

REGULATION

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENTS

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Attendance

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Grades 6-8

Attendance and Excuses

I. Introduction

Students are required to attend school regularly. Procedures have been established at the middle school level (grades 6-8) which enable school personnel to determine the reason(s) for all student absences and to take appropriate action(s) in cases of excessive absenteeism.

For purposes of this regulation, there are three categories of absences:

- a. Level I: Unexcused absences
- b. Level II: Parent explained/authorized absences
- c. Level III: Administrative excused absences with requisite documentation

Excessive absenteeism is defined as more than fifteen (15) Level I/Level II absences. Students who accumulate in excess of fifteen (15) Level I/Level II absences will be required to attend Saturday School sessions. Furthermore, any student who accumulates in excess of thirty (30) days of absence, regardless of level of absence, except where homebound instruction has been provided, may not be promoted to the next grade level.

The procedures for ensuring student attendance include provisions for:

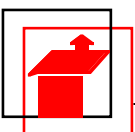
- 1. Keeping track of absences
- 2. Notifying students and parents of excessive absences
- 3. Withholding credit for all courses until successful completion of assigned Saturday School sessions
- 4. Student retention due to excessive absenteeism
- 5. Initiating court action when appropriate
- 6. Suspension from school when appropriate

The procedures have been approved by the Board of Education and shall be reviewed and modified as the need arises. They contain provisions for appealing any decisions made under this policy.

Attendance Procedures

A. Recording Absences

- 1. Attendance will be taken daily and recorded in the student data management system by the homeroom/advisory teacher. Attendance office personnel will make attendance record changes when a student's status changes from absent to late.
- 2. Absenteeism Verification
 - a. Parent to call attendance office by 9:30 A.M.



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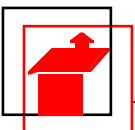
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- b. Upon returning to school a student must submit to his/her homeroom/advisory teacher an appropriate note of verification from a parent/guardian explaining the absence.
 - c. When a student is absent three (3) or more consecutive days, a doctor's note must accompany the parent note of verification.
3. Only the following reasons will be considered Level III absences (not charged to fifteen (15) days):
- a. Personal illness with accompanying doctor's note
 - b. Death in Family
 - c. Medical appointment
 - d. Religious holiday
 - e. Court appearance
 - f. Suspensions imposed by the administration
 - g. A parent/student must present to school administrator and/or designee all required completed documents when involved in Theatrical Productions and/or related Employment of Child Actors when the student holds a Theatrical permit, up to age 16 years old, or an Employment Certificate, from age 16 to 18 years old as per New Jersey Child Labor Law, N.J.S.A. 34:2-21.57 through N.J.S.A 34:2-21.64: Proof of Age, Proof of Recent Physical, Under Age 8 – Visual Acuity Test, Social Security Card, Parent Permission Letter, Letter that must be signed by the Principal and/or designee stating that the parent and school have discussed the “equivalent education” for the time period that the minor is required to attend school, and the parent is aware of school work required to make-up the school lessons or that the school is requiring a tutor on the production site for the continued educational progress of the student. Note: If the school advises the parent that a tutor is necessary, then the production company must supply the tutor from the date required by the school principal and/or designee.

Note(s) and appropriate documentation for these reasons must be submitted in a timely manner from the time the student returns to school or the documentation may not be accepted. Parents and students are strongly encouraged to make every effort to schedule medical, dental, and legal appointments at times that will least conflict with the instructional program.

4. A student who arrives at school after 10:35 a.m. shall be marked absent for the day. A student who leaves school prior to 12:19 p.m. shall be marked absent for the day.
- For a student to receive credit for a full day of school, he/she must be in attendance a minimum of four (4) hours.
5. If a student arrives late to school, it is necessary for his/her parent or guardian to sign the student in at the attendance office.



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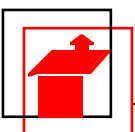
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6. If a student is to leave school before the regular dismissal time, his/her parent or guardian must sign the student out at the attendance office.
7. A student must be present for a full day of school to participate in any extra-curricular activity scheduled for the same date.

