

CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

135 BERKSHIRE STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02141

25-194



August 5, 2025

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Approval of Revisions to Student Attendance Policy

Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the revisions to Student Attendance Policy as detailed in the attached document.

The revisions to the Student Attendance Policy are being presented for its first reading.

Description: This document contains revisions to the Student Attendance Policy in order to provide further clarity to when documentation is required to support student absences.

Supporting Data: Student Attendance Policy

Respectfully submitted,

David Murphy
Interim 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 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 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 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 principal, 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 (with supporting documentation provided);

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 (with supporting documentation provided);

e. legal matters requiring a personal appearance (with supporting documentation provided);

f. suspensions or expulsions in or out of school;

g. school-related trips, assemblies, activities or meetings;

h. School-service related absences:

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

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

kj. 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 (6) 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 and with appropriate documentation provided, when applicable, as detailed above the student's medical provider upon the student's return to school constitutes an unexcused absence.

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's office to leave early. Any student who does not sign out of school in the principal's office before leaving or who does not attend a class or classes whether or not they leave the school or school grounds or remain in the school or school grounds 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 by the school 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 notifies 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. The principal or designee also shall make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent/guardian/caregiver of the student who has five (5) 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 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.

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 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 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 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 action 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 five (5) unexcused and/or excused absences, or fifteen (15) or more tardies, or a combination of the two in the same class during a quarter as an Attendance Violation (AV). In addition, three (3) unexcused tardies to class will be counted as one (1) unexcused absence for purposes of calculating an AV. Additionally, a student who receives four (4) unexcused absences or twelve (12) unexcused tardies in any one class, will result in an AV. Attendance Violations (AV) will be reported on progress reports and record cards. On or before issuance of the AV, the Dean of

Students will schedule a meeting with the student and their parent/guardian/caregiver to discuss ways to improve attendance. There will be no reduction of a student's grade as a result of the issuance of an AV.

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.

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

Adopted: September 19, 2023