

PROCEDURES FOR ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

General

1. When a student returns from an absence, the parent/guardian must provide the school with a signed, written excuse citing the date(s) and reason(s) for absence. This written excuse must be submitted even if prior notification of intended absence was provided. Parents are requested to notify the school in advance of planned absence and to make phone contact on the morning of an illness or other reason for absence.
2. Following an absence of three consecutive days without notification from home, or anytime a questionable situation or pattern of absenteeism occurs, the principal or designee will contact the parent/guardian informing him/her of the student's absence. Parents/guardians are required by law to provide the school with a phone number at which they can be contacted or accessed during school hours.
3. Beginning with the end of the first marking period, written professional and/or verifiable documentation will be required whenever a student's absenteeism exceeds 10% of the membership days. For example, in case of illness, a physician's statement will be mandated, noting that absence was medically necessary for the dates the student was out; diagnostic information need not be provided at the discretion of the parent/student. For all other absences, written verification such as a court summons, letter from DSS or official documentation of catastrophic event will be required. When a student reaches 10% absenteeism, no reasons for absence beyond those previously listed as legitimate will be considered acceptable.
4. Parents and/or guardians of students whose absenteeism exceeds 10% will be notified in writing of the need to supply appropriate documentation. Such documentation will continue to be mandated for all absences until the rate of absenteeism falls below 10%.
5. Should the parent/guardian fail to provide the necessary verifications or should the student subsequently be absent for a reason not listed as legitimate, the principal or designee will contact the parent/guardian to address the situation. When deemed necessary by school personnel, a parent/guardian will be notified of the need for a conference to discuss, and mutually plan for, the resolution of an attendance problem. Upon notification, it is expected that a parent/guardian will appear for the appointed conference or contact the school to reschedule. It must be understood that participation in such conferences is viewed as a parent/guardian's responsibility. While the district will make every reasonable effort to accommodate the needs of parents who are working or facing other difficulties, we will expect parents to play an active role in problem solving both to benefit the student and to comply with the law regarding parental responsibility for regular school attendance.
6. If the problem remains unresolved, a referral will be made to the building administrator or designee who serves as attendance officer, who will assess the situation and decide on the need for formal intervention and on-going attendance related services.

- a. In situations in which non-compliance continues, the building administrator will make a determination regarding agency or court action.
 - b. Court action may include truancy proceedings against a willfully absent student or the filing of charges against a parent/guardian for failure to provide for the educational needs of his/her child.
7. Referrals to the building administrator will also be made when any acute or chronic absenteeism involving students of mandatory school age cannot be resolved at the building level. The building administrator will assess each referral and implement appropriate intervention efforts which could include court or DSS action in situations involving lack of cooperation or compliance.

Credit/Promotion Implications

When a student's absenteeism exceeds 10% of the membership days (9 absences in a semester or 18 in a full year) the school may act to deny credit or promotion:

- a. When a decision to deny credit or promotion is made, the school will notify the parents of the intended action.
- b. The parent/guardian and/or student have the right to appeal loss of credit/promotion decisions. The appeal must be in writing and submitted to the school within the timeframe noted on the loss of credit notification.
- c. A hearing by the school's review committee will be scheduled, at which point the parent and/or student will have the opportunity to provide documentation for the absences under discussion or to explain extraordinary circumstances.
- d. A letter stating the decision of the review committee will be sent to the parent/guardian within 5 school days of the review committee meeting.
- e. The parent/guardian and/or student may appeal the decision to the superintendent. The appeal must be in writing and sent within 5 school days of receipt of the review committee letter. A hearing will be conducted by the superintendent or his/her designee and a written decision provided. The decision of the superintendent will be the final decision of the district.

Adopted: June 3, 1996

(Replaces JE, JE-E, JE_E_1, JED, JEDA)

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:1, 76:2, 76:19, 76:20, 119:51A, 119:39E

OTHER REFS: Student Handbook

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