

STUDENTS

Student Attendance and Truancy

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control of the child. To assist parents and other persons in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures to implement this policy.

I. Definitions:

1. **Absence** - any day during which a student is not considered “in attendance” at his/her assigned school, or on a school sponsored activity (e.g. field trip), for at least one half of the school day.
2. **Disciplinary absence** - Any absence as a result of school or District disciplinary action. Any student serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should be considered absent. Such absence is not considered excused or unexcused.
3. **Educational evaluation** - for purposes of this policy, an educational evaluation is an assessment of a student’s educational development, which, based upon the student’s presenting characteristics, would assess (as appropriate) the following areas: health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status and motor abilities.
4. **Excused absence** - a student is considered excused from school if the school has received written documentation describing the reason for the absence within ten (10) school days of the student’s return to school, or if the child has been excluded from school in accordance with section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (regarding communicable diseases), and the following criteria are met:
 - A. Any absence before the student’s 10th absence, is considered excused when the student’s parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate written documentation in accordance with this policy.
 - B. For the student’s 10th absence and all absences thereafter, a student’s absences from school are, with appropriate documentation in accordance with this regulation, considered excused only for the following reasons:
 - a. student illness (verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional);
 - b. religious holidays;
 - c. mandated court appearances (documentation required);

- d. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - e. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by the District administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and this regulation;
 - f. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends.
- 5. In Attendance** - any day during which a student is not considered to be absent from his/her assigned school, or from an activity sponsored by the school (e.g. field trip), for at least one half of the school day.
- 6. Student** - a student enrolled in Regional School District 13.
- 7. Truant** - any student **five (5) to eighteen (18)** years of age, inclusive, who has **four (4)** unexcused absences from school in any one month or **ten (10)** unexcused absences from school in any school year.
- 8. Unexcused absence** - any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for at least one half of the school day, which is not excused or considered a disciplinary absence.

The determination of whether an absence is excused will be made by the building principal or his/her designee. Parents or other persons having control of the child may appeal that decision to the Superintendent or his/her designee, whose decision shall be final.

II. Written Documentation Requirements for Absences

- 1. Written documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absence within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school. An incidence of absence is considered consecutive days of absence.
- 2. The first nine (9) days of absence will be excused upon receipt of a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate.
- 3. For the student's 10th absence, and all absences thereafter, documentation of the absence must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and must also include the reason for the absence and the following additional information:
 - A. Student illness:
 - a. signed note from a medical professional, who may be the school nurse, who has evaluated the student confirming the absence and giving an expected return date; or

- b. signed note from school nurse who has spoken with the student's medical professional and confirmed the absence, including the date and location of the consultation.
 - B. Religious holidays: none.
 - C. Mandated court appearances:
 - (1) a police summons;
 - (2) a subpoena;
 - (3) a notice to appear;
 - (4) a signed note from a court official; or
 - (5) other official, written documentation of the legal requirement to appear in court.
 - D. Funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family: written document must explain the nature of the emergency.
 - E. Extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the District administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and this policy: written pre-approval from the administration, in accordance with this regulation.
 - F. Lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends: none.
4. Neither e-mail nor text message shall serve to satisfy the requirement of written documentation. In rare and extraordinary circumstances, a building administrator may, in his/her own discretion, accept the delivery of written documentation through a scanned copy sent by e-mail.
 5. Regional School District 13 reserves the right to randomly audit written documentation received, through telephone and other methods of communication, to determine its authenticity.
 6. Any absence that is not documented in accordance with this regulation within ten (10) school days after the incidence of absence will be recorded as unexcused. If documentation is provided within ten (10) school days, but is incomplete, the building principal may, at his/her own discretion, grant up to a five (5) school day extension for provision of the completed documentation.

