

SECTION J
STUDENTS

3. Attendance (Voted 11/6/78, #78-447; 4/27/89, #89-196; 1/5/12, #12-2; 6/16/15, #15-41)

AL draft for discussion on December 16, 2024

[Sources consulted:
M.G.L. c. 76, s. 1, 1A, 1B, 2; M.G.L. c. 76, s. 18
DESE guidance on attendance policies, February 2022
MASC policy JH, as copied below by Alicia Mallon
MASC remarks on DESE guidance, as copied below by Alicia Mallon]

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for student success. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to the schools for the development of attendance-related rules that are consistent with the requirements of G.L. c. 76, s. 1, 1A, and 1B.

I. ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

The School Committee is charged with enforcing school attendance. Under Massachusetts law, regular attendance at school is required for all persons between the ages of 6 and 16, and parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring their student's attendance at school. G.L. c. 76, s. 1, 2.

All students enrolled in PSB are required to attend school, including all scheduled classes, on each school day, and to arrive on time to school and to all scheduled classes. Students will be excused from attending school or class or from arriving late to school or class on a particular day only if one or more of the reasons set forth in Part III of this Policy applies. In all other cases, students who are absent from school or from class or who are consistently late to school or to class may be subject to disciplinary action as provided for in their school handbook, or as otherwise determined by the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee.

II. ATTENDANCE RULES AND PROCEDURES

All schools shall develop and maintain school attendance rules and procedures that are consistent with this Policy. Such attendance rules and procedures shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. A process for providing notice to students and their parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year of: (a) the PSB attendance requirements; (b) the range of consequences for a student's failure to attend or arrive on time to school or to scheduled classes at school; (c) the procedure parents/guardians shall use to report student absences or late arrivals to school or to scheduled classes at school; and (d) the requirement that parents/guardians provide updated contact information so that they may be reached during the school day;
2. A process for monitoring student attendance at school that is consistent with applicable law and the collective bargaining agreement between the School Committee and Brookline Educators' Union;
3. When and how absences will be reported by parents or guardians to the school, by the administrative designee to classroom teachers, and by teachers to the administrative designee for classroom attendance;
4. Parent/guardian responsibilities for reporting a student's absence including method of reporting (e.g., phone, email, text), expected time of notification, any required documentation verifying the reason for the absence, and deadline for submitting said documentation;
5. In the event that a student is absent from school and the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence, a process for notifying the student's parent/guardian as soon as reasonably possible but within no more than 3 days of the student's absence;

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6. A process for notifying the parent/guardian of a student who has at least 5 days in which the student has missed 2 or more periods unexcused in a school year or who has missed 5 or more school days unexcused in a school year. The Principal, or the Principal's designee, shall make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent/guardian of a student who has 5 or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attendance. These action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the Principal, or Principal's designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian and with input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and non-profit agencies;

7. A process for reporting an individual student's pattern of tardiness or absences to the student's parent/guardian and to the school Principal or Head of School or their designees and implementing further support or action, as appropriate; and

8. Any academic consequences for excessive absenteeism, including loss of credit.

Deleted: <#>A process for responding promptly to an individual student's failure to arrive on time to school or to scheduled classes at school, which process shall include notification to the student's parent/guardian;¶

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III. EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

A. Excused Absences: A student shall be deemed to have an excused absence from school or from class only under the following circumstances:

1. The student is experiencing personal illness;
2. The student has suffered personal trauma, such as the death of a family member;
3. The student is observing a religious holiday;
4. The student must attend a medical appointment that cannot be made outside of school hours. The student must provide proper documentation for such appointment. The School Committee discourages the making of appointments during the school day;
5. The student must participate in a legal proceeding requiring their appearance in person;
6. The student has been suspended from school;
7. The student is attending an approved school related trip, assembly, or meeting;
8. The student is attending a scheduled interview for formal opportunities outside of school which may include, but not be limited to employment, postsecondary education opportunity, or internship. The student must provide proper documentation for such interview;
9. Other, as deemed appropriate by the Principal or Head of School or their designees.

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All such absences must be confirmed by an eligible parent/guardian.

B. Unexcused Absences: An unexcused absence is not covered by Section IIIA above. Examples of an unexcused absence may include, but may not be limited to:

1. Repetitive or chronic absence or tardiness due to illness or injury not documented by a doctor or other medical professional;
2. Non-emergency family situations; and
3. Family Vacations.

IV. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

For a student with a disability, it may be appropriate to convene the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to address any impact of the student's disability on attendance and address any changes needed to the IEP to ensure that the student receives a free appropriate public education. A student may be referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education or related services if there is reason to suspect the student has a disability that affects the student's ability to attend school regularly.

| Refs: G.L. c. 76, s. 1, [1A, 1B](#), and 2; 603 CMR 27.00

JH - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of students attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their students attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the student; and observance of major religious holidays.

[REMARK: These reasons (except inclement weather) are already among those listed in Section III.a of the PSB policy.]

A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

Accordingly, parents/guardians will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of their student. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

Student Absence Notification Program

[REMARK: The two elements of this Program are already listed in Section II of the PSB policy.]

Each Principal or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each Principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

Dropout Prevention

[REMARK: This is already found in M.G.L. c. 76 s. 18. It seems unnecessary to add it to our policy.]

A student who has not graduated from high school and has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence shall not be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to the student, and that student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed 14 days.

Commented [AM1]: MASC policy JH is the policy that most closely matches this policy.

The details in Sections II and III are more commonly found in handbooks.

The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian. The Superintendent or designee shall convene a team of school staff to participate in the exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

SOURCE: MASC - Updated 2021

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); [76:1A](#); [76:1B](#); [76:16](#); [76:18](#); [76:19](#); [76:20](#)

NOTE: DESE'S minimum requirements for policies and protocols include the following items which are most appropriate for inclusion in student handbooks so that Districts can most effectively meet student and family needs.

- When and how absences will be reported by parents or guardians to the school, by the administrative designee to classroom teachers, and by teachers to the administrative designee for classroom attendance.
- Parent/guardian responsibilities for reporting a student's absence including method of reporting (e.g., phone, email, text), expected time of notification, any required documentation verifying the reason for the absence, and deadline for submitting said documentation.
- Timeline for school notification to parents of an absence in the event the parent or guardian did not report the absence.
- When and who from the school will check-in and follow-up with students and families (e.g., after 1 unexcused absence; after 5 excused absences) and how this will take place.
- Any academic consequences for excessive absenteeism (e.g., loss of credit).
- Interventions and services the school may use to encourage consistent student attendance and reengagement.

[REMARK: The last item does not seem to belong in a student handbook.]