

Coventry Public Schools

School Attendance Policy

Purpose: The Coventry School Committee believes that daily attendance is a critical factor in student academic and social success. Students who attend school regularly are more successful academically, socially and emotionally and are more likely to attend post-secondary schools and less likely to drop out of school. The Coventry School Committee seeks to ensure that every student attends school every day and on time. Further, the Coventry School Committee seeks to provide immediate action and/or interventions for students who are demonstrating patterns of excessive absences.

Attendance

Attendance is mandated by Rhode Island General Laws 16-19-1. Regular attendance is absolutely necessary for academic success as it develops a sense of responsibility which is indispensable for survival in the workplace.

Definitions:

1. **Excused Absences:**

Excused absences shall include the following:

- Absence from class due to out-of-school suspension
- Absence from class due to attendance at school-sponsored events
- Absence from class due to attendance at scheduled meetings with school personnel
- Absences from class due to religious observance
- Illness confirmed by a Doctor's note within 3 days of return to school
- Dental appointments confirmed by a Dentist's note within three (3) days of return to school
- Family bereavement confirmed with a newspaper obituary / Note from parent/guardian
- Legal/court obligations confirmed by a note from the courts
- Verifiable college and military appointments, prior permission from the Assistant Principal for Student Services and appointment verifications forms are required.
- Parent notes for illness of up to five (5) school days as approved by School Administrators (not to exceed four notes per quarter)

2. **Unexcused Absences:**

Any absence that cannot be characterized by one of the above categories will be considered an unexcused absence. Students absent from class due to family travel or vacation result in a loss of valuable instructional time and is strongly discouraged. The number of days missed for such absences will be counted as unexcused absences. Please Note: Parent/guardian permission in and of itself is not recognized by Coventry Public Schools as a legitimate reason for absence.

3. **Tardy:**

A student will be considered tardy when he/she enters the school building after the designated arrival time or when the student enters a class after the designated start time. Five (5) unexcused late arrivals to school and/or early dismissals will constitute one (1) unexcused absence.

4. **Class absence:**

A student will be considered as being absent from a class at the secondary level if the student is absent for thirty (30) minutes or more of any class without a valid excuse.

5. **Perfect Attendance:**

A student will be considered to have perfect attendance if the student has no unexcused daily and/or period absences.

6. **Attendance Review Committee:**

The Attendance Review Committee is comprised of a group of teachers and administrators who will, on a monthly basis, review students' attendance at the Middle and High School level and will identify students who are in violation of the attendance policy. Additionally, the committee will facilitate the appeal the process at the High School.

7. **Social Suspension:**

Social Suspension is the period of time when a student is ineligible for participation in any and all extra-curricular events, athletics, social events, dances, etc.

8. **Truancy:**

A student is considered Truant when the student and/or the student's parent/guardian purposely keeps the student away from school without a valid excuse as defined above.

Interventions:

ELEMENTARY:

1. All absences and tardies are recorded and reported as unexcused until notification of a valid excuse is made to the main office of the school. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the school of the student's absence prior to the start of school on the day of the absence. If the parent/guardian does not call, a written excuse from the parent or guardian is required within three (3) school days of the student's return to school. Additionally, when a pattern of absences develops, a written excuse and medical documentation may be required in addition to the phone call.
2. After a student has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences and/or tardies, a telephone call may be made to the parent/guardian requesting an explanation. The Principal may review the explanation and determine what steps, if any, are necessary for follow up.
3. Following ten (10) cumulative unexcused absences, the principal may make a referral to the Truancy Officer.
4. Parents/guardians will be notified, in writing, if unexcused absences have put the student in danger of non-promotion.

Family Travel/Vacation:

A student's absence from school for the purposes of family travel or vacation result in a loss of valuable class time and is strongly discouraged. The number of days will be counted as unexcused absences. Teachers are not responsible for preparing school work that a student will miss during a vacation that scheduled during the regularly scheduled school day calendar.

Early Dismissals:

Early dismissals from school are discouraged as they take away from valuable instructional time. Requests for the early dismissal of a student will be granted only for business that cannot be conducted outside of the normal school day. Parents/Guardians will be expected to present a driver's license or government issued identification to pick up the child from school.

Reasons for early dismissal shall be limited to the following reasons: Illness as verified by the school nurse, doctor's appointment, court appearance, or family emergency as verified by the Principal. All requests for early dismissal must be in writing. Written requests must be presented to the School at the beginning of the school day in which the dismissal will take place. Phone calls requesting early release of a student will not be accepted.

Because the early dismissal of students is so disruptive to the classroom, early dismissals will not be granted within thirty (30) minutes of the dismissal of students unless an emergency exists and the dismissal is approved by the Principal.

Missed Assignments:

The teacher and student (or parent/guardian where appropriate) may determine the timeline for work to be made up due to absences.

