

Board of Education POLICY Committee Meeting

Thursday, January 4, 2024 6:00 PM

Board of Education Conference Room E, Live Stream:

<http://devos2.bethel.k12.ct.us/show?video=763ff4de0370> Materials can be viewed at: <https://meetings.boardbook.org/Public/Organization/2425> The opportunity for members of the public wishing to make comments can attend and comment in-person or may send public comments to the Board via email or letter and it will be included as part of the record of the meeting., 1 School Street, PO Box 253, Bethel, CT 06801

1. Regulation 5113 - Student Attendance and Truancy	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2. First Reading	
2.A. Policy 4112.51 - Employment & Student Teacher Checks	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2.B. Policy 4121 - Substitute Teachers	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2.C. Policy & Regulation 3542.43 - Food Service Charging	Speaker (s): Jen Variale
2.D. Policy 5112 - Ages of Attendance	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2.E. Policy & Regulation 5112.4 - Disenrollment	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2.F. Policy 6159 - Individualized Education Program/Special Education Program	
2.G. Policy 5141.21 Administration of Medication	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2.H. Bylaw 9323 - Construction of the Agenda	Speaker (s): Christine Carver
2.I. Policy 6159 - Individualized Education Program/Special Education Program	Speaker (s): Christine Carver & Christine Sipala
3. Policies for future review/discussion	
4. New Business	
5. Public Comment	
(Please note: The Board welcomes Public Comment and asks that speakers please limit their comments to 2 minutes. Speakers may offer objective comments of school operations and programs that concern them. The Board will not permit any expression of personal complaints or defamatory comments about Board of Education personnel and students, nor against any person connected with the Bethel Public School System.)	
6. Adjourn	

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ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS REGARDING ATTENDANCE, TRUANCY, AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

I. Attendance and Truancy

A. Definitions for Section I

1. “Absence” - any day during which a student is not considered “in attendance”, ~~as defined in these regulations.~~
2. “Disciplinary absence” - Any absence as a result of school or district disciplinary action, ~~except for each day that the student receives alternative education programming for at least half of the instructional school day.~~ ~~A disciplinary absence is not considered excused or unexcused for attendance and truancy purposes.~~
3. “Educational evaluation” - for purposes of this policy, an educational evaluation is an assessment of a student’s educational development, which, based upon the student’s presenting characteristics, would assess (as appropriate) the following areas: health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities.
4. “Excused absence” - a student is considered excused from school if the school has received documentation (see section B) describing the reason for the absence within ten (10) school days of the student’s return to school, or if the child has been excluded from school in accordance with section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (regarding communicable diseases), and the following criteria are met:
 - a. Any absence before the student’s 10th absence, is considered excused when the student’s parent/guardian approves, through a note, phone call or electronic submission, such absence and submits appropriate written documentation in

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accordance with this regulation.

- b. For the student's 10th absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are, with appropriate documentation in accordance with this regulation, considered excused only for the following reasons:
 - i. student illness (verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional);
 - ii. religious holidays;
 - iii. mandated court appearances (documentation required);
 - iv. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - v. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by the district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and this regulation;
 - vi. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends.
- c. A student, age five to eighteen, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces who has been called for duty, is on leave from or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten (10) days of excused absences in any school year, and, in the discretion of the administration, additional excused absences to visit such student's parent or legal guardian with respect to the parent's leave or deployment. In the case of such excused absences, the student and parent or legal guardian are responsible for

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obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by the student prior to his or her return to school.

5. "In Attendance" - any day during which a student is present at the students assigned school, and/or participating in an activity sponsored by the school (e.g. field trip), for at least one-half of the school day; and/or participating in statutorily authorized remote learning as determined through a combination of: synchronous virtual classes, synchronous virtual meetings, activities of time logged electronic systems, and/or completion and submission of assignments for at least half the instructional day.
6. "Student" - a student enrolled in the Bethel Public Schools.
7. "Truant" - any student five (5) to eighteen (18) years of age, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in a thirty-day period or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.
8. "Unexcused absence" - any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for at least one-half of the school day, which is not excused or considered a disciplinary absence.
9. "Mental health wellness day" means a school day during which a student attends to his/her emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school. Such days must be nonconsecutive.

