

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee does recognize that parents of children attending our schools have rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school regularly, in accordance with State law. State law requires the school system to investigate cases of excessive school absence. For this purpose, the Committee defines excessive absence as more than eleven (11) unexcused absences per school year. All absences (even those authorized by parents) are considered unexcused unless the required documentation is provided.

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

- Illness or quarantine (with a doctor's note)
- Bereavement or serious illness in family
- For observance of major religious holidays
- Legal (with documentation from the court, lawyer etc.)
- Other – a student may be excused for other absences with approval from the school administrator.

Documentation for the above absences should be provided to the school principal or designee within five (5) school days of the absence. Documentation provided after ten (10) school days may require a meeting with a principal or designee.

Clear communication between parents and the school is imperative to ensure the safety of students and to reinforce a student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork. Accordingly, parents should provide a written explanation for the absence of a child. This should be provided in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

Family vacations are not considered excused absences. The School Committee strongly discourages families from taking vacation during the school year. When children are absent from school for the purpose of family vacations, their learning is interrupted and their progress may be affected. 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 their return to school.

Unexcused absence from school is considered truancy and will be treated as such. This includes absence from any class or activity during the school day for which the student is scheduled. It also includes any after-school special help session or disciplinary session that the student has been directed to attend by a teacher or administrator. Disciplinary action shall be taken in such case, beginning with notification of parents. Continued violation may lead to more serious repercussions, up to and including suspension from school.

If a child is absent, he or she cannot participate in after-school or evening events on the day(s) on which he or she is absent. The principal will have the authority to excuse a student's absence and allow the student to participate, based on the principal's understanding of the events surrounding the absence.

Excessive unexcused absences will require assessment and intervention by the school administration. Interventions may include contact with parents, school conferences, case management services and service referral. In situations in which attendance does not improve despite intervention by the school administration, the school may take one or more of the following actions:

- A Failure To Send, Criminal Complaint, against the parent will be sought at the Stoughton District Court
- A 51A for parental neglect will be filed with the Department of Children and Families
- A Child in Need of Supervision (CHINS) petition will be sought at the Dedham District Juvenile Court.

For High School students (in addition to policy stated above):

1. Students enrolled in a semester course (~20 weeks) will be denied credit if they have more than five (5) unexcused absences during the course.
2. Students enrolled in a yearlong course (~40 weeks) will be denied credit if they have more than eleven (11) unexcused absences during the course.
3. Student enrolled in a course other than a semester or year long course will be denied credit when they exceed a number of unexcused absences determined by multiplying the number of days in the course by 0.061 and rounding to the nearest whole number.

Students in the high school may also earn back days of missed attendance by attending Saturday School (a day for a day), or its equivalent, as made available by the high school administration.

Additionally, high school seniors may be excused for up to four (4) days for college visits. High school juniors may be excused to attend one (1) session of the annual NACAC National College Fair or its equivalent. Appropriate documentation from a college visit or college fair attendance will be required in order to receive credit for the days.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:2; 76:16; 76:20; 119:39E; 119:51A