

**West Islip School District Attendance Policy
Frequently Asked Questions**

Q. Why did the West Islip School District create an Attendance Policy?

A. The West Islip School District has always had an attendance policy as required by Section 104.1(i) of Commissioner's Regulations under NYS Education Law sections 3205 and 3210.

Q. What was changed in the Attendance Policy?

A. Previously, all absences were considered unexcused. The revised policy differentiates among excused, unexcused, and exempt tardies and absences. In accordance with Education Law, incentives and consequences were developed to align with the type of absence or tardiness.

Q. If my child is absent due to illness, what type of documentation do I need?

A. If a student is absent due to illness, a parent note is required for an illness from one to three consecutive days. If a student is absent for four consecutive days or more, a doctor's note is required.

Q. What happens if I do not submit an absence note?

A. A note is expected the day a student returns to school. Parents have three days to resolve an unexcused absence. The absence remains an unexcused absence until documentation is received. Therefore, if a note is not received, the absence remains encoded as unexcused.

Q. Why is a family vacation considered unexcused?

A. Compulsory education laws mandate that students be in school full-time unless there is an excused or exempted reason. Family vacations have always been considered unexcused. The district recognizes that the decision to take a family vacation rests with the family, and the district encourages students to be in school except in the case of excused or exempt absence.

Q. Why can't school work be provided prior to a vacation?

A. Teachers design lessons based not only on the curriculum, but on the specific needs of their students. They use daily information to revise, edit and differentiate instruction. Pre-planning is not an exact science and students are better served by receiving work under the direction of a teacher. Regardless of any absence, the dynamics of the classroom cannot be substituted. Missing school is missing opportunities for learning.

Q. Why is the West Islip School District concerned about chronic absenteeism and tardiness?

A. With nearly one-fourth of our students chronically absent or at risk for chronic absenteeism, the district is concerned about the significant impact that has upon those students, as well as the impact it has upon the students who have excellent attendance.

Did you know...

- students who are chronically absent in preschool are five times more likely to be chronically absent in second grade;¹
- compared to children with average attendance, chronically absent students gained 14 percent fewer literacy skills in kindergarten; in first grade they had 15 percent fewer literacy skills and 12 percent fewer math skills;²
- chronic absence in kindergarten is associated with lower academic performance in first grade, and the impact is twice as great for students in low-income families;³

- students identified as academically ready at the beginning of kindergarten but who were chronically absent in kindergarten and first grade scored 60 points below students with good attendance on third grade reading tests;⁴
- by sixth grade, chronic absence is one of three early warning signs that a student is more likely to drop out of school, and ninth grade student attendance has been shown to be a better predictor of dropout than eighth grade scores;
- course performance in the ninth grade was the strongest predictor of student graduation and chronic absence was the strongest predictor of course performance;⁵
- fifty percent of students who miss two or more days of school in September miss a month or more of school for the school year;⁶ and
- among students who graduate, those who missed ten or more school days during tenth grade had a 25 percentage point difference in their post-secondary enrollment rates.⁷

Additionally, research studies have found that students suffer academically from having chronically absent classmates – as exhibited across both reading and math testing outcomes. Chronic absenteeism not only had a damaging effect on those individuals missing excessive school days, but also has the potential to reduce outcomes for others in the same educational setting.⁸

Valuable time is used for teachers to reteach materials when students are not present. Students who make up work are missing out on new learning. Although there are times when an absence is unavoidable, students are expected to be in school unless there is an excused or exempt absence.

For more information, visit the following websites for additional information and resources:

Every Student Present <http://www.everystudentpresent.org/>
Attendance Works <http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

¹Ehrlich Stacy B. et al., Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences, University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research, May 2014.

²Ready, Douglas D., Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development: The Differential Effects of School Exposure, Sociology of Education, October 2010.

³Chang, Hedy & Romero, Mariajose, Present, Engaged & Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty: NY: NY, September 2008.

⁴Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Associations with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes, Applied Survey Research, May 2011.

⁵Allensworth, Elaine and Easton, John, What Matters for Staying On-track and Graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A Close Look at Course Grades, Failures, and Attendance in the Freshman Year. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research, July 2007

⁶Olson, Linda S., Why September Matters: Improving Student Attendance, Baltimore Education Research Consortium, July 2014.

⁷Balfanz, Robert and Vaughan Byrnes, Meeting the Challenge of Combating Chronic Absenteeism: Impact of the NYC Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Chronic Absenteeism and School Attendance and Its Implications for Other Cities, Everyone Graduates Center, Johns Hopkins University School of Education, November 2013.

⁸Gottfried, Michael A., Chronic Absenteeism in the Classroom Context: Effects on Achievement, Urban Education, University of California Santa Barbara, December 2015.