

Woonsocket Education Department

School Attendance Policy – P4–16

Purpose: The Woonsocket School Committee believes that school attendance and active participation in class are critical to academic and social success at all levels and are extremely important components of the teaching and learning processes. Students who attend school regularly are more successful academically, socially and emotionally and are more likely to attend post-secondary schools and less likely to drop out of school. The Woonsocket School Committee seeks to ensure that every student attends school every day and on time. Further, the Woonsocket School Committee seeks to provide immediate action and/or interventions for students who are demonstrating patterns of excessive absences.

Attendance: Attendance is mandated by Rhode Island General Laws 16-19-1. Regular attendance is absolutely necessary for academic success as it develops a sense of responsibility which is critical for success in the workplace.

Cumulatively, absences will be tallied from excused and unexcused absences.

Definitions of Excused Absence: Excused absences occur when a student is not present at school or at a school-endorsed activity, but is temporarily excused. All students must present written documentation detailing the reason(s) for any absence, in advance when possible, but no later than 48 hours after returning to school.

Excused Absences:

Acceptable Excused Absences are those due to:

- Absence from class due to out-of-school suspension;
- Documented student illness (students who are seriously or chronically ill or are ill for an extended period should be seen by a physician);
- Dental appointments confirmed by a dentist's note;
- Dismissal by school nurse;
- Death in the family/family emergency;
- Regularly observed religious holiday;
- Documented court appearance;
- Academic field trip resulting in missed classes (WMS, WHS, WACTC);
- Co-Curricular activities resulting in missed classes (WHS, WACTC);
- Staff generated pass (WHS, WACTC);
- Military obligations (WHS, WACTC);
- Exceptional circumstances deemed appropriate by building principal; and
- Verifiable college and military appointments.

Family Travel/Vacation:

When possible, family vacations should be scheduled during times in which school is not in session. Absences due to family vacation will be considered unexcused.

We recognize that there are instances when parents will remove their students from classes for a short period of time. It is important to note that much of the learning opportunities the student will miss are directly connected to classroom activities. Thus, the completion of a worksheet or similar type assignment may not afford a student the optimal learning experience. Therefore, vacations when school is in session are strongly discouraged. Days missed due to a vacation are considered unexcused absences. In the case of a student being on a vacation or family trip, parents should contact the guidance office in advance and complete an Unexcused Vacation Form. Additionally, parents should inform their child's teachers so the child may complete appropriate work within a reasonable time period when they return from vacation.

Unexcused Absences:

Definition of Unexcused Absence: An unexcused absence occurs when a student is not present at school or at school endorsed activity without acceptable cause. Any absence for reasons not included in the list of excused absence absences above will be considered unexcused. When possible, family vacations should be scheduled during times in which school is not in session. Absences due to family vacation will be considered unexcused.

Tardy:

A student will be considered tardy when he/she enters the school building after the designated arrival time or when a secondary (middle school/high school) student enters a class after the designated start time. Lateness or tardiness will only be excused for any of the reasons listed under excused absences.

Class Absence:

A student will be considered as being absent from a class at the secondary (middle school/high school) level if the student arrives tardy for 15 minutes or more without a valid excuse.

Attendance Review:

The School Leadership Team at each school is comprised of a group of staff and administrators who will, on a monthly basis, review students' attendance and will identify students who are in violation of the attendance policy.

Truancy:

A student is considered Truant when the student and/or the student's parent/guardian purposely keeps the student away from school without a valid excuse as defined above.

Non-Attendees:

If any student enrolled in the Woonsocket Public School System has not attended school (or whose parent/guardian has not contacted the school to make status known) after a period of ten (10) consecutive days in session, the school will:

- Make a documented phone call to the student's home;
- If there is no response, a letter will be sent home;
- If no response, the Attendance Officer will be directed to visit the last known address; and
- Lastly, a certified letter confirming the removal of the student.

**If a child who has been withdrawn from enrollment under the subsection returns to school, or if the school mistakenly withdraws the child from enrollment, the child shall promptly be re-enrolled.

Interventions:

Research on school attendance clearly highlights the critical importance of schools, parents and students working together early in the child's academic career to develop habits of regular attendance and the development of the work ethic and senses of personal responsibility and accountability necessary for academic and life successes. This work must begin early and those students who successfully engage in school from the start are far more likely to graduate high school, attend college or be successfully employed and contribute to society.