III. Extraordinary Educational Opportunities

1. To qualify as an extraordinary educational opportunity, the opportunity must:
 - A. be educational in nature and must have a learning objective related to the student's course work or plan of study;
 - B. be an opportunity not ordinarily available for this exemption;
 - C. be grade and developmentally appropriate; and
 - D. include content that is highly relevant to the student; while some opportunities will be relevant to all students, others will contain very specific content that would limit their relevance to a smaller group of students.
2. Family vacations do not qualify as extraordinary educational opportunities.
3. All requests for approval of extraordinary educational opportunities must:

- A. be submitted to the building principal in writing prior to the opportunity, but no later than ten (10) school days prior to the opportunity except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the building administrator;
 - B. contain the signatures of both the parent/guardian and the student;
 - C. include an outline of the learning objective of the opportunity and include detail as to how the objective is linked to the student's coursework or plan of study; and
 - D. include additional documentation, where available, about the opportunity.
4. The building principal shall provide a response in writing and include the following:
 - A. either approval or denial of the request;
 - B. brief reason for any denial;
 - C. any requirements placed upon the student as a condition of approval;
 - D. the specific days approved as excused absences for the opportunity;
 - E. the understanding that the building administrator may withdraw its approval if the opportunity is canceled or the student fails to meet the agreed-upon requirements of the approval.
 5. All decisions of the building principal relating to extraordinary educational opportunities shall be final.
 6. Students who are granted excusal from school to participate in extraordinary educational opportunities are expected to share their experiences with other students and/or school staff when they return.
 7. Approval for an extraordinary educational opportunity is determined on a case-by-case basis and the analysis of individualized factors. An opportunity approved for one student may not be approved for another.

IV. Truancy Exceptions:

1. A student **five (5) or six (6) years of age** shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student has appeared personally at the school district office and exercised the option of not sending the child to school at five (5) or six (6) years of age.
2. A student **seventeen (17) years of age** shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student consents to such student's withdrawal from school. Such parent or person shall personally appear at the school district office and sign a withdrawal form indicating such consent. Such withdrawal form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor or school administrator from the school that the District provided the parent (or person having control of the child) with information on the educational options available in the school system and community.
3. If a parent or guardian of an expelled student chooses not to enroll the student in an alternative program, the student shall not be considered to be "truant."

V. Readmission to School Following Voluntary Withdrawal

1. Except as noted in paragraph 2 below, if a student voluntarily withdraws from school (in accordance with Section IV.2, above) and subsequently seeks readmission, the Board may deny school accommodations to the student for up to ninety (90) school days from the date of the student's withdrawal from school.
2. If a student who has voluntarily withdrawn from school (in accordance with Section IV.2, above) seeks readmission within ten (10) school days of his/her withdrawal, the Board shall provide school accommodations to the student not later than three (3) school days after the student requests readmission.

VI. Determinations of Whether a Student is "In Attendance":

1. A student serving an out of school suspension or expulsion shall be reported as absent unless he or she receives an alternative educational program for at least one half of the regular school day. In any event, the absence is considered a disciplinary absence, and will not be designated as excused or unexcused.
2. On early dismissal days and days shortened due to inclement weather, the regular school day for attendance purposes is considered to be the amount of instructional time offered to students on that day. For example, if school is open for four hours on a shortened day scheduled, a student must be present for a minimum of two hours in order to be considered "in attendance."
3. Students placed on homebound instruction due to illness or injury in accordance with applicable regulations and requirements are counted as being "in attendance" for every day that they receive instruction from any appropriately certified teacher for an amount of time deemed adequate by the administration so as to ensure that the student is able to successfully return to the regular classroom setting.

VII. Notification and Monitoring of Attendance

1. Notification
 - A. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration shall notify the parent or other person having control of the student enrolled in grades K - 8 in writing of the obligations pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-184 to assure that such a student attends school regularly or to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the Durham/Middlefield Public Schools.
 - B. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration shall obtain from the parent or other person having control of the student in grades K-8 a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.

