

K-8 Attendance Policy

Consistent attendance is critical for students to achieve in the classroom. The district's K-8 attendance policy is designed to promote the development of responsible, dependable, and punctual students, recognize the role of the student, family, and school in maintaining appropriate attendance, and enforce Massachusetts Laws with respect to school attendance. Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 76, Section 2 states all children between the ages of six and sixteen are required to attend school regularly. The statute defines regularly as not more than seven absences in any six-month period. The following policy outlines definitions for excused and unexcused absences, protocols for reporting absences, and potential consequences for failure to adhere to the policy or follow school protocols.

Excused Absences:

The School Committee recognizes that parents 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. The state statute further points out that good attendance is the joint responsibility of the student, the parent/guardian, and the school. Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school for the following reasons:

1. Illness, quarantine or other medical condition
2. Bereavement or serious illness in family
3. Observance of major religious holidays
4. Court appearance/subpoena
5. Out of school suspension
6. School sponsored activities approved by the administration

Unexcused Absences:

Examples of unexcused absences and/or tardiness include oversleeping, missing the bus, car problems, family vacations, restrictions from a field trip (students are still expected to report to school), and caring for siblings. While students are strongly encouraged to make-up work for any absence, teachers are not required to give academic credit for make-up work completed following an unexcused absence.

Attendance F (applicable to Grades 6-8 only): repeated unexcused absences are unacceptable and can have serious academic consequences. If a student accumulates eight unexcused absences in a given trimester, the student will receive an "Attendance F," or a grade of 59 in all classes missed. If the student has a grade lower than a 59 for the trimester, he or she will receive that grade.

Protocol for Reporting an Absence:

A parent or guardian only **MUST CALL/CONTACT** the school to report an absence on the day of the absence with a valid reason (listed above). Any absence that is not called in by a parent or guardian **ON THE DAY OF THE ABSENCE** will be considered unexcused. Calls from family members who are not a parent or guardian will not be

accepted. Upon return to school, a student is required to present a written note outlining the reason for his or her absence. Notes must be received within 48 hours of the absence.

The school will contact homes of students whose absences have not been called in by a parent/guardian. If you receive a message from the school regarding your child's absence, please call the office immediately. If no call is received, and truancy is suspected by administration, the Saugus Police Department will be contacted.

School administration may request appropriate medical documentation to excuse any extended absence due to illness. An extended absence is considered four consecutive days or longer.

Chronic Absenteeism:

Upon the seventh (7th) absence for the year, either excused or unexcused, a letter will be sent out addressed to the parent/guardian outlining the school's attendance concerns and requiring the parent/guardian to contact the school, discuss the reasons for the absences, and plan for improved attendance going forward.

Upon the tenth (10th) absence for the year, either excused or unexcused, the child's administrator will contact the parent/guardian and arrange for a mandatory meeting with administration to come up with a plan to address the absenteeism.

If a student accumulates further absences for the year, and the parent or student is failing to follow the attendance plan developed with administration, the Vice-Principal or Principal will be obligated to involve the Department of Children and Families and/or the Juvenile Court by filing a CHINS or 51a as appropriate.

If a student accumulates twenty (20) absences for the year, administration will hold a mandatory meeting with the parent/guardian regarding possible grade retention.

Make-up Work:

Students will be given a reasonable number of days to make up work following an absence. The general time frame will be equal to the number of school days missed, unless prior arrangements are made with a teacher for an extra help session after school. For example, if a student is absent for three (3) consecutive days, they will have three (3) school days to make up the work missed for full credit. This rule will hold, unless a student has made prior arrangements to meet with a teacher after school to make up an assignment.

SC First Reading 10/28/10

SC Second Reading and Adoption 1/11/11

(Replaces JHA 6/15/2000 & JHAB 8/14/03)