

HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Board of Education recognizes that regular school attendance is a major component of academic success and the responsibility for educational success rests with the student, the parent, and the teacher. Teachers must motivate their students to participate, and curriculum must be interesting and relevant; however, good class attendance is an essential ingredient for learning to occur. Classroom lessons and participation foster social interaction, development of effective communication skills and critical thinking. Any absence from class is therefore detrimental to the learning process. This policy is intended to encourage full attendance by all students, limit the level of absences, tardiness, and early departures (referred to in this policy as “ATEDs”), maintain an adequate attendance recordkeeping system, identify patterns of student ATEDs, 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:

- The attendance policy will be included in student handbooks and will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year.
- Parents will receive a plain language summary of this policy by mail at the start of the school year.
- When a student is absent, tardy, or leaves early from class or school without excuse, or accumulates more than three absences in a marking period, designated staff member(s) will notify the student’s parent(s) by phone and/or 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.
- School newsletters and/or publications will include periodic reminders of the components of this policy.
- 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.

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- 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.

- Excused and Unexcused Absences

Excused ATEDs are defined as absences, tardiness, and early departures from class or school due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads or weather, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, or such other reasons as may be approved by the appropriate building administrator.

All other ATEDs are considered unexcused absences.

All ATEDs must be accounted for and absences made up (when permitted by this policy) if full credit is to be earned for a marking period. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school office within 24 hours of the ATED and to provide a written excuse upon the student's return to school.

General Procedures/Data Collection

- Parents should phone the school attendance office between the hours of 7:15 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. whenever a student is absent from school.
- Attendance will be taken during each class period.
- At the conclusion of each class period or school day, all attendance information shall be compiled and provided to the designated staff member(s) responsible for attendance.
- The nature of an ATED shall be coded on a student's record.
- Student ATED data shall be available to and should be reviewed by the designated school personnel in an expeditious manner.
- Where additional information is received that requires corrections to be made to a student's attendance records, such correction will be made immediately. Notice of such a change will be sent to appropriate school personnel subject to applicable confidentiality rules.
- Attendance data will be analyzed periodically to identify patterns or trends in student absences.
- Where consistent with other school practices, teachers and staff shall detain students in the hallways who are absent from a class period without excuse and refer the students to the Building Principal or the Principal's designee. Continuous monitoring will be conducted to identify students who are absent, tardy, or leave class or school early.

Attendance Incentives

The district will design and implement systems to acknowledge a student's efforts to maintain or improve school attendance. For example:

- Students with perfect attendance for a given year will receive a letter of recognition from the Superintendent of Schools. This letter will be awarded at the annual Awards Night program (or at a similar event) at the conclusion of each school year.
- Any student with perfect attendance for two years at the middle school or four years at the high school will receive special recognition at the school building level.
- At the building and classroom levels, Building Principals and teachers are encouraged to schedule significant classroom activities for days of chronically high absenteeism such as before and after school vacations. Among these activities are graded assignments, introduction of new material, or scheduled student presentations.
- At the classroom level, teachers are encouraged to assign special responsibilities (distribute and collect materials, lead groups, assist the teacher, etc.) to students who may need extra motivation to come to school.

Disciplinary Consequences

Unexcused ATEDs will result in disciplinary action consistent with the district's code of conduct. Those penalties may include, for example, detention or in-school suspension. Students may also be denied the privilege of participating in or attending extracurricular events.

In addition, designated staff member(s) will contact the student's parents and the student's guidance counselor. Such staff member(s) shall remind parents of the attendance policy, explain the ramifications of excessive ATEDs, stress the importance of class attendance and discuss appropriate intervention strategies to correct the situation.

In addition, the building principal will contact local Child Protective Services (CPS) if they suspect that the child is being educationally neglected. The building principal 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 building principal.

Attendance Grade Policy

The Board of Education recognizes an important relationship between class attendance and student performance. Consequently, each marking period a student's grade will be based on classroom participation as well as student's performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc.

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. All students with an excused ATED are expected upon their return to consult with their teachers regarding missed work. Consistent with the importance of classroom participation, unexcused ATEDs and unmade-up ATEDs will affect a student's class participation grade for the marking period.

In grades 9-12, a student who has more than five absences during any marking period will have 15 points (the value the district assigns for class participation) deducted from his/her computed marking period grade (based upon test and quiz scores, homeworks, papers, presentations, etc.). Students with properly excused ATEDs may make up the work for up to three full period absences per marking period. Made up ATEDs will not count as an accumulated absence toward the allowed five absences per marking period.

To ensure that parents and students are aware of the implications of this minimum attendance requirement for grades 9-12, the teacher will advise the student and a designated staff member will contact the parent(s) by telephone (when possible) and mail prior to the student reaching four ATEDs each marking period.

Only those students with excused ATEDs will be given the opportunity to make up a test or other missed work and/or turn in a late assignment for inclusion in their marking period grade. Make up opportunities must be completed by a date specified by the student's teacher (typically the last day of the week following the return to school) for the class in question.

The district continues to have a no-cut policy. Every unexcused absence will be followed by disciplinary action as outlined in the district Code of Conduct.

Three latenesses or early departures of 15 minutes or less will be considered a full period absence. Each lateness or early departure in excess of fifteen minutes will count as a full period absence.