The determination of whether an absence is excused will be made by the building principal or his/her designee. Parents or other persons having control of the child may appeal that decision to the Superintendent or his/her designee, whose decision shall be final.

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1. Documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absence within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school. An incidence of absence is considered consecutive days of absence.
2. The first nine (9) days of absence will be excused upon receipt of a signed note, email, or voicemail message from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person 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.
3. For the student's 10th absence, and all absences thereafter, documentation of the absence must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and must also include the reason for the absence and the following additional information:
 - a. student illness:
 - (1) signed note from a medical professional, who may be the school nurse, who has evaluated the student confirming the absence and giving an expected return date; or
 - (2) signed note from the school nurse who has spoken with the student's medical professional and confirmed the absence, including the date and location of the consultation.
 - b. religious holidays: none.
 - c. mandated court appearances:
 - (1) a police summons;

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- (2) a subpoena;
 - (3) a notice to appear;
 - (4) a signed note from a court official;
 - (5) other official, written documentation of the legal requirement to appear in court; or
 - (6) up to two (2) non-consecutive mental health days.
- d. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family: written documents must explain the nature of the emergency.
 - e. extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and this policy: written pre-approval from the administration, in accordance with this regulation.
 - f. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends: none.
- 5. The Bethel Public Schools reserves the right to randomly audit documentation received, through telephone and other methods of communication, to determine its authenticity.
 - 6. Any absence that is not documented in accordance with this regulation within ten (10) school days after the incidence of absence will be recorded as unexcused. If documentation is provided within ten (10) school days, but is incomplete, the building principal may, at his/her own discretion, grant up to a five (5) school day extension for provision of the completed documentation.

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- C. Absenteeism for Extended Periods of Time
 - 1. For students who are absent for more than fifteen (15) consecutive days related to travel (not due to illness), they will be considered unexcused absences.
 - 2. Parents should be aware, the Bethel Public Schools cannot guarantee class placement or schedule upon return.

- D. Extraordinary Educational Opportunities
 - 1. To qualify as an extraordinary educational opportunity, the opportunity must:
 - a. be educational in nature and must have a learning objective related to the student's course work or plan of study;
 - b. be an opportunity not ordinarily available for this exemption;
 - c. be grade and developmentally appropriate; and
 - d. include content that is highly relevant to the student; while some opportunities will be relevant to all students, others will contain very specific content that would limit their relevance to a smaller group of students.
 - 2. Family vacations do not qualify as extraordinary educational opportunities.
 - 3. All requests for approval of extraordinary educational opportunities must:
 - a. be submitted to the building principal in writing or via email prior to the opportunity, but no later than ten (10) school days prior to the opportunity except in exceptional

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- circumstances at the discretion of the building administrator;
- b. include an outline of the learning objective of the opportunity and include detail as to how the objective is linked to the student's coursework or plan of study; and
 - c. include additional documentation, where available, about the opportunity.
4. The building principal shall provide a response in writing or via email and include the following:
 - a. either approval or denial of the request;
 - b. brief reason for any denial;
 - c. any requirements placed upon the student as a condition of approval;
 - d. the specific days approved as excused absences for the opportunity;
 - e. the understanding that the building administrator may withdraw approval if the opportunity is canceled or the student fails to meet the agreed-upon requirements of the approval.
 5. All decisions of the building principal relating to extraordinary educational opportunities shall be final.
 6. Students who are granted excusal from school to participate in extraordinary educational opportunities are expected to share their experiences with other students and/or school staff when they return.
 7. Approval for an extraordinary educational opportunity is determined on a case-by-case basis and the analysis of

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individualized factors. An opportunity approved for one student may not be approved for another.

