

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

In order for the Norwood Board of Education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each pupil, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and pupils is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of pupils from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of pupils to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully.

A pupil must be in attendance for 160 or more school days in order to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which he/she is assigned.

A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon recommendation of a review committee, appointed by him/her, and consisting of representative staff, including pupil service personnel and classroom teachers.

In recommending the granting of a waiver of this attendance requirement, the review committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess of the 20 days. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the pupil and parent/guardian.

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a child will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence.

Truancy

The board will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of pupils below the age of 15.

It shall be the policy of the board to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness to his/her needs of the educational program that is offered each pupil who is habitually and repeatedly absent from his/her assigned program and to consult with the child study team for its recommendations.

Excused Absences

The board considers the following as cause for excused absence:

- A. Disabling illness
- B. Recovery from accident
- C. Required court attendance
- D. Death in the family
- E. Religious observance--In accordance with statute, no pupil absent for religious observance of a day recognized by the Commissioner of Education or this board of education shall be charged with an unexcused absence, deprived of an award or eligibility/opportunity to compete for an award, or of the right to take an alternate to a test or examination missed through such absence.
- F. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal

Attendance need not always be within the school facilities. A pupil will be considered to be in attendance if he/she is present at any place where school is in session by authority of the board. The board shall consider each pupil assigned to a program of independent study, with parent/guardian permission, to be in regular attendance for that program, provided that he/she is under the guidance of a staff member so assigned, reports daily or weekly, as prescribed, to such staff member the place in which he/she is conducting his/her study, and regularly demonstrates progress toward the objectives of his/her course of study.

Regular Release of Pupils Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations which may justify release of certain pupils from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the pupil's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the pupil.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a pupil be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day.

As agent responsible for the education of the children of this district, the board shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the pupil's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- B. Medical disability;
- C. Family emergency;
- D. Court appearance;
- E. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

No pupil in grades kindergarten through eight shall be permitted to leave the school before the close of the school day unless he/she is met in the school office by his/her parent/guardian or a person authorized by the parent/guardian to act in his/her behalf.

Potentially Missing Children

- A. If daily attendance records indicate a child is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact them.
- B. If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance officer shall investigate.
- C. If the attendance officer cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the appropriate local authorities.
- D. If a child who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

Marking Missing Child's School Record

Whenever the Chief School Administrator receives notice from the Missing Persons Unit that a child has been reported missing, he/she shall mark the child's records in such a way that whenever a copy of or information regarding the record is requested, district personnel will be aware that the record is that of a missing child. If a copy of a marked school record is requested, the Chief School Administrator shall supply the record to the requestor without alerting him/her to the fact that the record has been marked, according to provisions in code and statute on accessing pupil records (see policy 5125 Pupil records). After the Chief School Administrator has complied with the request for copies of records or information, he/she shall immediately report the inquiry or any knowledge as to the whereabouts of the missing child to the Missing Persons Unit.

Regulations

The Chief School Administrator shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

- A. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
- B. Identify potentially missing and/or abused pupils;
- C. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board, including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- D. Impose on truant pupils such disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations, but no such penalty may have an irredeemable negative effect on the pupil's record of achievement beyond that which naturally follows his/her absence from school activities;
- E. Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of his/her behavior, and consider modification of his/her educational program to meet his/her particular needs and interests;
- F. Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
- G. Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
- H. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Date: November 11, 1985
Revised: June 29, 2009

Legal References:

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| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1 | General mandatory powers and duties |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:35-4.9 | Pupil promotion and remediation; policies and procedures |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-14, -15, -16 | Religious holidays; absence of pupils on; effect ... |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-19a | Newly enrolled students; records and identification |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-24 | |
| through -26 | Missing children; legislative findings and declarations ... |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-25 | Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-26 | Days when attendance required; exceptions |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-27 | Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-31 | Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-32 | District and county vocational school attendance officers |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-7 | Exclusion of pupils who are ill |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-8 | Exclusion of pupils whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-9 | Failure of parent to remove cause for exclusion; penalty |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-10 | Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-11 | Exclusion of pupils having communicable tuberculosis |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-12 | Closing schools during epidemic |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:46-16, -17 | Exclusion of pupils pending examination and classification ... |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:54-20 | Powers of board (county vocational schools) |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 52:17B-9.8a | |
| through -9.8c | Marking of missing child's school record |
| <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:3-9.1 <u>et seq.</u> | Attendance and Pupil Accounting |
| <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:8-3.1 | Pupil attendance |
| <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:8-5.1 | Graduation requirements |
| <u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:30-1.1 <u>et seq.</u> | Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts |

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794

Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851

C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)

Manual for the Evaluation of Local School Districts (September 2002)

Cross References:

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| 5020 | Role of parents/guardians |
| 5111 | Admission |
| 5114 | Suspension and expulsion |
| 5124 | Reporting to parents/guardians |
| 5125 | Pupil records |
| 5141.2 | Illness |
| 5141.4 | Child abuse and neglect |
| 5142 | Pupil safety |
| 6146 | Graduation requirements |
| 6146.2 | Promotion/retention |
| 6147 | Standards of proficiency |
| 6147.1 | Evaluation of individual student performance |
| 6154 | Homework/makeup work |
| 6171.4 | Special education |
| 6173 | Home instruction |

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Excusable Absences

See this policy for details.