B. Notification Procedures

1. Attendance office personnel will refer to the assistant principal the name of any student who has accumulated three (3) consecutive days of absence (Levels I, II, or III) or any pattern of absences. The parent/guardian of any such student will be contacted by phone.
2. Attendance office personnel will refer to the assistant principal the name of any student who has accumulated six (6) days of Level I/Level II absences. The parent/guardian of any such student will be contacted by phone and/or letter.
3. Attendance office personnel will refer to the assistant principal the name of any student who has accumulated ten (10) days of Level I/Level II absences. The parent/guardian of any such student will be contacted by phone and/or letter.
4. If, despite the warning, the student reaches the point of excessive absenteeism fifteen (15) Level I/Level II absences), the assistant principal will notify the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) that an in-person conference is required to discuss the reasons for the absences. The conference will take place as soon as possible.
5. In cases of unexcused absences (Level I absences), the building principal or designee, in addition to the above notification procedures, shall implement the State-mandated protocols for responding to unexcused absences as set forth in Section D of Policy No. 5200 – *Attendance*. These protocols require specific administrative action at the following levels of unexcused absenteeism:
 - Up to four (4) cumulative unexcused absences;
 - Between five (5) and nine (9) unexcused absences; and
 - Ten (10) or more cumulative unexcused absences.
6. Attendance office personnel will refer to the assistant principal the name of any student who has accumulated fifteen (15) days of *absence regardless of level of absence*. The parent/guardian of any such student will be contacted by phone and/or letter.
7. Attendance office personnel will refer to the assistant principal the name of any student who has accumulated twenty (20) days of absences *regardless of level of absence*. The parent/guardian of any such student will be contacted by phone and/or letter.
8. Attendance office personnel will refer to the assistant principal the name of any student who has accumulated twenty-five (25) days of absences *regardless of level of absence*. The parent/guardian of any such student will be contacted by phone and/or letter.



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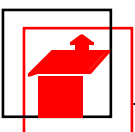
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C. Conference with the Assistant Principal

1. During the conference, the importance of regular school attendance will be stressed. The state laws and school policies on attendance will be discussed. It will be made clear that the school believes that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly. Parents will be notified during the conference that the school will refer the case to the local court if the student's Level I/Level II absences continue.
2. The purpose of the conference will be for the student and parents/guardian to explain each absence and to provide medical documentation for absences as appropriate.
3. It is recognized that every illness does not require treatment by a physician, however, in cases of repeated short-term absences for illness, there should be medical treatment and a note should be produced indicating the cause for the recurring illnesses.
4. The parents and students will be warned that future absences will result in strong action being taken.
5. The conference will be followed by a letter in which the major points covered will be repeated. A copy of this letter will be placed in the student's attendance folder.

D. Post Conference Action

1. When a student reaches sixteen (16) Level I/Level II absences, he/she will be notified via registered mail, by the Assistant Principal, that he/she is in violation of the Attendance Policy. For each Level I/Level II absence beyond fifteen (15) absences, the student will be required to attend one (1) Saturday School session. Students and parents will be referred to the local court by the district truant officer for violation of NJ Compulsory Attendance Statute 18A:38-25 ("disorderly person for failing to send a child to school") for absences beyond the 15th.
2. Level I/Level II absence. Absences for which the school has provided homebound instruction will not be included in this calculation.
3. Excessive class absence, therefore, means that student has not adequately participated in the learning activities of his/her classes and is not entitled to receive full credit for those classes.
4. The usual penalty for excessive absences, therefore, will be the withholding of credit for the classes until successful completion of Saturday School sessions.
5. Students who do not complete assigned Saturday School sessions prior to the end of the school year will be required to make up their Saturday School sessions in the following school year. Until the owed Saturday school time is completed, the student will be ineligible for participation in any extra-curricular activity(ies).
6. Eighth grade students who have not completed their required Saturday School sessions will not be permitted to participate in the 8th grade end-of-year trip.



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E. Retention

A student who has been absent in excess of thirty (30) days (regardless of level of absence) will not be promoted to the next grade. Extenuating circumstances, as determined by the building principal, may serve to justify a possible waiver of the 150-day attendance requirement. With input from classroom teachers, the principal will make the final decision concerning promotion or retention for each student. Absences for which the school has provided homebound instruction will not be included in this calculation.

F. Appeal Process

There are times when there might be an unforeseen factor or extenuating circumstances. Hence, there is an appeal procedure which a parent/guardian may follow to request a hearing.

The appeal process may be instituted for a review of the number of days of absence, which the attendance records reflect and/or to determine whether the days accumulated are appropriately designated as Level I, Level II, or Level III absences.

Tier One

1. A parent or guardian may file a written appeal with the principal requesting a conference when a student's absences have exceeded the maximum limit of fifteen (15) Level I/Level II absences.
2. This written appeal must be submitted to the Principal within five (5) days after receiving notification that a student has exceeded the maximum limit for absences.
3. The appeal request must state the reason(s) for appeal.
4. The student's total attendance record will be considered in an appeal case.
5. The Principal will notify the parents of his/her decision in writing. The notification will be made within three (3) school days after the appeal hearing.

