



WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South
Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D. – Superintendent

MEMORANDUM

TO: Woodbridge Board of Education
FROM: Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D., Superintendent
DATE: July 15, 2021
RE: Proposed Revision of Policy 5113, "Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal"

On June 8, 2021, the Policy Committee of the prior Board reviewed a proposed revision of Policy 5113, "Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal." Then, on June 21, 2021, the prior Board accepted the proposed revision for 30-Day Review. On July 19, 2021, the current Board will be asked to adopt the proposed revision.

The proposed revised Policy 5113 would accomplish the following:

- Clarify the preferred mechanism for parents/guardians reporting a student absence (p. 1).
- Add definition of, and procedures for requesting approval for, "extraordinary educational opportunities" (p. 4).

The proposed revision would also strike older language that in some cases is repetitive, and in other cases conflicting. The proposed language aligns with the relevant Connecticut General Statutes as well as best practices for promoting student attendance at school.

In addition, this proposed revision would integrate current Policy 5113.2, "Truancy," so that one cohesive policy on student attendance would exist.

Students

Attendance/Excuses/Dismissal

Attendance

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children, ages five through eighteen inclusive, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until ages six or seven. Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or withdrawal with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

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. A student not meeting the definition of "in attendance" shall be considered absent.

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education and the learning that takes place in the classroom is an essential part of ~~your child's~~ **that** education. Time lost from class because of absences, tardiness and early dismissals **disrupts** the continuity of the instructional process and is a lost opportunity for all children of valuable instructional time.

The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent. The BRS school day begins and 8:25 AM and ends at 3:10 PM. Students are considered tardy if they arrive after 8:25 AM. To promote the importance of full day attendance, the school office will communicate with parents, ~~in writing~~ **by telephone, e-mail, or first-class mail**, if **and** when a student has four (4) or more tardies or four (4) more early dismissals in a month. The principal, at his/her discretion, may request a meeting with a child's parents as a follow-up.

Definitions ~~(related to chronic absenteeism)~~

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 percent 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.

Truant child: An enrolled student who has four unexcused absences from school in a month or ten unexcused absences in any school year.

Excuses

A student's absence from school shall be considered "excused" if written documentation of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school and meets the following criteria:

A. For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered "excused" when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation to school officials.

~~Such documentation includes a message received from parent/guardian from attendance phone line,~~ **Preferred documentation is provided by the parent/guardian leaving a message prior to 8:25 AM on the day of the absence on the school's attendance phone line. Acceptable alternate documentation includes a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that who spoke in-person personally with the**

parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism.

B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);
5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required);
6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

C. A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless:

1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or
2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or District disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Education approved definitions.

~~When the school in which a child is enrolled receives no notification from a parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel or volunteers under the direction of school personnel to notify by telephone and by mail such parent or other person having control of the child.~~

Responsibility for completion of missed classwork lies with the student, not the teacher. Unless a student has an extended illness, all make-up work ~~will~~ **should** be completed within five days after the student returns to school.

Excused Absences for Children of Service Members

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section [27-103](#), and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of the Board of Education, additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of such excused absences such child and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible ~~to~~ **for** obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by such child prior to his or her return to school from such period of excused absence.

Chronic Absenteeism

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.

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 established 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.~~

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

Prevention and Intervention Strategies

1. The Principal and/or designee will hold a meeting with the parent/guardian of a child who is a “truant child” or “chronically absent child” as defined above. Such meeting will be held no later than ten (10) school days after the student’s designation as “truant” or “chronically absent” based upon the definitions articulated in this policy.
2. The Principal and/or the Special Services Director will, when deemed appropriate, coordinate services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services.
3. The Principal or his/her designee will annually at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, notify in writing the parent or other person having control of each child of the school attendance obligations of the parent or such person pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §10-184.
4. The Principal or his/her designee will annually at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, obtain from the parent or other person having control of each child a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or such other person during the school day.
5. The Principal will establish a procedure that provides that, whenever an enrolled student 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 having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort to notify, by telephone and by mail, the parent or such other person shall be made by school personnel. The required mail 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 pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs. Persons who, in good faith, give or fail to give notice shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.
6. The school's mandated reporters must report suspected educational neglect to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families.
7. The Principal or his/her designee shall refer a child for a Planning and Placement Team meeting for evaluation for a possible disability of the “truant child” or “chronically absent child.”
8. If a parent or other person having control of the “truant child” or “chronically absent child” fails to attend the meeting with the Principal or his/her designee, or otherwise fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the problem, the Principal or his/her designee shall notify the Superintendent, who shall file, no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after such failure to attend such meeting or such failure to cooperate with the school, a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child’s family is a family with service needs.

Dismissal

No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Superintendent or his/her designee.

No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission of the Principal or designee, and the approval of the student’s parent/guardian. ~~No student may be permitted to leave school at any time other than at regular dismissal without the approval of the student's parent/guardian.~~ If a court official with legal permission to ~~take~~ takes custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.

