

BLOOMFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Bloomfield, Connecticut

BOARD POLICY

No. 5113.2(a)

**RE: Attendance, Excused Absences, and Truancy
Students**

Approved: 11/12/2002

Revised: 3/8/2016

Revised: 11/14/2017

Revised: 4/2/2019

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. The responsibility for regular attendance rests with the students' parents, guardians or with the students themselves when they become of legal age.

In order for students to develop to their full potential, the Board of Education deems it essential that students attend school on a regular basis. The learning experiences that occur in the classroom are considered to be meaningful and essential components of the learning process. Time lost from class tends to be irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instructional interaction.

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.

Excused Absence

The Board believes a student should not be absent from school without the parents' knowledge and consent, therefore verification of an absence should be in writing by parent or guardian.

For absences one through nine, an absence shall be considered "excused" when a child does not attend school and appropriate documentation is provided by the student's parent/guardian approving the absence, due to:

- A. Illness or injury,
- B. Death in the immediate family,
- C. Religious obligation,
- D. Court appearance,
- E. School sponsored activity,
- F. Lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the students attends, (This reason does not require documentation.)
- G. An emergency, or
- H. Other exceptional circumstances and extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by a District administrator and in accordance with SDE guidelines. Written excuse for such absences should be submitted to school officials by the child's parent or guardian. All other absences with or without written explanation shall be considered unexcused.

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For the tenth absence and all others thereafter, the same reasons cited above shall constitute “excused” absences. Documentation by a medical professional is required for illness, regardless of the length of the absence once the tenth absence is recorded.

Unexcused Absence

Board policy with respect to unexcused absences stresses prevention and inquiry leading to remediation of absences. The schools will make all reasonable efforts to keep parents and students informed as to attendance problems and will make all reasonable efforts to help students improve their attendance when such improvement is warranted. Only when all local resources are exhausted is referral to legal authorities recommended.

A student’s absence from school shall be considered “unexcused” unless the absence meets the definitions, listed above, for an “excused” absence, including the documentation requirements; or if the absence is the result of school or District disciplinary action.

Release of Student During School Day

The Board recognizes the need for students to be in school for the full instructional day. It is encouraged that early dismissal should be requested only in emergency or unusual situations.

Request for release of a student during the school day originating outside the schools must be handled by the administration to ensure maximum provisions for the safety and welfare of the student.

Dismissal before the normal end of the school day must be requested in writing.

Students who become ill during the school day may be excused by the school nurse, and transportation home will be arranged by school personnel.

Truancy

The Board of Education must provide each child with a continuing education which will prepare the student to assume adult roles and responsibilities. Therefore, regular attendance and punctuality are expected from all children enrolled in our schools. By statute, responsibility for assuring that students attend school rests with the parent(s) or other person having control of the child. Every effort must be made to keep absences and tardiness to a minimum. To assist parent(s) and others in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education has developed the following procedures regarding students ages five (5) to eighteen (18) inclusive.

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1. Annually notify parents or other person having control of each child enrolled, ages five (5) to eighteen (18), inclusive in writing of the obligations of the parent pursuant to student attendance (C.G.S. 10-184).
2. Obtain from each parent or other persons having control of an enrolled child a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.
3. Establish a system for monitoring student's individual absences/tardies.
4. Notify, by telephone and by mail the parent(s) or other such person(s) whenever a child 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 is aware of the student's absence.

The required mailed 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 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.

5. Identify a student as "truant" when the student has four (4) unexcused absences in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in any school year.
6. Hold a meeting with appropriate staff and the parent or other person having control of the child identified as a "truant" within ten (10) days of such designation to review the reasons for the truant behavior and to evaluate the situation.
7. Referral will be made to the PPT to determine whether or not an educational evaluation is appropriate, prior to filing a written complaint with the Superior Court.

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8. Provide for the coordination of services and refer enrolled students who are truants or to community agencies providing child and family services.

A student who is identified as a "truant" may be subject to the following consequences:

- a. Promotion to the next grade may be contingent upon the student successfully completing a summer school program
- b. The student may be retained in the same grade in order to acquire the skills necessary for promotion to the next grade level

Persons who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to subdivision (4) above, shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.

The board, on or before 8/15/18, shall implement a truancy intervention model identified by the state department of education (SDE) for any school within the district that has a disproportionately high rate of truancy, as determined by the commission of education.

Chronic Absenteeism

As used in this section, the following definitions are applicable:

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 per cent 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.

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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:

1. A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
2. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
3. 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.

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, chronically absent children, parents or guardians of chronically absent children, and representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants.

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 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 when it becomes available. (SDE to develop by 1/1/16.)

The District shall annually include in information for the strategic school profile report for each school and the District that submitted to the Commissioner of Education, data pertaining to truancy and chronically absent children.

The principal or his/her designee of any elementary or middle school located in a town/city designated as an alliance district may refer to the children's truancy clinic established by the Probate Court serving the town/city, a parent/guardian with a child defined as a truant or who is at risk of becoming a truant. (An attendance officer or a police officer shall deliver the citation and summons and a copy of the referral to the parent/guardian.)

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Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157 AND PA 18-15)
10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157 and PA 11-136)
10-198b State board of education to define “excused absence,” “unexcused absence,” and “disciplinary absences”
10-198c Attendance Review teams (as amended by pa 17-14 and pa 18-182)
10-198d Chronic absenteeism
10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised 1995 - PA 95-304)
45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by pa 15-225)
10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)
10-202e-f Policy on dropout prevention and grant program.
10-221(b) Board of education to prescribe rules.
Campbell v New Milford, 193 Conn 93 (1984).
Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define “attendance.”
Action taken by the State Board of Education on June 27, 2012 to define “excused” and “unexcused” absences.