Incentives:

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

Students who have demonstrated improved attendance may receive rewards that could include certificates, awards, special activities, and/or school-wide recognition.

Opportunities for support and intervention:

The district will provide ongoing support and interventions in order to promote students' continuous enrollment and success. To that end, whenever possible the school will notify parents when a student's absences exceed five (5) in a calendar month. Additionally, an Attendance Review Committee will be formed and will meet at minimum once per month to review students' attendance. Appeal Process: Students (or parent/guardian) who feel aggrieved because of action taken as a result of any section of this policy may appeal said action to the Attendance Review Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Superintendent of Schools and the Woonsocket School Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Rhode Island Department of Education in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders:

- The responsibility for attendance and academic success is shared by students, parents, schools, and the district.

Student Responsibilities:

- To attend school in compliance with the Rhode Island compulsory attendance law;
- To attend school/assigned class every day that school is in session;
- To be on time to every class, prepared for rigorous academic work;
- To know and adhere to the school's attendance policies and procedures; and
- To make up any missed assignment due to absences and to complete work as assigned by the teacher.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:

- To require that their child attend school regularly and comply with the Rhode Island Compulsory Attendance Laws;
- To know and adhere to the school's attendance policies and procedures;
- To recognize that any absence has a detrimental influence on their child's academic achievement;
- To contact the school when their child is absent by the acceptable method as adopted by the school;
- To provide a note indicating the reason for absence(s). This note should specify the date(s) their child was absent and must be received in the main office within 48 hours of their child's return to school); and
- To work collaboratively with the school to solve any attendance problems. Always provide the school with an accurate and up to date daytime telephone number where they can be reached.

Teacher Responsibilities:

- To take daily attendance, period by period, and to maintain accurate attendance records for each assigned class;
- To clearly communicate attendance policy and make-up procedures to all students;
- To document and report any attendance problem to the principal/designee or attendance team; and
- To work collaboratively with principal, parent/guardian, attendance team, and students to solve attendance problem.

Principal (or Designee) Responsibilities:

- To administer and supervise the attendance policies and procedures;
- To assist and support teachers with the implementation of attendance policies and procedures;
- To inform parents, students, and school staff about district attendance policies and procedures;
- To establish and implement an attendance team to address all attendance problems;
- To maintain accurate records on student attendance;
- To inform students' parents/guardians of their child's absences once the student has had six (6) unexcused absences;
- To inform students and parents of the consequences for absences;
- To work cooperatively with the student, parents/guardians, and attendance team to resolve attendance problems;
- To provide a copy of attendance policies and procedures to students and parents/guardians once a year; and
- To create incentives and rewards recognizing students who have exemplary class attendance.

District Responsibilities:

- Recording, tracking and investigating attendance and attendance issues;
- Reporting of student attendance information to state and federal authorities in accordance with state and federal law, mandates and school department regulations;
- Establishing a system of criteria, consequences and referral for investigating and addressing excessive absences, truancy, tardiness and dismissals and the failure to notify the school of the reason for the absence/tardiness/dismissal; and
- Establishing guidelines that provide reasonable opportunity for the student to make up work.

**ELEMENTARY
School Day Start and Ending Time**

**Bernon, Savoie, Governor Pothier, and Citizens' Elementary Schools
Grades K-5 (8:45 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.)**

**Coleman, Globe and Harris Elementary Schools
Grades K-5 (9:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.)**

1. All absences and tardies are recorded and reported as unexcused until notification of a valid excuse is made to the main office of the school. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the school of the student's absence prior to the start of school on the first day of the absence(s). Written documentation is required detailing the reason(s) for any absence, in advance when possible but no later than 48 hours after returning to school.

2. After a student has accumulated six (6) unexcused absences and/or tardies, a telephone call may be made to the parent/guardian requesting an explanation. The Principal may review the explanation and determine what steps, if any, are necessary for follow up.
3. Following twelve (12) and eighteen (18) cumulative unexcused absences or tardies, the principal or assigned designee will contact the Attendance Officer.
4. Parents/guardians will be notified, in writing, if unexcused absences have put the student in danger of non-promotion.

