

## **STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES**

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. 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.

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

- **illness or quarantine**
- **bereavement or serious illness in family;**
- **weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child;**
- **observance of major religious holidays.**
- **other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.**

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his character. Parents/guardians can help their children by not allowing them to miss school needlessly.

Accordingly, parents/guardians will provide a 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 or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

The district is committed to reaching out to the parents/guardians of chronically absent students (those with absences at or exceeding 10%) to help implement a plan to improve attendance. When absences are excessive or unexcused (seven-day sessions or fourteen half-day sessions in any given six month period) the school will implement a more detailed process that may involve the following:

- Sending home a notification letter to ensure the family is aware of the student's attendance
- Contacting the parent/guardian to arrange an attendance meeting to address concerns
- Seeking help for the student and their family through supportive counseling, meetings and, if necessary, court action. Students are considered chronically absent when they have missed ten percent of the scheduled school days.

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### **Dropout Prevention**

A student who has not graduated from high school and has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence shall not be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to the student, and that student's parent/guardian. 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 convene a team of school staff to participate in the 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.

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                  October 7, 2014

SOURCE:       MASC February 2019

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); 76:1B; [76:16](#); 76:18; [76:20](#)