Extraordinary Educational Opportunities

An extraordinary educational opportunity is defined as an opportunity: (a) with a learning objective related to the particular student's course work or plan of study; (b) not ordinarily available to the particular student; (c) appropriate to the development of the particular student (e.g., age, grade, and educational attainment); and (d) with content highly relevant to the particular student. The opportunity must come at no cost to the District. Family vacations do not qualify as extraordinary educational opportunities.

A request for the approval of an extraordinary educational opportunity must be submitted in advance in writing, with the signature of the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), to the Principal. The request must detail how the opportunity meets the criteria outlined above. All relevant documentation must be attached.

The decision to approve, or not approve, an extraordinary educational opportunity will be put in writing by the Principal after consultation with the Superintendent, and may be subject to withdrawal based on conditions outlined in the approval. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will set no precedent for the particular student or for other students.

(cf. [5142](#) - Student Safety)

(cf. [5113.2](#) - Truancy)

(cf. 6113 - Released Time)

Legal Reference Connecticut General Statutes

[10-220\(c\)](#) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)

[10-184](#) Duties of parents (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

[10-185](#) Penalty

[10-198a](#) Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 11-136, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes and PA 14-198, An Act Concerning Excused Absences from School for Children of Service Members, and PA 16-147, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee).

[10-198b](#) State Board of Education to define "excused absence," "unexcused absence," and "disciplinary absence".

[10-198c](#) Attendance review teams.

[10-198d](#) Chronic absenteeism (as amended by PA 17-14).

[45a-8c](#) Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by PA 15-225)

[10-199](#) through [10-202](#) Attendance, truancy - in general.

Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define "attendance."

Action taken by State Board of Education on June 27, 2012, to define "excused" and "unexcused" absences.

PA 17-14 An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education.

Policy adopted: February 26, 2018

WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Woodbridge, Connecticut

Students

Attendance/Excuses

Definitions:

Length of School Day—The school day at Beecher Road School begins at 8:25 AM and ends at 3:10 PM. Arrival and/or departure after 8:30 and prior to 3:10 significantly impacts on a student's academic instruction.

Tuant—means a child between the ages of 5 and 18 enrolled in a public or private school who has four unexcused absences from school in a month or ten unexcused absences in any school year.

Tardy Student—refers to a student who arrives at school after 8:25 AM. The school day at Beecher Road School begins at 8:25 AM and ends at 3:10 PM. Students who arrive at school after 8:25 AM four or more times per month will be considered "truant."

Habitually Tardy Student—refers to a student who is tardy four times or more within a month without a written legal excuse, i.e., illness/injury, doctor's appointment, religious observation or to attend the funeral of a family member or friend.

Early Pick up—refers to a student who leaves school prior to 3:10 PM. The school day at Beecher Road School begins at 8:25 AM and ends at 3:10 PM. Students who leave prior to 3:10 PM four or more times per month will be considered "truant."

Absence/Unexcused Absence—An absence shall be excused when a child does not attend school because of illness or injury, death in the family, religious obligation, or other exceptional circumstances. The parent or guardian is expected to give the school an excuse for any such absence. All other absences, with or without an explanation from a parent or guardian, will be considered unexcused. Excessive absences due to illness may not be considered excused unless a doctor's note is provided.

1. The Principal and/or designee must conduct a meeting within ten school days after the fourth unexcused absence in one month or within 10 school days after the 10th unexcused absence in one year with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant.

The Principal and/or the Special Services Director will, when deemed appropriate, coordinate services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services.

2. The Principal or his/her designee will annually, at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, notify the parent or other person having control of each child in writing, of the obligations of the parent or such person (pursuant to Section 10-184 (3) of their obligation relative to a child's attendance at school:

3. Annually, at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, the Principal and/or designee will obtain from a parent or other person having control of the child, a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or legal guardian during the school day.

4. The Principal will establish a procedure which provides that whenever a child in any grade, kindergarten to six, 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 having control of the child is aware of the student's absence, a reasonable effort to notify, by telephone and by mail. The parent or such person shall be made by school personnel or volunteer under the direction of the Principal. The required mail 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. Any person who in good faith gives or fails to give notice as specified above, shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceedings which result from such notice.

5. The school's mandated reporters (teachers, principals, guidance counselors, school psychologists, physical therapists, athletic coaches, paraprofessionals and social workers), must report suspected educational neglect to the Department of Children and Families.

~~6. The Principal and/or designee shall refer a child to the Planning and Placement Team for evaluation for a possible disability if the student is excessively absent without excuse (Connecticut State Regulations, Section 10-76d-7).~~

~~7. The Superintendent is required to file a truancy petition with respect to all students who are absent without excuse four (4) days in any given month or ten (10) days in any year, whose parents/legal guardian fail to attend the meeting held to discuss the attendance issues or otherwise refuse to cooperate.~~

~~**Tardy/Habitual Tardiness**~~

~~1. Parents are responsible for accompanying their child(ren) and signing him/her in and for turning in written excuses for students arriving after 8:25 AM or leaving prior to 3:10 PM. Acceptable excuses for arriving late or leaving early include: illness/doctor's appointment; religious observance; family emergency.~~

~~2. Students having four unexcused "tardies" shall be counted as having one unexcused absence.~~

~~**Regulation approved: March 17, 2014**~~

~~WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT~~

~~Woodbridge, Connecticut~~