

## **STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES**

Regular and punctual school attendance for all students, when learning in-person and remotely, is essential for success in school. The School Committee recognizes that parents/guardians 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.

Students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays; family trips up to 5 days per year, with a pre-approval form; and college visits, with a pre-approval form. A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the principal or designee.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parents/guardians are asked to monitor their child for symptoms of possible illness and keep their child home if the child or household members are experiencing symptoms consistent with possible COVID-19 infection. These absences will be considered excused and will not require health care provider documentation, but families should be in communication with the school nurse if COVID-19 infection is suspected or confirmed.

Parents/guardians 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 health care provider's statement certifying such absences.

### **Student Absence Notification Program**

Each principal or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within three (3) days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each principal 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 school 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.

### **Dropout Prevention**

A student who has not graduated from high school and has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence shall not be considered permanently removed from school unless the principal has sent notice to the student, and that student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least two (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.

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LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); 76:1B; [76:16](#); 76:18; [76:20](#)