

## **Attendance Policy**

The School Committee requires a high level of participation in engaged learning. Regular school and class attendance enables students to benefit from classroom discussions, presentations and interactive activities. These shared academic experiences are integral to the learning process and cannot be re-created or replicated. Massachusetts law requires compulsory attendance for all students. M.G.L. chapter 76 §1 states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school.

The Committee believes that excessive student absenteeism and tardiness, whether caused by excused or unexcused absences, may be an early warning sign of poor academic achievement and may put students at risk of dropping out of school. The Committee desires to ensure that all students attend school in accordance with the state's compulsory education law and take full advantage of educational opportunities provided by the District.

### **Examples of when students may be excused temporarily from school attendance are:**

- Illness, injury or quarantine as documented by a doctor or other medical professional
- Bereavement/funeral or serious illness within the student's family
- Religious holiday
- Required court appearance
- DCF Commitment
- DYS Commitment

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or his/her designee. Parents/guardians will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child in order for that absence or tardiness to be excused. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

Examples of unexcused absences may include, but may not be limited to:

- Repetitive or chronic absence or tardiness due to illness or injury not documented by a doctor or other medical professional
- Truancy
- Family vacations
- Undocumented absences

### **Family Vacations**

We strongly discourage family vacations when school is in session. In addition to compromising the attendance law, family vacations interrupt the educational process in each subject area in ways that make-up work cannot reverse. Teachers are not required to provide work in advance of a family vacation.

### **Truancy**

Unnecessary absence due either to a students' willful decision or a parent's inability or unwillingness to ensure attendance is a violation of law and district policy. Parents who support or enable a chronic pattern of unnecessary absences for children under the age of 16 may be subject to agency or court action.

### **Tardiness**

Every student who is not present in his/her class or homeroom at the start of opening session will be marked tardy. Tardy students need to report to the office. Parents/guardians must provide an excuse in person or by telephone followed by a written note to excuse the student's tardiness. The Principal may take appropriate disciplinary action if it is determined that a student has had excessive tardiness, which have impacted the student's learning and education.

### **Dismissals**

No student under the age of 18 shall be dismissed from school early without a request from his or her parent/guardian in person or in writing. All dismissals shall be recorded. Students may not leave the building until the person receiving them has been properly identified (please provide a picture ID). The school nurse may dismiss students for illness with permission from the parent/guardian.

### **Student Absence Notification Program**

Each principal or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within three (3) days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and /or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit organizations.

### **Dropout Prevention:**

A student who has not graduated from high school and has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence shall not be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to the student, and that student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 days and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate the

parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed 14 days.

The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian.

The Superintendent or designee shall convene a team of school staff to participate in the exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the students.

Legal References: M.G.L. 76:20

1<sup>st</sup> reading waived, 2<sup>nd</sup>/final and adopted: June 17, 2019