




August 8, 2023

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Approval of Student Attendance Policy

- Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Attendance Policy that are detailed in the attached redline document. These revisions seek to bring the policy into alignment with the requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as to when a student is considered chronically absent and to clarify what constitutes an excused and unexcused absence from school.
- Description: This is a first reading of revisions to the Student Attendance Policy.
- Supporting Data: Student Attendance Policy.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Victoria L. Greer, PhD  
Superintendent of Schools

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Regular and consistent attendance is essential to learning, to improving the achievement of all students, to maintaining a respectful school climate and to a student's successful school performance. The goal of the student attendance policy is to promote consistent, daily school and class attendance. The expectation is that all students will ~~have, at a minimum, at least ninety-five percent (95%)~~ be in attendance in school and in each class during each school day. A student who is truant, frequently absent or frequently tardy to school without adequate reason is in violation of this policy.

a. \_\_\_Parents/Guardians/Caregivers must call the school to give notification of an absence by no later than the morning of the absence.

b. If a call is not made, a note from the parent/guardian/caregiver or the student's medical provider is due on the day that the student returns to school explaining the absence. No student, however, shall be sent home to obtain a written explanation from their parent/guardian/caregiver during a school session.

c. In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school principal/~~head of upper school~~ may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable.

d. If an extended absence of a student is foreseen, the parent/guardian/caregiver should contact the principal/~~head of upper school~~ to make arrangements for the completion of academic requirements.

e. A student who is truant, chronically absent or tardy will be referred to the Office of the Safety and Security. The Director of Safety and Security, after consultation with the appropriate ~~pPrincipal/Head of Upper School~~, will review each matter and initiate corrective action which may include referral to the Middlesex County Court if the student is deemed to require additional services under the direction of the Court. In accordance with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirements, a student who is absent for ten (10) percent or more of school days in a school year (eighteen (18) or more days), including excused absences, is considered to be chronically absent.

Excused absences include:

- a. personal illness or quarantine;
- b. absences attributable to personal trauma; grieving, death in the family or serious illness in the family;
- c. observance or practice of a religious holiday;

d. medical appointments that absolutely cannot be made outside of school hours or counseling visits;

e. legal matters requiring a personal appearance;

f. suspensions or expulsions in or out of school;

g. school-related trips, assemblies or meetings;

h. college visits (two days in junior year of high school and three days in senior year of high school);

i. one trip or educational experience of no more than five days during a student's years at high school; or

j. weather so inclement as to endanger the health or safety of the child.

A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons, with the approval of the school administration not exceeding seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any six month period.

Any other absence that is not excused or any excusable absence that is not reported by a parent/guardian/caregiver by a telephone call or written note from a parent/guardian/caregiver or the student's medical provider upon the student's return to school constitutes an unexcused absence.

~~Unexcused absences include:-~~

~~a. Truancy from school or from individual classes or study halls;-~~

~~b. Trips not approved in advance by the principal/head of upper school;-~~

~~c. Looking for employment without prior approval from the principal/head of upper school;-~~

~~d. Staying home to avoid an examination in a given subject or to study for an examination;-~~

~~e. Leaving the school building during the school day without signing out in the principal/head of upper school's office;-~~

~~f. Oversleeping or otherwise being tardy to school (three unexcused tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence);~~

~~g. Remaining on or near school grounds, but not attending assigned classes; or~~

~~h. Any other absence that is not excused or any excusable absence that is not reported by a parent/guardian/caregiver by a telephone call or written note from a parent/guardian/caregiver or the student's medical provider upon the student's return to school.~~

When a student is at school, the student is under the supervision of all teachers and school authorities and must get permission from the principal/~~head of upper school~~'s office to leave early. Any student who does not sign out of school in the principal's/~~head of upper school~~'s office before leaving will be unexcused and receive no credit for all class activities or assignments missed. Each teacher shall keep a record of the absence or tardiness of students. A student who enters the classroom after the time appointed for the beginning of the session shall be recorded as tardy. Parents/guardians/caregivers will be notified when a student has any unexcused absence, or unexcused tardy or unexcused misses of two (2) or more periods of school. The school must ensure that it notify the student's parents/guardians/caregivers of a student's absence within three (3) days of the absence if the school has not received notification of the absence from the student's parent/guardian/caregiver. ~~When a child has been tardy five (5) times, has been absent five (5) days or ten (10) half days in the previous six (6) months for which there is no lawful excuse for said tardies or absences, misses five (5) or more school days unexcused in a school year or two (2) or more periods unexcused in a school year, it shall be the duty of the principal or head of upper school or designee in which such child is enrolled to report such attendance record to the Superintendent of Schools.~~ The principal ~~or head of upper school~~ or designee also shall make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent/guardian/caregiver of the student who has ~~five (5)~~our (4) or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attendance. The action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal, ~~head of upper school~~ or designee, the student and the student's parent/guardian/caregiver and with input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies, as appropriate.

