

ATTENDANCE FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

NOTE: This policy has been updated to incorporate an amendment to Social Services law that directs school districts to work with local social service districts to report cases of educational neglect. NYSSBA has inserted language in this policy, rather than draft a new and separate policy, since monitoring attendance patterns may be the most effective way to identify a case of educational neglect. NYSSBA further recommends that the district review this attendance policy with the local department of social services to ensure a common understanding of excused and unexcused absences (the definition of which is the purview of the Board of Education).

Philosophy

As an institution of learning, Mattituck-Cutchoque Union Free School District views class attendance as an essential factor to ensuring the academic progress of its students. For meaningful education to take place, students must be present in class and actively participate in the learning activities. Furthermore, the district is responsible to teach those values that will benefit students throughout their employment and/or their educational experiences. Good attendance is one such value that society views as primary for success. Through implementation of this policy the Board expects to reduce unexcused absences, tardiness and early departures, encourage full attendance by all students, maintain an adequate attendance recordkeeping system and develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance.

Notice

To be successful in this endeavor, it is imperative that all members of the school community are aware of this policy, its purpose, procedures and the consequences of non-compliance. To ensure that students, parents, teachers and administrators are notified of and understand this policy, the following procedures shall be implemented.

NOTE: The list of procedures should be modified to reflect district practice.

- A plain language summary of this attendance policy will be included in student handbooks and will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year.
- Parents can review a plain language summary of this policy on the District web site (or request a hard copy be mailed home) at the start of the school year. Parents will be asked to sign-off indicating that they have read and understand the policy.
- When a student is absent, tardy, or leaves early from class or school without excuse, designated staff member(s) will notify the student's parent(s) by phone and mail of the specific ATED, remind them of the attendance policy, and review ATED intervention procedures with them.
- A back-to-school event will be held at the beginning of each school year to explain this policy and stress the parent's responsibility for their ensuring their children's attendance.
- The district will provide a copy of the attendance policy and any amendments thereto to faculty and staff. New staff will receive a copy upon their employment.

- All faculty and staff will meet at the beginning of each school year to review the attendance policy to clarify individual roles in its implementation.
- Copies of this policy will also be made available to any community member, upon request.
- The district will share this policy with local Child Protective Services (CPS) to ensure a common understanding of excused and unexcused ATED's and to work toward identifying and addressing cases of educational neglect.

NOTE: The final bullet, above, was added to address educational neglect.

Definition of Terms

Excused absences, tardiness, and early departures

Excused absences, tardiness, and early departures from class or school are defined by the Commissioner's Regulation § 175.6 as those that are due to:

1. Personal illness
2. Illness or death in the family
3. Impassable roads due to inclement weather
4. Religious observance
5. Quarantine
6. Required court appearances
7. Attendance at health clinics
8. College visits with prior approval from administration
9. Cooperative work programs
10. Military obligations
11. Disciplinary detention
12. Any other reasons as may be approved by the building Principal or district superintendent.

Students shall not be considered absent when they are authorized by school officials to be somewhere other than in their regularly scheduled class. For example, if school personnel expect a student to report elsewhere during their regularly scheduled class time for such activities as meetings, conferences with school personnel, testing, physical exams, music lessons, or field trips, the student shall not be considered absent. It is the responsibility of the student and/or the staff member to provide the teacher with written documentation to attend these sessions before they are permitted to leave the class.

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to notify the school within at least 24 hours of the absence or tardiness and provide a written excuse upon the student's return to school. This written excuse should contain the student's name, the date(s) of the absence or tardiness, the reason, the parent or guardian's signature, and a telephone number where the parent or guardian may be reached.

When a student is out of school for 5 or more consecutive days or is hospitalized for any period of time, the parent or guardian must contact the Assistant Principal and Guidance office prior to the student returning to school to set up a re-entry interview. The purpose of this interview will be to outline the strategy to ensure student can make up past academic work.

Unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures

All other absences, tardiness, and early departures will be considered unexcused and be recorded as such. Examples include but are not limited to:

1. Staying home to baby-sit
2. Working
3. Being tired
4. Oversleeping
5. Family vacation
6. Traveling
7. Being needed at home
8. Cold weather
9. Missing the bus

All absences not accompanied with a written excuse from a parent or guardian within 24 hours of a student returning to school will be considered unexcused and recorded as such.

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to notify the attendance office in writing prior to any early departures. Failure to do so will result in the early departure being marked as unexcused. If a student leaves school early without first notifying the attendance office, disciplinary action will be taken.

