

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee does recognize that parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons:

1. Illness or quarantine (with a doctor's note);
2. Bereavement or serious illness in family;
3. Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child;
4. For observance of major religious holidays; or
5. Legal (with documentation from the court, lawyer etc.)
6. Other qualifying event – a student may be excused for other absences with approval from the school administrator.
7. Drivers license appointment.

Documentation for the above absences must be provided to the school principal or designee within ten (10) school days of the absence. Documentation provided after 10 school days will require a meeting with the principal or assistant principal. No documentation for the school year will be accepted after June 30th of that year.

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his character. Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school needlessly.

Accordingly, parents will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences are justified.

Student Absence Notification Program

Each Principal, by whatever title he may be known, will notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each Principal, by whatever title he may be known, 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 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 agencies.

In situations in which attendance does not improve despite intervention, the school may take one or more of the following actions:

- A Failure To Send, Criminal Complaint, against the parent/guardian will be sought at Hingham District Court
- A 51A for parental/guardian neglect will be filed with the Department of Social Services
- A CRA (Child Requiring Assistance) petition will be sought at Hingham District Juvenile Court.

High School Attendance (in addition to the policy stated above)

Grades are calculated for each student at the end of each term (approximately 45 school days). Students who accrue more than four (4) unexcused absences in a class for a term will receive a grade of AF (Attendance Failure) for that term.

Unexcused absences occur when a student misses more than 15 minutes of a class due to either tardiness, absence, or dismissal, which is not excused according to the district attendance policy. Documentation to excuse a tardy, absence, or dismissal, must be provided to the school principal or designee within ten (10) school days of the tardy, absence, or dismissal. Attendance Failures will not be changed or amended based on documentation provided outside of the ten (10) day window.

Attendance Failures will be calculated as a 59 for the purposes of averaging final grades for semester and full year courses. If a student receives an Attendance Failure, but earns a grade, which is lower than a 59, the lower grade will be used for averaging final grades for semester and full year courses.

Students in full year courses, who receive an Attendance Failure for a single term, but meet the attendance requirements for the other three terms in the same school year, will have the Attendance Failure removed from their record. The original grade they earned in the course will be restored and used for averaging their final grade in each course where this applies.

In addition to the district attendance policy, high school juniors and seniors may be excused for up to two days for college visits. High school juniors may be excused to attend one session of the annual NACAC National College Fair held in Boston. The appropriate documentation from the college visited or college fair will be required in order to receive credit for the days.

Also, family vacations are not considered excused absences. Teachers will not be required to provide work prior to a student leaving for vacation. The student will be required to make up all missed work upon his/her return to school.

Drop Out Prevention

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absences. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates 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 student.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:1B; 76:16; 76:18; 76:20

Adoption: March 9, 2015

First reading 2018 revision: April 9, 2018

Second reading: June 4, 2018

Third reading/Adoption: June 18, 2018

Proposed reconsideration: June 2023