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Any student with an excused absence from school or classes has the privilege of making up the class assignments, missed homework, quizzes, exams, papers, projects and other assignments. The principal ~~or head of upper school~~ shall ensure that there is a school-wide education service plan in place for all students who are suspended or expelled from school for more than five (5) consecutive days, whether in or out of school. Additionally, the principal ~~or head of upper school~~ shall ensure that any student suspended or expelled from school for more than five (5) consecutive days, whether in or out of school, has an opportunity to make academic progress during the period of exclusion, to make up assignments and earn credits missed, including, but not limited to, homework, quizzes, exams, papers, projects and other assignments.

For any student who ~~is legally absent for~~ has five (5) or more days of excused absences, the school will make arrangements with families to have the student make up home assignments and upon return, the student will have the opportunity to make up class work, including tests, quizzes, class assignments, missed homework, exams, papers, projects and other assignments. The parent/guardian/caregiver of any student who will have a prolonged absence (2 weeks or longer) due to illness or injury must notify the school to make the necessary arrangements for homebound instruction.

Absences or tardiness without satisfactory explanation shall be grounds for disciplinary action. School officials are encouraged to take all other appropriate disciplinary action before resorting to suspension in an effort to help a student with problems of truancy, tardiness and class cutting, including referral of the student to the Juvenile Court as a habitually truant child in need of services and/or referral for evaluation as a child in need of special education. No credit will be given to students who miss school work due to truancy, tardiness or class-cutting, unless the student makes up the missed work as directed by his teacher and teachers should afford students a reasonable amount of time upon their return to class to make up missed homework, quizzes, exams, papers, projects and other assignments. No adverse, prejudicial or discriminatory effect shall result to any student because they are absent to observe a religious holiday. Teachers should, to the extent feasible, refrain from scheduling any important tests, culminating activities, and/or major papers/reports during religious holidays.

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School and the High School Extension Program will treat four (4) unexcused absences as an Attendance Violation (AV). Excused absences, including verified personal illness, will not be counted against a student and will not result in the issuance of an Attendance Violation (AV) ~~if the absences fall into the following categories: (a) absences attributable to personal trauma, grieving, death in the family; (b) observance of a religious holiday; (c) medical appointments or counseling visits that absolutely cannot be made outside of school hours; (d) legal matters requiring a personal appearance; (e) suspensions in and out of school; (f) school-related trips, assemblies or meetings; (g) college visits (two days in junior year and three days in senior year); and (h) one trip or educational experience of no more than five days during a student's years at the high school.~~

Four (4) unexcused absences in any class, however, will result in an Attendance Violation (AV). In this case, a grade of AV will be issued for the term grade by the Dean of Students. In addition, three (3) unexcused tardies to class will be counted as one (1) unexcused absence. ~~Unexcused absences include: (a) truancy from school or from individual classes; (b) trips not approved in advance by the principal; (c) looking for employment without approval of the principal; (d) staying home to avoid an examination in a given subject or to study for an examination; (e) leaving the school building during the school day without signing out in the dean's office (cutting class); (f) oversleeping or otherwise being tardy to school; (g) remaining on or near school grounds, but not attending assigned classes (cutting class); and (h) any other absence that is not excused or any excusable absence that is not reported by parents/guardians/caregivers by a phone call or written note from parents/guardians/caregivers~~

~~or the student's medial provider upon the student's return to school.~~ Additionally, a student who receives twelve (12) unexcused tardies in any one class, will receive an AV for the course.

In accordance with the school district's policy, the school will notify the parents/guardians/caregivers after each absence and/or tardy of the student and also will notify the parents/guardians/caregivers after four (4) or more unexcused absences occur. Parents/Guardians/Caregivers may seek a medical waiver for any chronic condition, recurring illness or for any illnesses that exceeds four (4) days. Parents/Guardians/Caregivers will have the right to appeal any AV to the Appeals Review Committee at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School and the High School Extension Program within ten (10) days of the issuance of the AV and, if the appeal is denied, the parents/guardians/caregivers may within ten (10) days of the denial submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools for review. The decision of the Superintendent of Schools shall be final.

A student who receives an AV for any given class, in any given term, will receive a ten-point reduction to the final term grade for that class. If the student wishes to NOT receive a ten-point reduction then, the student must meet with their Dean of Students to create a "Buy-Back" contract/proposal established between the student and Dean of Students.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L.c. 76, §§1, 1B, 16 & 20

Adopted: ~~May 15, 2018~~