Tier Two

A written request to meet with the Superintendent, who represents the Board of Education, must be submitted within seven (7) days if not satisfied with the decision of the principal.

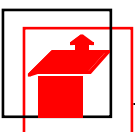
Tier Three

A written request may be submitted to the State Commissioner of Education if not satisfied with the decision of the Superintendent.

G. Credit Completion

It is assumed that students who do not attend classes, regardless of the reason, cannot benefit from the instruction taking place in these classes.

1. Any student whose Level I/Level II absences exceed fifteen (15) school days will be responsible to attend Saturday School sessions if he/she wishes to earn credit for the school year.



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2. Time Lines:

Days Absent
(Yearly Basis)

Saturday School Sessions Assigned

16 - 29

*One Saturday School session for each Level I/ Level II
absence beyond fifteen (15) days

30+

**Administrative decision based on each individual case;
students may be retained

Note: Should any Level I absence beyond the 15th day be determined to be a truancy, the student will be assigned to one Saturday School session and to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

3. Saturday School Hours

Saturday School sessions are scheduled each Saturday at a designated building from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. Students are to arrive prior to 9:00 a.m. with appropriate schoolwork for the three-hour session and have transportation arranged for noon.

H. Suspension

Suspension, either internal or external, will not be counted as absences toward accumulating absences for Non-Credit status.

NOTE: STUDENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING UP ALL WORK MISSED DUE TO SUSPENSION.

I. Procedures for Completing Missed School Work Due to Absence

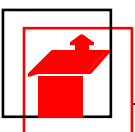
1. Students may make up all work missed due to absence with no grade point deduction, except in cases of truancy and cutting class. Students will be given one (1) day to make-up for each day absent.

Example: A student who is absent on Tuesday should have all make-up work completed by Thursday.

2. All tests administered during such absences may be made up with full credit. Previously announced tests may be given on the day the student returns to school. Teacher judgment will be used in other test make-up situations.
3. A student who is absent due to truancy and/or cutting class will not be given the opportunity to make up missed assignments, quizzes, tests, etc.

J. Requests for Family Vacations

1. Parents/Guardians should notify the school principal at least two (2) weeks in advance if they are planning to take students out of school.
2. The time lost due to #1 above will count towards the fifteen (15) Level I/ Level II absences allowed per school year according to policy.



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3. Absences taken during posted mid-term and final examination periods are strongly discouraged.
4. The student must makeup all work missed during these absences.

K. Long Term Medical Absences

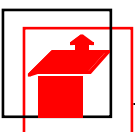
Students who are placed on homebound instruction due to illness will not have this time counted toward the fifteen (15) Level I/Level II absences nor toward the thirty (30) day benchmark for retention.

Procedures

1. Parent/Guardian should request homebound instruction through the principal no later than five (5) days after the inception of the illness in accordance with the administrative procedure on homebound instruction. (See Regulation No. 2412 *Homebound Instruction*.)
2. A statement by a medical examiner must be produced giving the prognosis of length of time the student will be absent and the nature of the illness.
3. Only medical absences of ten (10) or more consecutive days will be considered for homebound instruction.

L. Distribution of Information

1. Every effort shall be made to ensure that pertinent portions of these procedures are explained to all students.
2. Pertinent excerpts from the procedure will be published in the Student/Parent Handbook.
3. Parents who are sent letters of warning regarding impending problems with attendance shall also receive a copy of the appropriate portion of this procedure.



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SAMPLE MIDDLE SCHOOL LETTER

TO THE PARENTS OF:

Dear Parents:

This letter is to advise you of <Student's Name> attendance record. According to our records (he or she) has been absent from school six (6) days so far this school year. This total reflects only the amount of absences remaining after all doctors' notes, on file at <Middle School>, have been taken into account.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you of the total number of absences accumulated to date. Attendance letters are mailed at six (6), ten (10), and fifteen (15), days total accumulation. Please note at ten (10) days, you may be asked to attend an in-person conference to discuss your individual situation. Please be advised that student absences over fifteen (15) days will result in make-up sessions being assigned during Saturday School hours.

If you have any questions concerning the above, please feel free to call the Attendance Secretary, <Name>, at <Phone Number>, or the grade level assistant principals, <Name>, <Grades>, and <Name>, <Grades> at <Phone>.

Sincerely,

<Name>

Principal