2. Monitoring

Each school shall implement a system of monitoring individual unexcused absences of students in grades K-8. Whenever such a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day, school personnel under the direction of the building principal **[or his/her designee]** shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or other person having control of such student by telephone and by mail of the student's absence, unless school personnel have received an indication that the parent or other person is aware of the student's absence. **[Reasonable efforts shall include two (2) attempts to reach the parent or other person at the telephone number provided by the parent or other person. Such attempts shall be recorded on a form provided by the Superintendent.]** Mailed notice of the student's absence shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from school in a month or five unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court pursuant to section 46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs. Any person who, in good faith, gives or fails to give such notice shall be immune from liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.

(*Note: State law mandates notification and monitoring only with regard to students in grades K-8. Boards of Education are free, however, to extend the application of monitoring and intervention procedures to students at all grade levels.)

VIII. Procedures applicable to students ages five (5) to eighteen (18)

1. Intervention

- A. When a student is truant, the building principal or his/her designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent (or other person having control of such student) and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the student's truancy. This meeting shall be held no later than **ten (10) days** after the student becomes truant. The District shall document the meeting, and if parent or other person declines to attend the meeting, or is otherwise is non-responsive, that fact shall also be documented and the meeting shall proceed with school personnel in attendance.
- B. When a student is truant, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall coordinate services with and referrals of students to community agencies providing child and family services, as appropriate. The District shall document efforts to contact and include families and to provide early intervention in truancy matters.
- C. If the parent or other person having control of a student who is truant fails to attend the meeting held pursuant to subsection A., above, or otherwise fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, the Superintendent shall file, within fifteen calendar days of such failure to attend

the meeting or other failure to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, for such truant a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b - 149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the truant are such that his/her family is a family with service needs.

- D. In addition to the procedures specified in subsections A through C above, a regular education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to the building Child Study Team **[or other appropriate school based team]** to consider the need for additional interventions and/or assistance. The Team will also consider whether the student should be referred to a planning and placement team (“PPT”) meeting to review the student's need and eligibility for special education. A special education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to a PPT meeting for program review.
- E. If a FWSN petition is filed and the court orders an educational evaluation of the student, the District shall conduct an appropriate educational evaluation if no such evaluation has been performed within the preceding year.
 - a. For a regular education student, the educational evaluation will be conducted or arranged for by appropriate school personnel and coordinated through the Child Study Team **[or other appropriate school based team]**. Upon completion of the evaluation of a regular education student, the Child Study Team **[or other appropriate school based team]** shall review the evaluations and make appropriate recommendations for alternative procedures, programs or interventions. Such recommendations may include a referral of the student for further evaluation and/or consideration for special education eligibility.
 - b. In the case of a student who requires or may require special education and related services, the District shall convene a PPT to determine what evaluations may be appropriate to assess any specific areas of concern. The PPT shall reconvene to review the evaluations and make appropriate recommendations regarding the student’s need for special education services and the need, if any, to write and/or revise the student’s individualized education program (“IEP”).

IX. Reports to the State Regarding Truancy Data:

Annually, each local and regional board of education shall include information regarding truancy in the strategic school profile report for each school under its jurisdiction and for the school district as a whole submitted to the Commissioner of Education. Measures of truancy include the type of data that is required to be collected by the Department of Education regarding attendance and unexcused absences in order for the department to comply with federal reporting requirements and the actions taken by the board of education to reduce truancy in the school district.

Legal References:

Connecticut General Statutes §10-220

Connecticut General Statutes §10-184

Connecticut General Statutes §10-186

Connecticut General Statutes §10-198a

Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System

(Connecticut State Department of Education, January 2008)

Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-2, *Utilizing Local Support Resources*

Prior to Referral of Students for Family with Service Needs (August 4, 2009)

Connecticut State Board of Education Memorandum, *Definitions of Excused and Unexcused*

Absences (June 27, 2012)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of*

Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention

(April 2013)

Policy Revised: February 12, 2014