Guidelines for Violation of the Attendance Laws

1. Daily, the nurse's office will verify all student absences with direct telephone calls to the parents/guardians. Parents are requested to call 201-768-6363, x235 whenever a child will be absent to inform the school of the occurrence and its cause.
2. All children returning from any absence are required to present their homeroom teacher with a note explaining the absence.
3. If the child has been home due to illness, he/she must be fever and/or vomiting free for 24 hours before returning to school.
4. After 3 days of consecutive absence, without a parent or guardian notification to the school nurse or pupil's teacher, the school nurse will contact the family to clarify the lack of communication as to the nature of the absence.
5. After 5 days of consecutive absence, due to illness, a physician's note may be required.
6. After 10 days of non-consecutive absence during a single marking period, a physician's note may be required.
7. If compliance with #5 and #6 is not forthcoming, a parent/guardian conference with the principal and attendance officer is required. Review of the importance of attendance will be discussed along with a review of the Compulsory Attendance Law. Written notice of the legal obligation of the parents/guardians to assure the pupil's attendance will be presented to the parents/guardians.
8. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) fail to comply with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18a:-25, he/she shall be deemed a disorderly person(s) by the Attendance Officer and shall be subject to a fine as dictated by law and at the discretion of the Court.

Potentially Missing Children

- Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a child will be absent.
- If daily attendance records indicate a child is absent, and the parents/guardians have neither called nor been reached by school staff, a designated person will make one additional attempt to reach the parent via contact information on the Emergency Card.
- If such outreach fails to link up with the parent/guardian and the child is still not located in the school building or on school grounds, the Principal shall be immediately informed.
- The Principal shall alert the appropriate local authorities (see exhibit of report to the Chief of Police).

- If a child who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

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- A. Justifiable reasons may include:
 - 1) Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours.
 - 2) Medical disability
 - 3) Family emergency
 - 4) Court appearance
- B. Accountability for unexcused tardiness will begin with homeroom teachers who will use the daily attendance folder to notify the following designated staff for follow through:
 - 1) At the third lateness, **the homeroom teachers** shall contact the parent to alert them to the absences.
 - 2) At the fifth lateness, **the school nurse** will speak to the student (commencing at the third grade level) and send a letter home to the parent.
 - 3) At the eighth lateness, **the nurse** will call the parent to discuss the emerging pattern of absences. A second letter will be sent confirming the conversation and pointing towards reduction in future absences.
 - 4) At the tenth lateness, **the attendance officer will inform the appropriate guidance counselor** who will receive data and will confer with the student and parents to define the cause(s) of the pattern, to design an action-plan with all parties signing off to show their commitment. A copy of the plan will be sent to the parents, the homeroom teacher, and the principal. (*If the student is classified, the case manager will fill this role.*)
 - 5) For patterns that are unresolved, the **counselors (or case manager)** will monitor the action-plan and discuss consequences with the principal. Where the problem is deemed as centered on the child, consequences will be differentiated K-4 and 5-8.
 - ✓ In grades K-4, the counselor will tend to focus more on the family issues, involving a guidance-oriented approach to improve arriving at school on time each day. In some cases, a student may incur a disciplinary consequence such as the loss of recess time for each tardy arrival.
 - ✓ In grades 5-8, the counselor will also involve a guidance-oriented approach to improve arriving at school on time each day. However, he/she will tend to focus more on individual responsibility with increasing expectations as the student grows older each year. In many cases, a student may incur a disciplinary consequence such as the loss of recess time for each tardy arrival.

- 6) If the repeated consequences fail to rectify the situation, the principal and all parties involved will have a problem-solving session with the parents to revise the original action-plan. If the problem is still deemed to center on the student, the district Code of Conduct will be applied (i.e., section V. "Consequences for Negative Behavior – Formal Procedures").
- 7) If the principal perceives the situation is unresolved and/or potential for legal action on the part of the district, the **Chief School Administrator** shall become involved.

At any of the above stages, all staff shall adhere to laws and policies re suspected child abuse and neglect. This requirement may involve contacting the Department of Family services. If deemed appropriate, staff shall notify administration of the need for a possible referral to the Child Study Team. Administration may need to contact the Family Crisis Center or to pursue disciplinary sanctions under the compulsory education law.

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed above shall be cumulative, and may affect academic progress and report card grades.

Exemplary Attendance

Perfect attendance shall be acknowledged at an end-of-year assembly for the upper grades. Pupils in all grades who attain a perfect attendance record (no absences or lateness) shall be awarded a certificate of excellence at the close of the school year.

Date: April 24, 1989
Revised: June 29, 2009

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

TO: Norwood Chief of Police
FROM: Principal, Norwood Public School District
RE: **REPORT OF A POTENTIALLY MISSING CHILD**
DATE: _____

School districts are mandated to notify local police departments of potentially missing children.

This notification is being given for the reason checked below:

- Student did not report to school today, parent/guardian has not confirmed an absence, and the student cannot be located at this time.
- Student reported to school this morning but was found to be missing at: _____
- Student has been absent for five consecutive days and cannot be located.
- Student's parent/guardian has withdrawn student from school during the school term and the Norwood Public School District has not received an official request for the student's records from another school within 15 school days.
- Student's parent/guardian withdrew student at the end of a school term and this school has not received an official request for the student's records from another school within 60 calendar days.

This notification pertains to:

Student's Name

Norwood Address

Date of Birth

Date Last Attended this School

Principal's Signature: _____, Date: _____

cc: Chief School Administrator
Student's File