



METUCHEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent

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Metuchen, New Jersey 08840

Vincent Caputo, Ed.D.
Superintendent

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January 22, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

At our Reorganizational Board Meeting earlier this month, we updated our regulation on student attendance, Regulation #5200. This updated regulation is now in effect and is aligned with NJ State Department of Education guidelines. The most significant change in the regulation is limiting **allowable** absences for students to only five reasons:

- 1) Religious observances;
- 2) College visits (up to three days per school year for students in grades 11 & 12 only);
- 3) Take Our Children to Work Day;
- 4) Participation in observances of Veterans' Day;
- 5) The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.

*Note that parent notes, family vacations, sick days (including doctor visits), and bereavement days are not considered **excused**.

The reason for this change is due to the new State regulations on "chronic absenteeism." The State defines chronic absenteeism as being absent at least 10% of the school year. So if a student is absent 18 days or more, he or she is considered chronically absent by the State. The State has added the percentage of chronically absent students to the school report card. Schools with too many chronically absent students are required to implement action plans to decrease absenteeism. We already started some of these initiatives, and the results are encouraging.

Although this is a considerable change for our district as a whole, the impact on our individual children is minimal. Please keep in mind that although the State has redefined **allowable** absences, *the authority to make educational decisions on the accumulated **unexcused** absences remains with the district.*



Please remember:

- 1) Parents are still encouraged to keep your children home if they are sick;
- 2) The decision for promotion is up to the principal, and there is an appeal process;
- 3) Individual circumstances, such as ongoing health issues or severe illness will be considered on a case-by-case basis;
- 4) If your child is late to school or leaves early, that does not count toward absences; so it is always better for your child to come to school late or leave early rather than miss the entire day.

We believe that this new regulation will ultimately help our children achieve. The single most important factor in our children's education is their teacher. If they spend more time together in their classroom, our students will be better prepared for success in college or career.

The school calendar is posted on the district website. Please try to plan any vacations on non-school days. If you have any questions, please call either your principal or my office at 732.321.8700 ext 1016.

Sincerely,

Vincent Caputo, Ed.D
Superintendent