Early Dismissals:

Early dismissals from school are discouraged as they take away from valuable instructional time. Written permission from a parent or guardian is encouraged in order to have a student dismissed from school. The parent or an authorized designated adult must come to the school office to pick up their child. Since missing school affects a student's work, we recommend appointments be made whenever possible after school. Students should bring written notification to their teacher at the beginning of the school day.

Missed Assignments:

Students to arrange for make-up work in a timely manner.

MIDDLE SCHOOL
Hamlet and Villa Nova Middle Schools
7:25 a.m. - 1:50 p.m.

1. All absences and tardies are recorded and reported as unexcused until notification of a valid excuse is made to the main office of the school. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the school of the student's absence prior to the start of school on the first day of the absence(s). Written documentation is required detailing the reason(s) for any absence, in advance when possible but no later than 48 hours after returning to school.
2. After a student has accumulated six (6) unexcused absences and/or tardies, a telephone call may be made to the parent/guardian requesting an explanation. The Principal may review the explanation and determine what steps, if any, are necessary for follow up.
3. Following twelve (12) and eighteen (18) cumulative unexcused absences or tardies, the principal or assigned designee will contact the Attendance Officer.
4. Parents/guardians will be notified, in writing, if unexcused absences have put the student in danger of non-promotion.

Early Dismissal:

Early dismissals from school are discouraged as they take away from valuable instructional time. Requests for the early dismissal of a student will be granted only for business that cannot be conducted outside of the normal school day. In the event a student needs to leave school early for an appointment, he/she must bring a note from the parent to the front office in exchange for a pass at the specific time to return to the main office. The note should include the student's full name, the name of the student's team, and the time they are to be released. The parent must come to the main office, present a license or government photo-ID and sign the student out.

Missed Assignments:

Students to arrange for make-up work in a timely manner.

Appeal Process:

Students (or parent/guardian) who feel aggrieved because of action taken as a result of any section of this policy may appeal said action to the Superintendent of Schools and the Woonsocket School Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Rhode Island Department of Education in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws.

HIGH SCHOOL
Woonsocket High School
8:00 a.m. - 2:15 p.m.

A student is expected and required to attend school and classes each day school is in session unless he/she has a reason that qualifies for an excused absence. The following list contains the rules and expectations for students:

1. Students who are absent or suspended will not be allowed to participate/attend any school activity during the period of absence or in the case of suspension, until official reinstatement to school with a parents.
2. Family vacations during school time will not be considered excused.
3. Excessive tardiness to school is unacceptable. Students who accumulate between 6-10 unexcused tardies per semester will receive detention for each. A parent conference may be requested should excessive tardiness become a serious or chronic problem. On the 11th tardy to school, students will be placed in the Intervention Support Services and must return to school with a parent or guardian. All additional unexcused tardies will result in disciplinary consequences. All notes must be submitted on the day the student is tardy.
It is impossible to anticipate all excuses for lateness. For this reason the administration reserves its professional right to deal with unique circumstances in a manner which is not fully outlined or described in this policy.
4. A student who arrives tardy to class by 15 minutes or more, regardless of the class, will be considered to be absent from that class.
5. Students who are intentionally late to school will be considered truant.
6. Students tardy after 11:00 am are ineligible to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities on that day. Should the tardiness occur on the last day before a weekend or vacation, the student will be ineligible to participate in any events over the weekend or the vacation.
7. Students with an unexcused dismissal or unexcused absence from school are ineligible to participate in or attend athletics or extra-curricular activities on that day or the ensuing weekend should it occur on the day before a weekend.
8. The classroom teacher will assign a disciplinary consequence to students who are tardy to class without an acceptable or verifiable reason.

9. Students who miss a class period or an entire day of school without permission will be considered truant. All students who are determined to be truant will be subject to corrective action.
10. Students may be dismissed from school with a parental note for medical purposes or with verifiable documentation by a doctor, dentist, legal obligation, etc.
11. Absence Notes - Parents - The district does accept a parental note of absence for illness as an excused absence if the note is received within two (2) school days following the student's return from the absence.
12. Medical Notes - Medical notes must be original notes or a fax from a doctor's office only. Parents/students are responsible for submitting medical notes to the Main Office within two (2) school days from the student's return to school.

*WSC Approved 1st Passage on: May 25, 2010
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