D. Truancy Exceptions:

1. A student **five (5) or six (6) years of age** shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student has appeared personally at the District office and exercised the option of not sending the child to school at five (5) or six (6) years of age.
2. A student **seventeen (17) years of age** shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student consents to such student's withdrawal from school. Such parent or person shall personally appear at the district office and sign a withdrawal form indicating such consent. Such withdrawal form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor or school administrator from the school that the district provided the parent (or person having control of the child) with information on the educational options available in the school system and community.
3. A student who is eighteen (18) years of age or older may withdraw from school. Such student shall personally appear in person at the school counseling office and sign a withdrawal form. Such withdrawal form must include an attestation from a guidance counselor or school administrator from the school that the district provided such student with information on the educational options available in the school system and community.
4. Beginning July 1, 2023 a student seventeen (17) years of age shall not be considered truant if the parent or persons having control over such child withdraws such child from school and enrolls such child in an adult education program pursuant to Conn. Gen Statutes 10-69. Such a parent or person shall personally appear at the school counseling office and sign an adult education withdrawal and enrollment form. Such adult education withdrawal and enrollment form shall include an attestation (1) from the school counselor or school administrator of the school that the district has provided such

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a parent or person with information on the educational options within the school system and in the community and (2) from such parent or person that such child will be enrolled in an adult education program upon such child's withdrawal from school.

3. If a parent or guardian of an expelled student chooses not to enroll the student in an alternative program, the student shall not be considered to be "truant."

Remediation of Truancy

1. Notify parents annually of their obligations under the attendance policy.
2. Establish a system to monitor student attendance.
3. Make reasonable efforts by telephone and by mail to notify parents or other persons having control if the child does not arrive at school and there has been no previous approval of other indications which indicates parents are aware of the absence.
4. Identify a student as "truant" when the student accumulates four unexcused in a thirty-day period or ten in a school year.
5. Develop a plan with the student's family that is identified as truant to increase attendance.
6. Refer to a Planning and Placement Team as appropriate.
7. Make a referral to the Department of Children and Families for educational neglect as appropriate.
8. Provide notice to the parents/guardian the information concerning 2-1-1 Infoline and other pediatric mental health and behavioral health screening sources and tools provided by the State Department of Education.

Students so identified as Truant may be subject to:

1. Loss of academic credit at Bethel High School.

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- E. Readmission to School Following Voluntary Withdrawal
1. Except as noted in paragraph 2 below, if a student voluntarily withdraws from school (in accordance with Section D.2, above) and subsequently seeks readmission, the Board may deny school accommodations to the student for up to ninety (90) school days from the date of the student's withdrawal from school.
 2. If a student who has voluntarily withdrawn from school (in accordance with Section D.2, above) seeks readmission within ten (10) school days of his/her withdrawal, the Board shall provide school accommodations to the student not later than three (3) school days after the student requests readmission.
- F. Determinations of Whether a Student is "In Attendance":
1. A student serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion shall be reported as absent unless he or she receives an alternative educational program for at least one-half of the ~~instructional~~ school day. In any event, the absence is considered a disciplinary absence, and will not be designated as excused or unexcused.
 2. On early dismissal days and days shortened due to inclement weather, the regular school day for attendance purposes is considered to be the amount of instructional time offered to students on that day. For example, if school is open for four hours on a shortened day scheduled, a student must be present for a minimum of two hours in order to be considered "in attendance."
 3. Students placed on homebound instruction due to illness or injury in accordance with applicable regulations and requirements are counted as being "in attendance" for every day that they receive instruction from an appropriately certified teacher for an amount of time deemed adequate in accordance with applicable law.

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1. Notification

- a. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration shall notify the parent or other person having control of the student enrolled in grades K - 8 in writing of the obligations pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-184 to assure that such a student attends school regularly or to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the Bethel Public Schools.
- b. Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon the enrollment of any child during the school year, the administration shall obtain from the parent or other person having control of the student in grades K-8 a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.

2. Monitoring

Each school shall implement a system of monitoring individual unexcused absences of students in grades K-12. Whenever such a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day, school personnel under the direction of the building principal or his/her designee shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or other person having control of such student by telephone and by mail of the student's absence, unless school personnel have received an indication that the parent or other person is aware of the student's absence. Reasonable efforts shall include two (2) attempts to reach the parent or other person at the telephone number provided by the parent or other person. Such attempts shall be recorded on a form provided by the Superintendent. Any person who, in good faith, gives or fails to give such notice shall be immune from liability, civil

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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.