Appeal Process:

Students (or parent/guardian) who feel aggrieved because of action taken as a result of any section of this policy may appeal said action to the school administration level at which the action was taken. Further appeals may be taken to the Superintendent of Schools and the Coventry School Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Rhode Island Department of Education in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. All absences and tardies are recorded and reported as unexcused until notification of a valid excuse is made to the main office of the school. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the school of the student's absence prior to the start of school on the day of the absence. If the parent/guardian does not call, a written excuse from the parent or guardian is required within three (3) school days of the student's return to school. Additionally, when a pattern of absences develops, a written excuse and medical documentation may be required in addition to the phone call.
2. After a student has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences and/or tardies, a telephone call may be made to the parent/guardian requesting an explanation. The Principal may review the explanation and determine what steps, if any, are necessary for follow up.
3. Following ten (10) cumulative unexcused absences, the principal may make a referral to the Truancy Officer.

4. Parents/guardians will be notified, in writing, if unexcused absences have put the student in danger of non-promotion.
5. Students who arrive after 11:00 am without a doctor's statement will not be eligible to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities (including clubs and dances).

Family Travel/Vacation:

We recognize that there are instances when parents will remove their students from classes for a short period of time. It is important to note that much of the learning opportunities the student will miss are directly connected to classroom activities. Thus, the completion of a worksheet or similar type assignment may not afford a student the optimal learning experience. Therefore, vacations when school is in session are strongly discouraged. Days missed due to a vacation are considered unexcused absences. In the case of a student being on a vacation or family trip, parents should contact the guidance office in advance and complete an Unexcused Vacation Form. Additionally, parents should inform their child's teachers so the child may complete appropriate work within a reasonable time period.

Early Dismissal

Early dismissals from school are discouraged as they take away from valuable instructional time. Requests for the early dismissal of a student will be granted only for business that cannot be conducted outside of the normal school day. In the event a student needs to leave school early for an appointment, he/she must bring a note from the parent to the front office in exchange for a pass at the specific time to return to the main office. The note should include the student's full name, the name of the student's team, and the time they are to be released. The parent must come to the main office, present a license or government photo-ID and sign the student out.

Missed Assignments:

When a student is absent from class for any reason, it is his/her responsibility to make up the work missed. General guidelines state that a student has 24 hours for each class missed to complete missing work. Other arrangements can be made at the teacher's discretion. Failure to make up missing work will factor into the evaluation of students overall progress.

Appeal Process:

Students (or parent/guardian) who feel aggrieved because of action taken as a result of any section of this policy may appeal said action to the Attendance Review Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Superintendent of Schools and the Coventry School Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Rhode Island Department of Education in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws.

HIGH SCHOOL

A student is expected and required to attend school/ classes each day school is in session unless he/she has a reason that qualifies for an excused absence. The following list contains the rules and expectations for CHS students:

1. Students who are absent or suspended will not be allowed to attend any school activity during the period of absence or in the case of suspension, until official reinstatement to school with a parent.
2. Family vacations during school time will not be considered excused.

3. Excessive tardiness to school is unacceptable. Students who accumulate between 5-7 unexcused tardies per semester will receive detention for each. A parent conference may be requested should excessive tardiness become a serious or chronic problem. A student will be assigned to Double Detention for being tardy 8-10 times. On the 11th tardy to school, students will be placed in the Alternative Learning Center and must return to school with a parent or guardian. All other days tardy will result in disciplinary consequences unless excused with verifiable documentation (i.e., doctor's note, dental note, legal obligation, etc.) All notes must be submitted on the day the student is tardy.
4. A student who arrives late to class by 30 minutes or more, regardless of the class, will be considered to be absent from that class.
5. Students who are intentionally late to school will be considered truant.
6. Students tardy after 11:00 am are considered absent and are ineligible to participate in athletics or extracurricular activities on that day. Should the tardiness occur on the last day before a weekend or vacation, the student will be ineligible to participate in any events over the weekend or the vacation.
7. Personal family appointments (non-medical), which can be scheduled during non-school hours, will be included in absence and tardy totals.
8. The classroom teacher will assign a disciplinary consequence to students who are tardy to class without an acceptable or verifiable reason.
9. Students who miss a class period or an entire day of school without permission will be considered truant. All students who are determined to be truant will be subject to strong disciplinary action.
10. Students may be dismissed from school with a parental note for medical purposes or with verifiable documentation by a doctor, dentist, legal obligation, etc. These notes from verifiable sources or appointment verification forms must be turned in to the Main Office within three days. No phone call will be accepted. Faxed notes can be sent to 822-9492.
11. Students with an unexcused dismissal or unexcused absence from school are ineligible to participate in or attend athletics or extra-curricular activities on that day or the ensuing weekend should it occur on the day before a weekend.
12. Students dismissed for medical, dental, legal appointments, etc., must present a note to the Main Office at the beginning of the school day. Upon the student's return to school from the appointment, verification documentation must be turned in to the office or to the coach or activity advisor, if school day has ended, to be eligible to participate (parental notes will not suffice.) Any student clinically dismissed by the nurse due to illness may not return to school and is ineligible to participate in athletics or school activities.
13. Parents are asked to provide a note in advance of dismissal so that the student is prepared for dismissal. This is especially important during the lunch period. Failure to provide an advance notice may result in a delay of dismissal.
14. **Absence Notes - Parents**
 - The district does accept a parental note of absence for illness as an excused absence if the note is received within three (3) school days following the student's return from the absence. Parents are required to provide a doctor's note for extended absences of more than five (5) consecutive school days.
 - Four (4) Parents' letters each quarter for absence due to illness are accepted as excused if the note is received within three (3) school days. The student's treating physician must provide any additional notes documenting further absences.
15. **Medical Notes**