All early departures will require students to be picked up in person by an authorized person listed on the emergency contact form. This person must show photo identification upon entering the school before signing out the student. Students will not be released to individuals not listed on the emergency contact form without prior arrangements made with the building principal.

If a student departs school early for a doctor's appointment, a doctor's note must be provided upon returning to school.

I. Disciplinary Consequences for the High School

Unexcused absences and early departures will result in disciplinary action consistent with the district's code of conduct. Those penalties may include two-hour after school detention, in-school suspension, Saturday suspension, or out of school suspension.

Excessive absences of any kind may result in loss of privileges, participation on school trips, or any other activity that may require students to miss more class time.

Unexcused tardiness to school will result in a lunch detention on that day. Three unexcused lates to any class period will result in a two-hour detention.

In addition, a designated staff member will contact the student's parent or guardian any time disciplinary action requires a detention other than during regular school hours. Such staff members will notify parents or guardians of any disciplinary action taken and will remind them of the attendance policy and explain the ramifications of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures.

The following is a list of sanctions to discourage poor attendance:

- Loss of the right to participate in extra-curricular activities
- Loss of the right to attend school related trips
- Loss of parking privileges
- Revocation of student's work study privilege
- Repetition of course or grade level due to excessive absences (loss of course credit)

NOTE: The following paragraph is added to put a mechanism in place for identifying educational neglect. If there is a particular staff member designated in the district for this purpose, or a particular process, please modify the paragraph accordingly.

In addition, the designated staff member will contact local Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect that the child is being educationally neglected. The designated staff member will provide CPS with the information necessary to initiate a report. If other staff members suspect education neglect, they must follow the procedures outlined in Board policy and regulation 5460, Child Abuse in a Domestic Setting, and advise the School Administrator.

II. Attendance/Grade Policy for the High School

At the high school level, any student with more than 9 absences from a one-half year class or 18 absences from a full year class will not receive credit for that course.

Students enrolled in a High School science lecture class with a separate lab period, the level will be 27 combined between the lecture period and lab.

All students arriving late to school with a legal excuse must be signed into the attendance office by a parent and/or guardian.

Tardiness to class greater than 20 minutes will count as an unexcused absence and will count towards the minimum attendance standard. Tardiness to class less than 20 minutes will count as 1/3 of an unexcused absence. Three events of tardiness to a class less than 20 minutes will be considered an unexcused absence and will count towards the minimum attendance standard.

Students who transfer from one class to another on the same level (for example, from 3rd period English to 6th period English) or from one course level to another (for example, from Regents Biology to General Biology) will have their class attendance transferred to the new class.

An excused absence, tardiness, or early departure for which the student has completed assigned make-up work, will not be counted under the schools policy concerning denial of course credit.

Only those students whose absence from class is legally excused by policy will be given the opportunity to make up test or other missed work and or turn in late assignments for inclusion into their final grade. Make up opportunities must be completed by a reasonable date specified by the teacher for the class in question.

Off campus lunch privilege - Students returning late to school after an off campus lunch (11th & 12th grade only) will be subject to the following consequences:

1st – 3rd offense = lunch detention the following day.

4th offense = suspension of off campus lunch privileges for 10 weeks.

To ensure that parents and students are aware of the implications of this minimum attendance requirement, a designated staff member will advise the student and contact the parent or guardian by telephone and mail at appropriate intervals prior to the student being denied course credit.

At the end of the 1st quarter, any student with 5 or more absences (legal and illegal) will be called into the Assistant Principal's Office for a conference and a letter will be sent home to the parent or guardian explaining the implications of this policy.

At the end of the 2nd quarter, any student with 10 or more absences from a full year course will be called into the Assistant Principal's Office for a conference and a letter will be sent home to the parent or guardian explaining the implications of this policy.

At the end of the 3rd quarter, any student with 14 or more absences from a full year course or 5 absences from a half-year course will be called into the Assistant Principal's Office for a conference and a letter will be sent home to the parent or guardian explaining the implications of this policy.

When any student reaches 18 absences in a full year course, or 9 absences from a half-year course, their parent or guardian will meet with the building principal to discuss the likelihood of their being denied course credit.

In order for a student to be eligible to participate in an extra-curricular activity on any given day, they must be in attendance at school for at least four class periods for that day.

III. Attendance Policy for the Elementary Schools

In the Fall of each school year, the Attendance Policy at the Elementary School is mailed home along with the District Code of Conduct. In accordance with Cutchogue East Elementary School's attendance procedure, a letter from the Assistant Principal is written to parents when their child has ten (10) or more absences. All absences from school are included in this total (illness, family vacation, appointments, etc.)