H. Procedures applicable to students ages five (5) to eighteen (18)

1. Intervention

- a. When a student is truant, the building principal or his/her designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent (or other person having control of such student) and appropriate school personnel to review and evaluate the reasons for the student's truancy. This meeting shall be held no later than **ten (10) days** after the student becomes truant. The district shall document the meeting, and if parent or other person declines to attend the meeting, or is otherwise non-responsive, that fact shall also be documented and the meeting shall proceed with school personnel in attendance.
- b. When a student is truant, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall coordinate services with and referrals of students to community agencies providing child and family services, as appropriate. The district shall document efforts to contact and include families and to provide early intervention in truancy matters.
- c. On or before August 15, 2018, if the Commissioner of Education determines that any school under the jurisdiction of Bethel Board of Education has a disproportionately high rate of truancy, the district shall implement a truancy intervention model identified by the Department of Education pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-198e.
- d. In addition to the procedures specified in subsections a through

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c above, a regular education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to the building intervention team to consider the need for additional interventions and/or assistance. The Team will also consider whether the student should be referred to a planning and placement team (“PPT”) meeting to review the student's need and eligibility for special education. A special education student who is experiencing attendance problems should be referred to a PPT meeting for program review.

I. Attendance Records

All attendance records developed by the Board shall include the individual student's state-assigned student identifier (SASID).

II. Chronic Absenteeism**A. Definitions for Section II**

1. “Chronically absent child” - a child who is enrolled in a school under the jurisdiction of the Bethel Board of Education and whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent (10%) of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year;
2. “Absence” - an excused absence, unexcused absence, or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to section 10-198b of the general statutes and these administrative regulations;
3. “District chronic absenteeism rate” - the total number of chronically absent children under the jurisdiction of the Bethel Board of Education in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year; and
4. “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.

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B. Establishment of Attendance Review Teams

If the Bethel Board of Education has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for the school district.

If a school under the jurisdiction of the Bethel Board of Education has a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for that school.

If the Bethel Board of Education has more than one school with a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for the school district or at each such school.

If the Bethel Board of Education has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher and one or more schools with a school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher, it shall establish an attendance review team for the school district or at each such school.

C. Composition and Role of Attendance Review Teams

Any attendance review team established under these regulations may include school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants, and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians.

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 attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

D. State Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Bethel Board of Education and its attendance review teams, if any, will consider any

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chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education.

III. Reports to the State Regarding Truancy Data

Annually, each local and regional board of education shall include information regarding the number of truants and chronically absent children in the strategic school profile report for each school under its jurisdiction and for the school district as a whole submitted to the Commissioner of Education. Measures of truancy include the type of data that is required to be collected by the Department of Education regarding attendance and unexcused absences in order for the department to comply with federal reporting requirements and the actions taken by the Board of Education to reduce truancy in the school district.

Legal References:

Public Act No. 22-47

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-220

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-184

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-186

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198a

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198b

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198c

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198d

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198e

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198f

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Connecticut State Department of Education, *Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System* (January 2008)

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)

~~Connecticut State Department of Education, *Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut's Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts* (April 2017)~~

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Connecticut State Department of Education Memorandum, *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* (February 22, 2018)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Youth Service Bureau Referral Guide* (February 2018)

Connecticut State Department of Education Memorandum, *Mental Health Wellness Days* (January 24, 2022)

[Connecticut State Department of Education Memorandum, Adoption of Definition of Remote Absence \(September 7, 2022\)](#)

[Connecticut Board of Education Resolution \(September 7, 2022\)](#)

Regulation approved: September 28, 1990

Regulation revised: 9/7/93, 4/4/94, 9/18/95, 8/25/05

Regulation Revised: 6/8/06, 2/8/2007, 5/10/07

Regulation Revised: 6/24/2013, 12/17/15, 03/17/16, 7/27/16, 6/1/17, 12/15/22, 12/7/23

BETHEL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Bethel, Connecticut