- Medical notes must be original notes or a fax from a doctor's office only. Parents/students are responsible for submitting medical notes to the Main Office within three (3) school days from the student's return to school.
16. *10% absent rule*: At any point in the school year, a student cannot be absent from a class for more than 10% of the days the class is scheduled to meet. Ex: A class meeting 20 times has a maximum absence of two (2) classes.

Rewards Program:

- At the conclusion of each quarter any student with perfect attendance will be eligible to be entered into a raffle to win prizes donated from community businesses who also value the commitment these students make towards their education.
- At the end of each school year, students who have an average of a 92.5 or higher in any full year course and also have 0 unexcused absences or tardies in that particular class, will be exempt from their final exam in that course.
- At the conclusion of each semester, students who have perfect attendance and who drive to school will be eligible for preferential parking in the lot of their choice. More incentives may be included based on funding and availability.

Incentives:

The Coventry School Committee believes it is important to recognize students who have perfect attendance. For this reason, at the conclusion of each quarter, any student who has perfect attendance, (cumulative) will be eligible to participate in a rewards program.

Consequences:

- (The 10% rule) Students who accumulate more than 10% unexcused absences (to be measured monthly) at any point in the year will immediately be placed on social suspension. This suspension will conclude on the last school day of the following month provided that the student has not accumulated more than 10% unexcused absences in the suspension month. **No credit will be given for any work missed due to an unexcused absence; however, the teacher will provide students with all available materials and missing assignments.**

Opportunities for support and intervention:

The district will provide ongoing support and interventions in order to promote students continuous enrollment and success. To that end, whenever possible the school will notify parents when a student's absences exceed five (5) in a calendar month. Additionally, an Attendance Review Committee will be formed and will meet at minimum once per month to review students' attendance.

Appeal Process:

Students (or parent/guardian) who feel aggrieved because of action taken as a result of any section of this policy may appeal said action to the Attendance Review Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Superintendent of Schools and the Coventry School Committee. Further appeals may be taken to the Rhode Island Department of Education in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders

The responsibility for attendance and academic success is shared by students, parents, schools, and the district.

1. Student Responsibilities

- To attend school in compliance with the Rhode Island compulsory attendance law
- To attend school/assigned class every day that school is in session
- To be on time to every class, prepared for rigorous academic work
- To know and adhere to the school's attendance policies and procedures
- To make up any missed assignment due to an excused absence and to complete work as assigned by the teacher

2. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- To comply with the Rhode Island compulsory attendance laws
- To know and adhere to the school's attendance policies and procedures
- To recognize that any absence has a detrimental influence on their child's academic achievement
- To require that their child attend school regularly
- To contact the school when their child is absent by the acceptable method as adopted by the school.
- To provide a note indicating the reason for absence(s) (This note should specify the date(s) their child was absent and must be received in the main office within 3 days of their child's return to school)
- To work collaboratively with the school to solve any attendance problems

3. Teacher Responsibilities

- To take daily attendance, period by period, and to maintain accurate attendance records for each assigned class
- To clearly communicate attendance and make up procedures to all students
- To document and report any attendance problem to the principal/designee or attendance team and to work collaboratively with principal, parent/guardian, attendance team and students to solve the problem

4. Principal Responsibilities

- To require all students to attend assigned classes promptly and regularly
- To assist and support teachers with the implementation of attendance policies and procedures
- To inform parents, students, and school staff about district attendance policies and procedures
- To administer and supervise the attendance policies and procedures
- To establish and implement an attendance team to address all attendance problems
- To maintain accurate records on student attendance and to publish a daily absence, tardy, and early dismissal bulletin
- To inform students' parents/guardians of their child's absences once the student has had 5 (five) unexcused absences in a quarter.
- To inform students and parents of the consequences for absences
- To work cooperatively with the student, parents/guardians, and attendance team to resolve attendance problems
- To provide a copy of attendance policies and procedures to students and parents/guardians once a year
- To create incentives and rewards recognizing students who have exemplary class attendance

5. District Responsibilities

- To assist and support principals in the development and training of school-based attendance teams
- To provide principals and support staff access to quarterly attendance data on each student to be used to monitor the attendance of all students
- To serve as a clearinghouse for providing alternative educational opportunities to students who have withdrawn from school

Substitution and Revocation

The policy is a substitution for the following policies which are hereby expressly revoked and the policy shall be in their place and stead: 5113, 5113 AD, 5113.1, 5113.1 AD

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| 7. | Second Read: | 10/22/2013 |
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Legal reference: R.I. Gen. Laws 16-19-1