Existing Policy 5113, adopted 8/16/21, appropriate as written with addition of legal reference

5113

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 and the learning that takes place in the classroom is an essential part of that education. Time lost from class because of absences, tardiness and early dismissals disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and is a lost opportunity for all children of valuable instructional time.

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. The BRS school day begins at ~~and~~ 8:25 AM and ends at 3:10 PM. Students are considered tardy if they arrive after 8:25 AM. To promote the importance of full day attendance, the school office will communicate with parents, by telephone, e-mail, or first-class mail, if and when a student has four (4) or more tardies or four (4) more early dismissals in a month. The principal, at his/her discretion, may request a meeting with a child's parents as a follow-up.

Definitions

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 C.G.S. 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.

Truant child: An enrolled student who has four unexcused absences from school in a month or ten unexcused absences in any school year.

Excuses
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:

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.

Preferred documentation is provided by the parent/guardian leaving a message prior to 8:25 AM on the day of the absence on the school's attendance phone line. Acceptable alternate documentation includes a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official who spoke personally 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. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism.

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.

D. A student is permitted to take two additional days as "mental health wellness days" during the school year, a "mental health wellness day" defined as a school day during which the student attends to his/her emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school. No student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.

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

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:

A. A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.

B. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.

C. 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.

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.

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.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

1. The Principal and/or designee will hold a meeting with the parent/guardian of a child who is a "truant child" or "chronically absent child" as defined above. Such meeting will be held no later than ten (10) school days after the student's designation as "truant" or "chronically absent" based upon the definitions articulated in this policy.

2. The Principal and/or the Special Services Director will, when deemed appropriate, coordinate services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services.

3. The Principal or his/her designee will annually at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, notify in writing the parent or other person having control of each child of the school attendance obligations of the parent or such person pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §10-184.

4. The Principal or his/her designee will annually at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, obtain from the parent or other person having control of each child a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or such other person during the school day.

5. The Principal will establish a procedure that provides that, whenever an enrolled student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day, and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort to notify, by telephone and by mail, the parent or such other person shall be made by school personnel. The required mail notice shall include a warning that two unexcused absences from school in one month or five unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §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. Persons who, in good faith, give or fail to give notice shall be immune from any 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.

6. The school's mandated reporters must report suspected educational neglect to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

7. The Principal or his/her designee shall refer a child for a Planning and Placement Team meeting for evaluation for a possible disability of the "truant child" or "chronically absent child."

8. If a parent or other person having control of the "truant child" or "chronically absent child" fails to attend the meeting with the Principal or his/her designee, or otherwise fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the problem, the Principal or his/her designee shall notify the Superintendent, who shall file, no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after such failure to attend such meeting or such failure to cooperate with the school, a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §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.

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 or designee, and the approval of the student's parent/guardian. If a court official with legal permission takes custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.

Extraordinary Educational Opportunities
An extraordinary educational opportunity is defined as an opportunity: (a) with a learning objective related to the particular student's course work or plan of study; (b) not ordinarily available to the particular student; (c) appropriate to the development of the particular student (e.g., age, grade, and educational attainment); and (d) with content highly relevant to the particular student. The opportunity must come at no cost to the District. Family vacations do not qualify as extraordinary educational opportunities.

A request for the approval of an extraordinary educational opportunity must be submitted in advance in writing, with the signature of the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), to the Principal. The request must detail how the opportunity meets the criteria outlined above. All relevant documentation must be attached.

The decision to approve, or not approve, an extraordinary educational opportunity will be put in writing by the Principal after consultation with the Superintendent, and may be subject to withdrawal based on conditions outlined in the approval. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will set no precedent for the particular student or for other students.

(cf. 5142 - Student Safety)

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 PA 11-136, 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).

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.

Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define "attendance."

Action taken by State Board of Education on June 27, 2012, to define "excused" and "unexcused" absences.

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

PA 21-46 An Act concerning Social Equity and the Health, safety and Education of Children.

Action taken by the State Board of Education on September 7, 2022 to amend the definition of "in attendance".

Policy adopted: ~~**August 16, 2021**~~

WOODBRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Woodbridge, Connecticut