

Attendance

Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have success in school and careers. Research supports the connection between regular attendance and a student's personal, social, and emotional wellness and academic success. When students are not present in school, they miss out on opportunities for social development and are often not able to make adequate academic progress; they may disengage from learning as they get further off-track and may even drop out of school.

Attendance is an important factor for students to reach four key educational milestones as reported in the Massachusetts Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS):

(1) reading by 3rd grade as assessed on the grade 3 MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) test; (2) meeting grade level expectations as measured on the grade 6 MCAS ELA and Mathematics tests; (3) passing all grade 9 courses; and (4) graduating from high school.

Each day that your child is going to be absent or tardy, please call the school (698-2207) or email the school secretary between 8:00 a.m. and 8:40 a.m. If you have not called by this time, our office staff will be calling you as a precautionary measure. To leave a message before 8:00 a.m. call the school and access the appropriate mailbox. If your child visits the doctor or is triaged over the phone, please ask for a note for the school to excuse your child's absence.

Excused/Unexcused Absences

Certain absences may be excused, meaning they will not be considered as it relates to a referral to truancy court by a Supervisor of Attendance under Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L. c.119). However, it is important to understand that all missed instructional time has the potential to negatively impact student outcomes. In addition, all absences are included as they relate to chronic absenteeism, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

RCS recognizes that students will, at times, have a legitimate reason to be absent. The following absences will be excused with either a phone call to the office the day of or a note the day after the absence:

- Student illness or injury (more than 3 consecutive days requires a doctor's note)

- Death in the family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Court Summons (student's name must appear on the summons)
- School approved activities
- Legal, immigration, military or other similar obligations

In addition, if your child is dismissed by the school nurse for medical reasons and she requests that you keep him or her home for an additional period of time, this will also count as an excused absence.

An absence is considered unexcused when a student misses school for reasons that are not accepted by the school, with or without parent/guardian permission.

Unexcused absences include the following:

- Attending parent/guardian appointments
- Attending parent/guardian court summons
- Family travel/vacation
- Staying home to take care of or visit family members
- Missing the school bus
- Sleeping late
- Weather-related absences other than when the district has canceled school
- Undocumented illness/injury that exceeds more than three days

After School Functions

Students who do not attend school during the day may not attend any school function that evening, unless absent for an excused appointment.

Truancy

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76, Sections 1 and 2, mandates that students attend school and that the responsibility for proper attendance is placed on the parents. The schools are responsible for enforcing this statute and notifying parents/guardians of the recorded absences. Massachusetts state law (G.L. c. 119, § 21) defines as habitually truant "a school-aged child, not excused from attendance under the lawful and reasonable regulations of such child's school, who willfully fails to attend school for more than **8** school days in a quarter. In some cases, absences may not be "willful" and there are underlying barriers to attendance that can be addressed through services and

support. Additionally, if your child accumulates **5** unexcused absences a letter will be sent home recommending a meeting to discuss ways to improve attendance. After more than **8** unexcused absences a meeting will be scheduled with administration and the classroom teacher. The solution could be as simple as notifying the parent/caregiver/guardian and working together to improve that student's attendance. However, in extreme cases, it may require the school to solicit assistance from the Court, by filing a Failure to Send or the Department of Children and Families, by filing a 51A (a report of suspected child abuse or neglect).

Chronic Absences

Students who miss at least 10% of days enrolled (e.g., 18 days absent when enrolled for 180 school days) are considered chronically absent. National research shows that chronic absenteeism erodes the academic and social skills needed to succeed in school. Children living in poverty are more likely to be chronically absent due to life circumstances such as lack of access to health care, housing insecurity, and unreliable transportation.

Tardy

School starts at 8:25 a.m. and students entering school after 8:25 a.m. will be considered tardy. If a student arrives after 8:25 a.m. the student and /or parent/caregiver should check in at the main office. Children are considered late if they arrive after 8:25 a.m. Please note that students are in classrooms preparing for the day before this time, so students should be arriving by 8:25 a.m. to get prepared for the day. Students who enter class tardy have a harder time settling into classroom routine, and may disrupt classroom instruction. Please make every attempt to schedule medical and other appointments after school hours whenever possible. We appreciate your efforts.

Early Dismissal

If you need to have your child dismissed before the end of the school day, you must send a note with your child or email the administrative assistant. Include the date and time of the dismissal and the name of the person who will be picking them up if it is not the parent/caregiver/guardian. Adults must report to the office in order to sign out the child. Early dismissal should be for emergency use only. Office staff will call down and

have the child sent to the office. Please do not go to the child's classroom to pick them up. Individuals unknown to the office staff will be requested to produce a proper form of identification prior to releasing the child(ren). *For the safety of our school community all visitors must use the front entrance and ring the bell to be let into the building. **Please note: There will be no office dismissals after 2:40 due to changes in afternoon dismissal procedure.*