

Students

Attendance and Excuses

This policy, and the accompanying administrative regulation, set forth Weston Public Schools' expectations and requirements with regard to absences and tardiness of students. The provisions of Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulation 5113.2, Student Attendance and Truancy, govern the Board of Education's compliance with the provisions of state law concerning truancy.

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 Board of Education recognizes that learning in the classroom is an integral and essential part of a student's total learning process. 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, such as:

1. The teacher explains, interprets and adds to the information given in textbooks and other sources.
2. Certain classroom activities such as discussions, media presentations, and speakers, can never be made up.
3. The student has a responsibility to participate in the class learning process and to contribute on the basis of his/her questions and comments.
4. Learning to function and interact as a responsible member in a group situation is a vital part of the student's educational experience.

Therefore, a student's enrollment in a course is his/her commitment to attend all class periods. No student shall be absent from or tardy to class without an acceptable reason. The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child. A student should not be absent from school without the parent's knowledge and consent. Verification of absences should be made by the parent or guardian.

Board policy with respect to unexcused absences stresses prevention and inquiry leading to remediation of absences rather than imposition of punitive measures. Only when all local resources are exhausted is referral to legal authorities recommended. Excessive and unauthorized absences and tardiness shall incur appropriate administrative action including but not limited to loss of credit. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Board will comply with the requirements of state law concerning the reporting of truancy (See Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulations 5113.2).

An absence shall be considered “excused” when a child does not attend school due to illness or injury, death in the family, religious holiday, an emergency beyond the control of the student’s family, or other circumstances described in the Administrative Regulations. School officials may request parents to verify health-related absences via an appropriately licensed medical professional’s note when the duration or frequency of absence, or the severity of the illness, has education or safety implications for the school community. School officials may also request verification of a claimed health-related absence via an appropriately licensed medical professional’s note when the school officials have reason to believe that the student’s absence is due to reasons other than as stated in this paragraph. An appropriately licensed medical professional’s note provided pursuant to this paragraph must state that the student is required to be absent from school for either the entire day or for a portion of the day. All other absences shall be considered unexcused.

Request for Release of Student During the School Day

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

Early dismissal should be requested only in emergency or unusual situations.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220, Duties of boards of education

Conn. Gen. Stat 10-221(b), Boards of education to prescribe rules

Conn. Gen. Stat., 10-184, Duties of parents

Campbell v New Milford, 193 Conn 93 (1984)

Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-186, Duties of boards of education re attendance

Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-198a, Policies and procedures concerning truants

Connecticut State Board of Education Memorandum, *Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences* (June 27, 2012)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention* (April 2013)

Policy References:

Board of Education Policy 5113.2, Attendance and truancy

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June 16, 2014

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Weston, Connecticut

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Students

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Absences

This regulation, and Board of Education Policy 5113, set forth Weston Public Schools' expectations and requirements with regard to absences and tardiness of students. The provisions of Board of Education Policy and Administrative Regulation 5113.2, Student Attendance and Truancy, govern the Board of Education's compliance with the provisions of state law concerning truancy.

If absence from school is to be considered excused, a principal or teacher may require a satisfactory explanation from the parent or guardian of a student, by telephone, in person, or by written note. The administration will determine where absences are excused or unexcused.

Legislation mandates school attendance, so it is up to the school to decide what will or will not constitute an excused absence. The school administration makes final determination of excused absences.

Class time and learning experiences lost for whatever reason have a direct and negative effect on the student's education.

Excused Absences*

1. Illness or injury of the student.
2. Funeral or death in the family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family.
3. Serious illness of a member of the family which necessitates the absence of the student.
4. Medical appointment that cannot be scheduled outside of regular school hours.
5. College interviews or visits (not permitted during midterm or final examination days).
6. Religious holiday.
7. Mandatory court appearance.
8. Such other absences which have had prior approval of the principal. Students who plan to be absent for reasons other than those listed above, should seek approval by presenting a note from home to the principal who will then indicate approval or disapproval.
9. Lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than Weston Public Schools.
10. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by the district administration and in accordance with Connecticut State Department guidance, Board policies, and administrative regulations
11. Such other exceptional circumstances as approved by the principal.

Students that are absent from class for a non-school related reason may not be present in the school building during that period. The responsibility for the make-up of work lies with the student, not the teacher.

* An excused absence for the purpose of this regulation may be different than an excused absence for the purpose of determining whether a student is truant under state law. Please see Board Policy and Administrative Regulation 5113.2, Student Attendance and Truancy.

School Required Absences

With prior notification, absences required by the school, such as curricular field trips, interscholastic contests, and suspension will be acceptable for excused absences and are excluded from consideration in the enforcement of the attendance policy.

Unverified Absences

When students are absent and no reason was reported by a parent or guardian, the absence will be considered unverified. Any absence that remains unverified on the eleventh school day after the student's return to school ("Verification Period") will be recorded as an unexcused absence. After the Verification Period, no changes will be made to the status of the absence.

Make-Up Work

All make-up work will be completed within twice the number of school days of absence when the student returns to school. A building administrator may authorize an amended make-up deadline. Whether or not students are given an opportunity to make up work missed as a result of an unexcused absence, or to receive credit for work missed as a result of an unexcused absence, will be at the discretion of the principal or his/her designee in consultation with the teacher(s) and school counselor. It is the student's responsibility to complete all make-up work.

Student Attendance Responsibility

The student has the responsibility to have his/her parent or guardian call the school on the morning of a legitimate absence or submit a parental excuse note to the attendance office.

A student should report to the health office if he/she becomes ill during the school day. Students are not allowed to leave campus without permission of the school nurse or school administrator. If a student leaves without the authorization of the nurse or school administrator, the absence will be considered unexcused, and the student will face disciplinary consequences as determined by the school administration.

