

# STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

<b>Section J: Students</b>	<b>File: JH</b>
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## ATTENDANCE

The Newburyport Public Schools expects parents [Note – All references to ‘parent’ mean parent(s) or guardian(s)] and students to make every reasonable effort to have their children attend school every day. The continuity of day-to-day instruction is a critical dynamic to the overall success of each student

If a pattern of absences develops, the administration, along with the appropriate personnel from the Newburyport Police Department will consider filing a Child Requiring Assistance complaint with the Essex County Court for truancy. Please see the Student Absence Notification Program below for further details.

For general, excused absences, it is the responsibility of the student to make up all missed assignments, tests or quizzes. The student will have as many days missed in order to make up the work. For example, if a student is absent for two (2) days, the student will have two (2) days to make up the required work.

If a student is out of school due to illness, the parent may request work assignments through the teacher. The parent will be responsible for retrieving this material at the close of the school day in the Office and will be responsible for overseeing their son’s/daughter’s completion of the assignment. If a student is to be absent for an extended period of time due to illness, (fourteen or more consecutive days), the family may be eligible to receive some tutorial services. If you believe your child will have an extended absence, please contact the principal’s office.

Participation in after-school or evening events will not be allowed for students absent on the day of the event.

### **Excused Absences**

Students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons:

- Illness or quarantine
- Bereavement of serious illness in family
- Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child
- For observance of major religious holidays (see Religious Observations below)
- For other exceptional reasons when approval of the school administrator

### **Absence Notification/Verification Procedure**

When your child is absent, either for an “excused” reason as set forth above or another reason, please follow the reporting procedures posted on the school web site and the current student handbook.

### ***Absence Reporting Procedure***

Please provide the following information when reporting a student absence:

- Identify yourself/calling party
- Student’s name, grade and home room teacher’s name
- Date(s) of absence

Do NOT leave the following information on the Call-In Line:

- Confidential medical information – speak to the nurse directly
- Requests for homework
- Messages for classroom teachers

For your child's safety, it is imperative that you call to document absences. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child was sent to school and did not arrive. To ensure all children arrive at school safely, all Newburyport elementary schools have a Safe Arrival Program in which we work to verify all unreported absences as quickly as possible.

### ***Documenting Absence if Not Called-In on Day of Absence***

If the absence is not verified by phone on the day of the absence, students will be required to present an absence note.

### ***Medical Absence and Student Illness***

Absences of five (5) days or longer require a note from a physician's office prior to the school readmitting your child to class.

#### **When should you call the nurse regarding a student illness?**

- A new medical diagnosis or change in health or emotional status, i.e. the diagnosis of an allergy
- A newly prescribed medication
- Any change(s) in current medication
- A serious injury, illness, or hospitalization
- An injury that will require crutches and/or wheelchair or elevator use, e.g. fracture, sprain, stitches or cast
- A contagious disease (e.g. chicken pox, flu, strep throat, pertussis)
- Extended period of absence with atypical symptom
- Recent changes in family history that may affect your child, such as a birth, recent loss or sudden illness

### **Tardiness**

It is important that students start their day off on the right foot and arriving late to school can negatively impact a student's day. As students grow and learn it is essential for their future success that they assume more responsibilities for their actions, choices and behaviors. Arriving to school on time is one of these responsibilities. Students arriving after the start of school are considered tardy and need to sign in at the office with an adult. Tardiness is noted on report cards. Although, we realize that emergencies occur on occasion, we expect students to arrive at school on time. If a family is experiencing difficulty getting a student to school on time, please contact the school administrative office for assistance.

### **Excused Dismissal**

Please try to schedule appointments after school hours. In the event that you have to dismiss your child, send a note to your child's teacher including the day, time, and who will pick up your child. In cases where we are not familiar with the adult, identification will be required. No child will be released without an adult escort.

If you dismiss your child from his/her classroom for any reason that does not pertain to a function designated for that child, he/she will be marked dismissed on the school attendance.

Dismissal notes are mandatory. Calling the school or sending an email to dismiss your child may result in someone not getting the message in a timely manner. We require written authorization for dismissals.

### **Family Vacations**

Sometimes families plan vacations that occur during regularly scheduled school time. The Newburyport Public School department does not encourage or condone such action. Instead, the schools uphold Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 76, Sections 1-21 entitled "School Attendance". This section of the law requires parents to "cause" their children to regularly attend school. Individuals who induce student absenteeism are liable for fines up to \$200. With this in mind, we reaffirm the position that parents are responsible for their children to attend school every day that classes are in session.

Absences due to family vacation are unexcused. A child who is absent from school due to a family vacation taken during the school year is of particular concern. It is important for children to receive continuous instruction; every day missed sets a

child back and creates added pressure on the child and on the school. The school calendar is published in advance of the school year to help parents plan family trips so that they coincide with school vacations. Parents are urged to comply with the school calendar.

The practice of the school department is not to provide advance and/or make up work when the student is absent from school due to vacation. Since assignments are based upon material previously taught, work must be made up after the child returns. Parental cooperation in this matter is appreciated.

Students who are absent at the time when state or national standardized tests are administered will be allowed to make up missed tests to the extent that scheduled make up time is available and consistent with state law and regulations.

### **Religious Observations**

Students may be granted excused absences when the school's schedule conflicts with religious holidays. A student may be required to submit written notification. A student should not suffer adverse or prejudicial consequences from an excused absence, should be allowed a reasonable opportunity to make up school work missed during the absence, and will not be subject to penalty scholastically or to attendance records due to absences incurred due to religious observances. A sincere attempt will be made to avoid assemblies, assessments, and special school events on religious holidays.

### **Attendance Failure**

Absences greater than seven (7) days in a semester are considered excessive. If a student is repeatedly absent or tardy without an acceptable excuse, the Principal may take necessary action, including retention, withholding of credit or receiving an incomplete. All absences, including absences excused by parents, will count toward the semester limit.

The exceptions for the purpose of this policy are documented, excused absences for:

- Family bereavement or serious illness in the family
- School-approved field trips
- Observance of major religious holidays
- Legal (with documentation from court or lawyer)
- Medical excuse, absences due to illness or doctor appointment (with date-specific medical documentation for each day of absence provided by physician in order for absence to be excused)

### **Student Absence Notification Program**

If the school has not received notification of an absence from a parent within three (3) days of the absence, the school shall notify the parent of the child's absence.

If a student has at least five (5) days in which he/she has missed two (2) or more periods unexcused in a school year, or if a student has missed five (5) or more school days unexcused in a school year, the school shall notify the student's. For those students who have five (5) or more unexcused absences in a school year, the school principal shall make reasonable effort to meet with the parent to develop jointly, and with input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant state and local agencies, an action plan to improve and ensure the student's attendance.

### **References:**

Source: MASC

LEGAL REFS.:

M.G.L. 76.1; 76.1a; 76.1b; 76.4; 76.19; 76.20

### **Version Control**

Action	Date
First Reading	6/5/2017
Second Reading	6/19/2017
Adopted	6/19/2017