Parents are urged to call the school nurse's office at 734-6049 extension 227 each day your child is absent.

Parents will be contacted by the Attendance Office if there is no indication of why the student is absent. On returning to school, all children must present a signed note from the parent stating the dates of and reason for the absence. Excuse notes are attached to this recourse guide.

Although we all hope that each child might not miss a single day of school there are times when it is best for the child, as well as for the other students, to remain home.

The following signs or symptoms would indicate that your child should be kept at home until the symptoms are gone or the child has received medical attention:

1. Temperature elevation (over 100.5 degrees F)
2. Runny nose, sneezing, cough
3. Upset stomach
4. Headache
5. Appearance of a rash on any part of the body
6. Earache
7. Toothache
8. Nits or head lice in hair
9. Pain or limitation of movement from injury

The child's teacher and the school nurse will constantly be observing your child for the same signs and symptoms during the school day. If any appear, the parent/guardian will be notified and requested to take your child home. Naturally, seeing that your child gets enough sleep, exercise, wears the proper clothing for the weather, starts the day with a good breakfast, and has regular medical and dental exams, can help prevent both illness and injury.

NOTE: The following paragraph is added to put a mechanism in place for identifying educational neglect. If there is a particular staff member designated in the district for this purpose, or a particular process, please modify the paragraph accordingly.

In addition, the designated staff member will contact local Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect that the child is being educationally neglected. The designated staff member will provide CPS with the information necessary to initiate a report. If other staff members suspect education neglect, they must follow the procedures outlined in Board policy and regulation 5460, Child Abuse in a Domestic Setting, and advise the School Administrator.

IV. Applicability

This policy shall apply to each course independently of other courses.

This policy shall apply to students with a handicapping condition unless otherwise noted in their Special Education Individualized Education Program

Students attending classes at other facilities, such as BOCES center, shall be subject to the attendance policies at those other facilities, except that this policy shall apply for that portion of the student's program for which they are enrolled at Mattituck-Cutchoque High School.

V. Attendance Incentives

An attendance honor roll shall be maintained and published quarterly identifying those students with perfect attendance as well as those students whose attendance has improved significantly.

Members of the attendance honor role will have it noted on their report cards and transcripts.

Other incentives will be implemented as deemed appropriate by building level administration.

VI. General Procedures/Data Collection

Attendance will be taken each class period by the classroom teacher. This attendance will be taken electronically, via the School Master program.

Teachers will refer students who are absent from a class period to the appropriate school personnel. These school personnel will determine the reason for the absence and notify the teacher.

As soon as possible but no later than the conclusion of each school day, all attendance information shall be compiled by the attendance office and distributed to all faculty members.

The nature of all absences, tardiness, and early departures will be coded on all student records.

Students who are not in the classroom when the first period bell rings, must sign in at the attendance office.

Designated school personnel will review student attendance data in an expeditious manner.

Attendance data will be analyzed periodically to identify patterns or trends in student attendance.

Where additional information is received that requires corrections to be made to a student's attendance record, such corrections will be made immediately.

VII. Procedures for Communication of the Policy

The attendance policy will be included in student handbooks and will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year.

Parents and guardians will receive a copy of this policy by mail at the start of the school year. Parents and guardians will be asked to sign and return a statement indicating that they have read and understand the policy.

When a student is absent, tardy, or leaves school, early without an excuse, designated staff members will notify the student's parent or guardian by phone or mail.

A designated staff member will advise students and contact the parents or guardians by telephone or mail at appropriate intervals if it appears that the student might be in danger of non-compliance with the policy.

The district will provide a copy of the attendance policy and any amendments to faculty and staff. New staff will receive a copy upon their employment.

All faculty and staff members will meet at the beginning of each school year to review the attendance policy to clarify individual roles in its implementation.

Copies of this policy will also be made available to any community member upon request.

VIII. Appeals Process

Parents may file a written appeal of a denial of credit. The appeal must be filed before the end of the 1st semester for half-year courses and before the end of the school year for full year courses. An Appeals Committee consisting of a guidance counselor, teacher, and the assistant principal will review the appeal. The Committee will make a recommendation to the building principal as to whether or not credit will be denied. The building principal will render a decision regarding the appeal and will inform all parties involved of the decision (in writing).

IX. Annual Review

The School Board in conjunction with building administration shall annually review building-level student attendance records and, if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall revise the comprehensive attendance policy and make any revisions to the plan it deems necessary to improve student attendance.

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