Administrative Procedures and Appeals

Whenever a student's ATEDs may require the denial of class participation credit, these procedures will be in effect:

1. The attendance dean will advise the Principal or his/her designee of the student's ATED for the marking period and identify absences due to school sponsored trips and activities, pre-arranged guidance appointments, days of suspension and home teaching, senior college visitation days (maximum of three), and days of religious observance.
2. The Principal or designee will review these records and the student's cumulative record.
3. The Principal or designee will meet with the student to determine the nature of the ATEDs during the marking period.

4. The Principal or designee will advise the parent/guardian and request additional information regarding the ATEDs.
5. The Principal or designee will then make one of the following determinations:
 - a. No further action is required in that extenuating circumstances will allow for additional make-ups.
 - b. The student will be denied the 15 points for class participation.

Following notification to the parent of the school's determination, an appeal may be made to the Building Principal who will confer with appropriate personnel and render a final decision.

The Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education will act in their legal capacities to review any building-level administrative decisions.

Summer School

Due to the limited class time during summer school, students with more than three absences in any course will be denied credit for that course. Parents will be notified by phone (when possible) and/or mail following the second absence.

Additional Note – Physical Education

The attendance policy in physical education classes will continue as described in current administrative procedures.

Cross ref: 4316, Physical Education
4331, Summer School
4710, Grading Systems
5300, Code of Conduct
5460, Child Abuse in a Domestic Setting

Ref: Education Law §§1709; 3024; 3025; 3202; 3205-3213; 3225
8 NYCRR §§104.1; 175.6
Social Service Law §34-a

Middle School Attendance Policy

Philosophy

Each one of our students has the right to educational opportunities that enable them to grow and develop to his or her fullest potential. To aid in this development, and to maximize student success, the Bellmore-Merrick Board of Education, administration, faculty, and staff believe that we must work cooperatively with students, staff, and families to ensure that regular attendance is maintained. The purpose of an attendance policy is to encourage regular and consistent attendance and punctuality in school for all students and to help students develop responsibility and self-discipline. Regular attendance fosters a climate conducive to learning, preserves effective teaching, and ensures a quality education. There is a strong correlation between regular attendance, academic achievement and successful social development for students. It is recognized that successful implementation of this policy requires cooperation among all members of the educational community.

Absences

If a student is going to be absent from school, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to contact the attendance office on the day of the absence. Please make every effort to contact the attendance office no later than 8:45 a.m. the morning of the absence. Written acknowledgment of your child's absence with reason should be submitted no later than 24 hours after the student returns to school. Parents are also encouraged to contact their child's teachers and/or guidance counselor to obtain any work they may have missed.

Excused Absences

Illness with note from medical professional (AbEx), death in the family/bereavement (Bvmt), required court appearances (CTA), required medical appointment accompanied by appropriate documentation (Doc), religious observance (Rel), suspension (OSS), school sponsored field trip (FLD), other school sponsored activities (ACT), or home teaching (HT)

Unexcused Absences

Any absence not meeting the above requirements for excused absences shall be considered an unexcused absence (AbUn). Examples include but are not limited to vacation (VAC), illness without doctors note (AbUN), cutting class (Cut), truancy (AbUn).

Excessive Absences

- Five unexcused absences in a quarter will result in the loss of five points from the child's quarter grade for each course the student had the unexcused absence in.
- Each quarter a student will have the opportunity to complete one make-up assignment per class that will reduce the five absences to four. Any student who does not complete the assignment(s) or who subsequently reaches five unexcused absences will automatically have five points deducted from their quarter grade in that course. Students identified as excessively absent will meet with their grade level administrator and guidance counselor for a mandatory extra help schedule and/or a weekly progress report.

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- Excessive absences in a school year for eighth grade students may result in denial of course credit and promotion. Attendance at the *Bridge to High School* summer program may be required. Excessive absences for a seventh grade student may also result in retention of student at the discretion of the building administration.
- Appropriate legal supports such as a PINS petition and/or CPS referrals may be implemented by the designated school personnel and building administrator upon review of a pattern of poor attendance and/or lateness to school.

Student Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the student/parent to acquire missed assignments and/or check with their teachers for make-up assignments upon their return to school. Completion of missed work should be made up in a reasonable time and returned to the teacher. Students should be aware that excessive absences or tardiness may result in the revoking of privileges to participate in and attend extracurricular activities or special events, and impact student participation grades.

Lateness

Classroom instruction begins in the middle school at 7:56 a.m. Any student who is not in their assigned first period class by 7:56 is considered tardy to school. Any student tardy to school must report directly to the attendance office upon entering the building in order to get a late pass to class. Lateness to school is recorded as unexcused unless a valid note is presented in the attendance office on the day of the lateness. Please refer back to the list of excused absences to determine what would constitute a 'valid' note of excusal. Students must be present for at least 5 class periods in order to participate in extracurricular activities.

Excessive Lateness

Three unexcused latenesses will be considered a full period unexcused absence and will result in a disciplinary action. These penalties may include, lunch detention, after school detention, in-school suspension, and/or students being denied the privilege to participate in or attend extracurricular events.

Notification of Policy to Parents/Guardians and Staff

- The attendance policy will be included in student handbooks and will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year.
- Parents will receive a summary of this policy by mail at the start of each school year.
- The building administration will review this policy with parents at orientation upon entering middle school.
- 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 with the district.

Appeals Process

Should a parent/guardian believe that extenuating circumstances exist that warrant exemption from this policy, a written letter of appeal in regard to loss of points and/or denial of course credit can be submitted directly to the grade level administrator and/or building principal within a week of parent/guardian notification.