

SUBJECT: ATTENDANCE

PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

New York State Education Law requires that the students enrolled in the West Islip School District attend school every day. The educational program offered by this district is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. The regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and their participation in a well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose. Absences have a highly adverse effect on the student as well as the entire educational program. Therefore, the Board of Education expects all parents to make every effort for their children to be in attendance.

The Board of Education recognizes that regular school attendance is a major component of academic success. Through implementation of this policy, the Board expects to reduce the current level of unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures (ATEDs), encourage full attendance by all students, maintain an adequate attendance recordkeeping system, identify patterns of student ATEDs and develop effective intervention strategies to improve school attendance.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the West Islip School District Attendance Policy are as follows:

1. To ensure every student has the opportunity for academic success.
2. To reduce the percentage of students who are chronically absent and/or tardy. Chronic absenteeism or tardiness is defined as missing 10 percent or more of school days for any reason.
3. To determine the district's average daily attendance for State aid purposes.
4. To verify compliance with compulsory education laws.
5. To know the whereabouts of every student for safety and other reasons.
6. To identify attendance patterns to design improvement efforts.
7. To close gaps in student performance.
8. To increase school completion.

Students will be considered in attendance if the student is:

- a) Physically present in the classroom or working under the direction of the classroom teacher during the class scheduled meeting time; or
- b) Working pursuant to approved independent study program; or
- c) Receiving approved alternative instruction.

TYPES OF ABSENCES

Unexcused absences are absences, tardiness, and early departures unrelated to school activities or for which there is no approved submitted documentation. Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to:

- o truancy (unlawful absence or irregular attendance)
- o family vacation
- o cutting class

Students missing school due to an unexcused absence will not be permitted to make up classroom work, quizzes or tests for credit.

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Excused absences are absences, tardiness, and early departures which include, but are not limited to:

- medical appointment (doctor's note)
- quarantine
- illness (four or more consecutive absences due to illness require a doctor's note)
- death in family
- religious observances
- college visitation (to a maximum of three (3) days). Signed documentation and proof of visitation must be provided by the college or university on a duly recognized form generated by the visited school.

Excused absences require written documentation within three days of the student's return to school. Students will be provided an opportunity to make-up any missed work. Until documentation is received, absences are marked as unknown (UKN). Unknown absences will be converted to unexcused absences after three days if written documentation is not provided. **Exempt absences** are absences, tardiness, and early departures that are initiated by the school or other sanctioned obligations, including but not limited to:

- pre-scheduled counseling appointment
- authorized school-initiated activity
- in-school suspension; out-of-school suspension
- school-initiated field trips
- pre-scheduled instrumental classes
- pre-scheduled nurse and physical appointments
- attendance at a CSE
- subpoenaed court appearance
- military program

On a day on which a student has any excused or unexcused absence, the student may not participate in cocurricular or extracurricular activities outside the school day, including but not limited to athletic practices and games, drama activities, etc.

ATTENDANCE & COURSE CREDIT (for secondary credit-bearing courses)

Attendance shall be taken each period of instruction, commensurate with rules established by the State Education Department. The course teacher shall make entries into the established system to register attendance and include all absences, tardiness and early departures.

Regular attendance is expected in all classes, and is considered essential for student success for purposes of this policy.

The Board of Education recognizes the important relationship between class attendance and student performance. Consequently, a student's final grade may be based on classroom participation as well as student performance on homework, tests, papers, projects, etc. Classroom participation means that a student is in class and prepared to work.

Any student who absents himself/herself from more than eighteen classes in a full year course, nine classes in a half year or alternating day course, or twenty-seven classes in a lab course may not receive credit for the course. However, if a student earns a passing grade, credit will not be denied for the course(s). (Note: For seniors, loss of credit could jeopardize graduation.)

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Where possible, make-up opportunities will be provided for all students with excused and exempt absences from class according to procedures established by the classroom teacher. Upon completion of the assigned make-up work, the student will be given credit for classroom work. Students will not be able to receive credit for participation if they are not in attendance, with the exception of an exempt absence.

To assure due process, the implementation of this minimal attendance policy will be in accordance with rules and regulations as developed by the administration. Further, the District shall vigorously publicize and disseminate this policy to ensure awareness by faculty, students, and parents/guardians.

SUMMER SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Summer school attendance will follow the 90% guideline set forth in this policy for attendance during the regular school year. A student who has more than three absences will lose credit and be dropped from the course.

BOCES ATTENDANCE

The District will establish criteria for admittance to BOCES programs that are based, in part on student attendance history.

Loss of credit in a BOCES program will be determined by the attendance policy established by Eastern Suffolk BOCES. Continuation in a two-year BOCES program will be determined, in part, by the attendance policy of both the BOCES and the West Islip School District.

APPEALS PROCESS

Should a student or parent/guardian believe that extenuating circumstances exist, an appeal to reverse the loss of course credit may be made directly to the building Principal, whose decision shall be final

SANCTIONS/INCENTIVES TO BE UTILIZED TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE**SANCTIONS (range of penalties depending on specific attendance violation)**

1. Detention
2. In-school suspension
3. Loss of eligibility for extracurricular activities
4. Suspension of parking and lunch privileges (seniors)
5. Loss of course credit (including refusal of summer school)

To ensure that parents and students are aware of the implication of the District's minimum attendance policy, the teacher and other appropriate school personnel will counsel the student, and contact the student's parents by mail and/or phone, at appropriate intervals prior to the student absenting themselves out of the course.

When a student cuts class or is absent, tardy, or departs early without proper excuse, parents will be notified.

INCENTIVES

Each building Principal and faculty will seek ways to promote student attendance and punctuality.

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NOTIFICATION TO FACULTY, PARENTS & THE COMMUNITY

1. The attendance policy will be included in student handbooks and will be reviewed with students at the start of the school year.
2. A back-to-school or Open House event will be held at the beginning of each school year to explain this policy and stress the parent's responsibility for ensuring their children's attendance.
3. Parents will receive a plain language summary of this policy at the start of each school year. Parents will be asked to sign and return a statement indicating that they have read and understand the policy.
4. School newsletters and publications will include periodic reminders of the importance of student attendance and content of this policy.
5. The District will provide a copy of the attendance policy and any amendments thereto to faculty and staff. New staff will receive a copy upon their employment with the District.
6. The District will post a copy of the attendance policy on the District website, thereby making it available to any community member upon request.

STRATEGIES TO MEET OBJECTIVES (Some duplication of items already mentioned)

The District will review attendance data to identify any patterns or trends in student absences, and the District will take appropriate action to remedy any such patterns or trends in student absences if any are identified. Examples of attendance trends or patterns include, but are not limited to:

- Consistent absence from a particular period (ex. first period, period after lunch, last period)
- Consistent absence from a particular day or course
- Consistent absence of students on post-event mornings
- Consistent pattern of absences throughout the school year.

Other potential strategies

1. Daily attendance calls
2. Identification of absence patterns
3. Period by period attendance
4. Communication with parents
5. Certified letters
6. Packet of information available to parents detailing places to seek help
7. Home visits
8. Parent conferences/case conferences
9. Instructional Support Team referral
10. Committee on Special Education referral
11. CPS referral

RESPONSIBILITY FOR REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE RECORDS

The Principal of each elementary school; the Principal, assistant principals, and counselors at each middle and high school; and the high school attendance clerk shall be responsible for reviewing attendance regulations and initiating any necessary actions for daily attendance.

Teachers are responsible for reviewing attendance regulations and initiating necessary actions for period by period attendance. These actions include but are not limited to contacting parents/guardians, writing disciplinary referrals, and reporting students to counselors for follow-up.