

Students

Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

Attendance

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children, ages five through eighteen inclusive, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or withdrawal with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent. A student not meeting the definition of “in attendance” shall be considered absent.

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity. The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent.

Definitions (related to chronic absenteeism)

Chronically absent child: An enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

Absence: An excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to CGS 10-198b.

District chronic absenteeism rate: The total number of chronically absent children in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year.

School chronic absenteeism rate: The total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

A student’s absence from school shall be considered “excused” if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student’s return to school and meets the following criteria:

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Excuses (continued)

- A. For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered "excused" when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation to school officials.

- B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
 - 1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
 - 2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
 - 3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - 4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);
 - 5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);
 - 6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

- C. A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless:
 - 1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or
 - 2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or District disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Education approved definitions.

When the school in which a child is enrolled receives no notification from a parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel or volunteers under the direction of school personnel to notify by telephone and by mail such parent or other person having control of the child.

Responsibility for completion of missed classwork lies with the student, not the teacher. Unless a student has an extended illness, all make-up work will be complete within five days after the student returns to school.

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Excused Absences for Children of Service Members

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of the Board of Education, additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of such excused absences such child and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by such child prior to his or her return to school from such period of excused absence.

Chronic Absenteeism

The Board of Education, in compliance with statute, requires the establishment of attendance review teams when chronic absenteeism rates in the District or at individual schools in the District meet the following circumstances:

1. A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
2. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
3. A team for either the District or each school must be established when (a) more than one school in the District has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher or (b) a District has a District chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in the District have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, chronically absent children, parents or guardians of chronically absent children, and representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants.

Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for such truants and chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians. Each established attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

The District shall utilize the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education when it becomes available.

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Chronic Absenteeism (continued)

The District shall annually include in information for the strategic school profile report for each school and the District that is submitted to the Commissioner of Education, data pertaining to truancy and chronically absent children.

The Principal or his/her designee of any elementary or middle school located in a town/city designated as an alliance district may refer to the children's truancy clinic established by the Probate Court serving the town/city, a parent/guardian with a child defined as a truant or who is at risk of becoming a truant.

Dismissal

No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Superintendent or his/her designee.

No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission of the Principal.

No student may be permitted to leave school at any time other than at regular dismissal without the approval of the student's parent/guardian. If a court official with legal permission to take custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.

(cf. 5142 - Student Safety)

(cf. 5113.2 - Truancy)

(cf. 6113 - Released Time)

Legal Reference Connecticut General Statutes

10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)

10-184 Duties of parents (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

10-185 Penalty

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA11-136, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes and PA 14-198, An Act Concerning Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members, and PA 16-147, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee)

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Legal Reference Connecticut General Statutes (continued)

10-198b State Board of Education to define “excused absence,”
“unexcused absence,” and “disciplinary absence”

10-198c Attendance review teams.

10-198d Chronic absenteeism (as amended by PA 17-14

45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report.
(as amended by PA 15-225)

10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy - in general

PA 17-14 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of
Education

Policy approved: January 22, 2019

NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Newtown, Connecticut

Students

High School Attendance

Attendance Philosophy

The faculty of Newtown High School believes that learning experiences that take place in the classroom are meaningful and essential to the entire education process.

Absence from class represents an irretrievable loss in terms of opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas among students and between students and teacher. Therefore, classroom attendance is an integral part of the student's course of study.

Definitions

Absence: In general, an absence occurs when a student is not present for the entire school day.

Documented Absence: A documented absence occurs when a student is absent from one or more classes with parent/guardian consent. This consent must be communicated with the school for the absence to be documented.

The Appeals Committee will consider the following categories of Documented Absences in its review of credit restoration:

- Serious illness, disabilities or handicapping condition
- Extraordinary family emergencies
- Educational reasons, including college visits
- Religious observations

Undocumented Absences: An undocumented absence, i.e., truancy, occurs, when a student is absent for the entire school day or part of a day without parental consent, or with parental consent when the school deems that consent not to be in the best interest of the student.

Appeals Committee: The Appeals Committee will review a student's losing class credit. Loss of class credit will occur when a student has not attended a sufficient number of classes (see D. Loss of Class Credit).

The Appeals Committee is convened by the assistant principal and made up of five members that include faculty, staff and administration.

Class Cut: A class cut occurs when a student is present in school but absent from class for more than ten minutes without permission. Permission must be obtained from a member of the faculty, staff, or administration.

Exemptions: School-approved field trips, including mentoring and job shadowing, as well as sports activities, i.e., State and league championships, are considered days in class.

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High School Attendance

Attendance Philosophy (continued)

Tardiness: Tardiness occurs when a student is late to class without permission. Permission must be obtained from a member of the faculty, staff, or administration. (For lateness beyond ten minutes, see Class Cut above.)

Reporting Absences

On any day when the student is not in school, the parent or guardian is responsible for calling the attendance office at 203-426-7656 (24 hours/7days) with an explanation.

If the parent/guardian does not call the school, a written explanation is required within two school days of when the student returns to school.

If a parent or guardian does not contact the school, the student has an Undocumented Absence.

Penalties

1. The penalties for undocumented Absences, i.e., truancy, are as follows:
 - The first Undocumented Absence, i.e., truancy, will result in a one-day Saturday detention.
 - Further Undocumented Absences, i.e., trancies, will result in suspension.
2. The penalties for Class Cutting are as follows:
 - First occurrence: Teacher may contact parents and assign a detention or equivalent.
 - Second and third occurrence: The administration will contact parents and assign detention or equivalent.
 - Further cutting may result in suspension.
3. Students will receive a grade of zero and have no right to make up any work they miss as a result of Class Cutting or an Undocumented Absence.
4. Students will be allowed to make up missed work without grade penalty for Documented Absences. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain assignments for Documented Absences. All work, including quizzes, and tests, should be completed within two (2) school days of return, unless the time is extended by the teacher.

Tardiness

Promptness to class is expected. On the third Tardiness to any class, and any succeeding Tardiness to that class, a school detention or equivalent will be assigned. There will be a grade penalty for work missed due to being tardy.

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High School Attendance (continued)

Loss of Class Credit

1. A student will lose credit for a course after missing ten (10) classes of any semester course or after missing the twenty (20) classes in a year-long course. This is regardless of whether the student has missed the classes due to Class Cutting, Undocumented Absences, or Documented Absences.
2. Based on school records, parents will be notified after a student misses the fifth class for a semester course or misses the tenth class for a year-long course.
3. Appeals for credit restoration must be submitted in writing by a student or parent/guardian to the principal's office within ten (10) days of notification of loss of credit. Decisions regarding appeals will be made by the Appeals Committee (see Definitions). Four or five members must rule in favor of the appeal to restore credit.
4. The Appeals Committee will only consider the following categories of Documented Absences in its review of credit restoration:
 - Serious illness, disabilities or handicapping condition
 - Extraordinary family emergencies
 - Education reasons, including college visits
 - Religious observations

Long-Term Illness

Long-term illness requires a homebound tutor to enable the student to maintain class work and course credit. Arrangements should be made by contacting guidance counselors, attendance staff, or a member of the administration.

Permission to Leave School

Before administrative permission is given for a student to leave a school or school grounds or for a recognized senior privilege, a written note from the parent or guardian should be presented to the building principal or designee. In emergency situations a telephone call from the parent or guardian may suffice. Students 18 years of age or older may sign themselves out.