

## DUDLEY-CHARLTON REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Regular and consistent attendance is essential to learning and to improving the achievement of all students. The goal of the student attendance policy is to promote consistent, daily school and class attendance. The expectation is that all students will have, at a minimum, at least ninety-five percent (95%) attendance in school and in each class during each school day.

In supporting student achievement, punctuality and attendance at school are recognized as the primary responsibility of the student and the parent/guardian. However, the school, through its attendance policy, intends to monitor and ensure regular attendance.

State law requires the Dudley-Charlton RSD to investigate cases of excessive school absence. For this purpose, the Committee defines excessive absence as more than ten (10) unexcused absences per school year. All absences (even those authorized by parents/guardians) are considered unexcused unless the required documentation is provided.

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

- Illness or quarantine (with a doctor's note)
- Bereavement or serious illness in family
- For observance of major religious holidays
- Legal (with documentation from the court, lawyer etc.)
- Other - a student may be excused for other absences with approval from the school principal. Additionally, high school seniors may be excused for up to four (4) days for college visits. Appropriate documentation from a college visit or college fair attendance will be required in order to receive credit for the days.

Documentation for the above absences should be provided to the school principal or designee within five (5) school days of the absence. Documentation provided after ten (10) school days may require a meeting with a principal or designee.

Clear communication between parents/guardians and the school is imperative to ensure the safety of students and to reinforce a student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day attendance to school. Accordingly, parents/guardians should provide a written explanation for the absence of a child. This should be provided in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

Family vacations are not considered excused absences. When children are absent from school for the purpose of family vacations, their learning is interrupted and their progress may be affected. Teachers will not be required to provide work prior to a student leaving for vacation. The students will be required to make up all missed work upon their return to school.

Truancy is any intentional unauthorized or illegal absence from school or class. The term usually does not refer to legitimate "excused" absences, such as ones related to medical conditions. It describes absences caused by students of their own free will. This includes absence from any

class or activity during the school day for which the student is scheduled. In such cases when a student has been identified as truant, the school will notify the parent or guardian, classify the day or class as an unexcused absence, and refer the student for discipline as established by the student handbook.

A child who is absent from school cannot participate in after-school or evening school events on the day(s) absent. In rare cases, the principal or designee will have the authority to excuse a student's absence and allow the student to participate, based on the principal's or designee's understanding of the events surrounding the absence.

All schools and each school principal or designee will be responsible for ensuring a pupil absence notification program is in place. The program shall be designed to ensure that each school notifies a parent or guardian of the child's absence.

Additionally, principals or designee must ensure that notification is provided to the parent or guardian of a student who has five (5) or more unexcused absences within a school year. School principals, or a designee, must make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent or guardian of a student who has five (5) or more unexcused absences to develop a plan that includes the specific action steps necessary to address the student's poor attendance. The plan, including the action steps, shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal, or a designee, the student and the student's parent or guardian, and may include suggestions from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies.

In a case where parents or guardians are unresponsive to the school administration's efforts to develop a plan and implement action steps designed to address poor attendance, or in the case where a plan is in place and poor attendance continues, excessive unexcused absences will require unilateral assessment and intervention by the school administration. Interventions may include involvement of a School Resource Officer and the Dudley or Charlton Police Department, case management services, and service referrals. In situations in which attendance does not improve despite additional intervention by the school administration, the school may take one or more of the following actions:

- A Failure To Send, Criminal Complaint, against the parent will be sought at the District Court
- A 51A for parental neglect will be filed with the Department of Children and Families
- A [Child Requiring Assistance \(CRA\)](#) application may be submitted to the Trial Court of Massachusetts Juvenile Court Department.

LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. [76:1](#); [76:2](#); [76:16](#); [76:20](#); [119:39E](#); [119:51A](#)

[DCRSD Student Handbooks](#)

Adopted: May 11, 2022