

Students

Section: JH

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Hudson Public School District believes that excellence comes through participation/engagement, commitment, and preparedness. The District believes that consecutive daily attendance is the best way to foster all of these. Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. Emerging research shows that chronic absences at an early age negatively affects performance in later grades. Attending school regularly is essential for students to gain the academic and social skills they need to succeed in life. A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is also an important factor in the shaping of his/her character. Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school.

Furthermore, attendance in school is required by Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.), specifically Chapter 76, §§ 1, 2, 4, and 19. In addition to this law, Hudson Public Schools has attendance requirements that must be followed.

The Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

When a child is not in school, his/her absence will be classified as “excused” or “unexcused”. Definitions of excused and unexcused are as follows:

Excused Absences

Every absence matters, regardless of whether it is excused, unexcused, a tardy, or an early dismissal. Hudson Public Schools recognizes that students will, at times, have legitimate reasons to be absent.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons:

- Illness or quarantine (with medical documentation)
- Bereavement or serious illness in family/family emergency
- Observance of major religious holidays
- College visits (documentation required)
- Other school-approved or dictated activities.

A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

Unexcused Absences

An absence is considered unexcused when a student misses school for reasons that are not accepted by the school, with or without parent permission. A student with many unexcused absences is considered truant.

There are many reasons for unexcused absences, including, but not limited to the following examples of unexcused absences are:

- Attending parental/guardian appointments (e.g. medical, dental, etc.)
- Attending parent/guardian court summons
- Family/travel vacation
- Staying home to take care of or visit with family members
- Missing the school bus
- Sleeping too late
- Undocumented illness/injury that exceeds more than three days
- Weather-related absences other than those when the district has canceled school

Students absent from school may not attend school-sponsored activities on the day or evening of the absence.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their care attends school daily. Accordingly, parents/guardians will provide a call, email, or written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

Student Absence Notification Program

Each Principal, by whatever title they may be known, or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within 2 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence. As mandated by the state, beginning with 5 absences or tardies, parents/guardians will receive an attendance letter. When appropriate, the Principal or designee can request a meeting to discuss the student's attendance. Parents will continue to receive written notification of their child's attendance at every 5th absence from school. Parents and guardians will also receive attendance information on report cards and can access attendance records on the district's Student Information System through the Parent/Student Portal.

Each Principal, by whatever title they may be known, or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has numerous absences or tardies that are deemed unexcused. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human services, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

Dropout Prevention

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the



interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed 14 days.

The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian. The Superintendent or designee shall offer to convene a team of school staff to participate in an exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

SOURCE: MASC October 2014

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:1B; 76:16; 76:18; 76:20

Adopted by Hudson School Committee: May 26, 2020