Proper parental notification must be provided to the school if there is a need to be dismissed early.

Parents

Parents or guardians are responsible for calling the attendance office in the morning to report absence or tardiness, and reason for the absence or tardiness. If no call has been received and a student is absent, the school will call home. Appointments for medical, dental, etc. should be scheduled after school hours. Prior notification of student's absence should be submitted whenever possible. (See also Unverified Absences above).

Teachers' Responsibility

Teachers are to maintain accurate daily attendance records and report cumulative absences.

It is the administration's responsibility to follow through on all unexcused absences and determine and exercise appropriate consequences for those unexcused absences.

It is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that teachers accurately record student attendance in the student information system so that parents or guardians have access to their child's attendance records in a timely manner.

Consequences for Unexcused Absences at the High School

- I. For the first unexcused absence in a school year, an administrator will communicate a warning to the student.
- II. For the second and third unexcused absences in a school year, the student will be assigned a detention and the student's parents or guardians will be notified.
- III. For the fourth unexcused absence in a school year, and for subsequent absences, students will be subject to more severe disciplinary consequences as determined by the school administration. Consequences may include suspension from school. The student may also be subject to other disciplinary measures including, but not limited to, loss of privileges (open campus, parking, etc.) and removal from co-curricular activities. Students will be referred to the student assistance team and a parent conference(s) may be scheduled.
- IV. In severe circumstances, repeated unexcused absences in any single course may result in the student being withdrawn from the course(s) with a failing grade. For the purposes of I, II, and III above, an unexcused absence shall be defined as an absence during a single class period. Students who have multiple unexcused absences on a single day will receive consequences as stated in II and III above as appropriate. Each class absence will be treated as a new occurrence.
- V. The decision of the principal regarding discipline imposed under the Policy and Administrative Regulations is final.

Consequences for Unexcused Absences at the Middle School and Elementary Schools

- I. Consequences will be determined by the school building administrators in their discretion and as permitted by law.
- II. The decision of a principal regarding discipline imposed under the Policy and Administrative Regulations is final.

Tardiness to Class

Continued tardiness on the part of any student will be viewed as a very serious matter. Promptness to class is extremely important. Students are expected to be in their place, ready for work, at the bell.

Tardiness at the High School

- I. For each accumulation of three (3) tardies in the same class, the teacher will assign the student a one-hour detention. Teachers may also enforce their own classroom tardy policy in addition to this consequence.
- II. Students arriving more than ten (10) minutes after a class begins will be marked absent for that period. The absence will be unexcused for the purposes of this regulation unless the student was tardy due to one of the reasons for an “excused absence” as defined herein.
- III. Students who accumulate more than six (6) tardies may be referred to an administrator who will determine the appropriate disciplinary consequences. Consequences may include, but not be limited to, loss of privileges (parking, open campus, etc.) and extended detention.
- IV. The decision of a principal regarding discipline imposed under the Policy and Administrative Regulations is final.
- V. If the school is responsible for a student’s lateness (i.e. the school bus is late), tardiness will be automatically excused.

Tardiness at Middle School, Intermediate School, and Elementary School

- I. Consequences for repeated tardiness will be determined by the school building administrators in their discretion and as permitted by law.
- II. The decision of a principal regarding discipline imposed under the Policy and Administrative Regulations is final.
- III. If the school is responsible for a student’s lateness (i.e. the school bus is late), tardiness will be automatically excused.

Requests for Early Dismissal

Permission must be granted by the principal or designee according to each individual case, provided a request is made by the parent or guardian with whom the student is living. A student may be dismissed from school early for any of the reasons stated under the “Excused Absence” section of this regulation.

In case of illness or other personal emergency necessitating dismissal of a student, the principal or designee shall notify the parent or guardian before dismissing the student.

No student shall be sent from school grounds during the school day without the approval of the principal or designee.

Absences and Participation in Co-Curricular Activities

Except as specifically permitted by the principal, any student who is absent from school, is not in school for at least three (3) hours, and/or who has failed to attend at least three full classes (in the case of the high school and middle school) will not be permitted that day to participate in or attend an extracurricular activity (e.g. practice, athletic event, rehearsal, meeting or performance). If a student's absence for a day, or for a portion of the day, is unexcused, the student may not participate in any school related, athletic, and co-curricular activities until after one (1) full day of regular attendance and after the student has served any assigned consequence. Students who are serving a suspension may not participate in or attend school related, athletic, and co-curricular activities; either on or off school grounds.

Extended Absences - Vacations

Family vacations should be scheduled to coincide with school vacations. The administration will work with families. However, the administration cannot guarantee that make-up work for extended absences will be provided prior to the absence. While the student and parent or guardian are required to notify the school of an extended absence from classes at least one week prior to the absence, the school reserves the right to deny the request that these absences be considered "excused" for the purposes of this regulation. School cancellation days (i.e. snow days) may extend the date for the last day of school or shorten planned student breaks.

Extended absences are regarded by the school as a very serious matter because such absences necessarily result in a loss to a student's instructional program. There is no way to compensate for what is missed in a class discussion or the interaction within a group. Activities such as science labs, class discussions, and speakers cannot be duplicated. Assignments related to these activities may result in lower and possibly failing grades.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-184, Duties of parents

Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-186, Duties of boards of education re attendance

Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-198a, Policies and procedures re truants

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-202e, Policy on dropout prevention

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220, Duties of boards of education

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-221, Board of Education to prescribe rules

Connecticut State Board of Education Memorandum, *Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences* (June 27, 2012)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention* (April 2013)

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