

CROMWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

**STUDENTS
Attendance, Excused Absences
and Truancy**

Adopted: 1/14/97

Revised:

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. The responsibility for regular attendance rests with the students' parents, guardians or with the students themselves when they become of legal age.

In order for students to develop to their full potential, the Board of Education deems it essential that students attend school on a regular basis. The learning experiences that occur in the classroom are considered to be meaningful and essential components of the learning process.

Excused Absence

A student should not be absent from school without the parents' knowledge and consent, therefore, verification of an absence should be in writing by parent or guardian.

An absence shall be considered "excused" when a child does not attend school due to:

- A. Illness or injury,
- B. Death in the immediate family
- C. Religious obligation,
- D. Court appearance,
- E. School sponsored activity,
- F. An emergency, or
- G. Other exceptional circumstances. Written excuse for such absences should be submitted to school officials by the child's parent or guardian. All other absences with or without written explanation shall be considered unexcused.

Unexcused Absence

Board policy with respect to unexcused absences stresses prevention and inquiry leading to remediation of absences. The schools will make all reasonable efforts to keep parents and students informed as to attendance problems and will make all reasonable efforts to help students improve their attendance when such improvement is warranted. Only when all local resources are exhausted is referral to legal authorities recommended.

REGULATIONS TO ACCOMPANY POLICY 5113 - ATTENDANCE, EXCUSED ABSENCES AND TRUANCY

STUDENTS

Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy

The administration has established an attendance regulation which reflects that time lost from class is essentially irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instructional exchange; that excessive absences rob teachers and students of teaching time that could be better spent on programs and activities; and that a student has an obligation to give, as well as receive, in the context of the classroom setting.

Definitions

The follow is a listing of definitions pursuant to this regulation.

1. "Absence" - is when a student in grades kindergarten through 12 is absent from an entire day of school with or without parents permission.
2. "Excused Absence" include absences from school or class due to
 - a) Illness with doctor's verification
 - b) Death in family
 - c) Religious holidays
 - d) Court appearances
 - e) Suspension from school
 - f) Limited absence from school for special activities with parental consent, subject to the approval of the Principal.

The administration will determine whether absences are excused or unexcused. The school does not consider all absences from class or school which has been explained by parents to be excused.

Students who have been absent from school must have the parent contact the school and/or turn in a note from a parent explaining the student's absence if it is to be considered excused,, otherwise it will be treated as an unexcused. The note must follow within two school days.

3. "Unexcused Absence" is an absence from any entire regularly scheduled school day for which the absence is not excused as defined above.

A student may not accumulate more than four (4) unexcused absences from a given class each marking period without a parent conference and/or reduction in grade.

4. "Class Cut" is when a student misses a class and has no legitimate reason for doing so or is tardy to or dismissed from school and does not have a legitimate excuse.
5. "Tardiness" is when students arrive at school later than the beginning of school. Tardiness may be explained by a parent but any absence from class that results will be considered as an accumulated absence and the student may lose credit. Students tardy to school are responsible for work done in classes missed as well as assignments made or due.

6. "Truant" is any student who has four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences from school in any school year.
7. "Habitual Truant" is any student who has twenty (20) unexcused absences within a school year.
8. "Loss of Credit" (Grade 9-12) will take place upon the fifth unexcused absence from class in a full credit course or third class cut in any other course. Continued attendance will be expected.

Attendance Procedure

1. If a student is absent from school, the parent or other person having control of the student will contact the school by 9:30 a.m.
2. If no contact is received, the school will make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or such person by telephone of the student's absence. A written record of these calls shall be maintained in the principal's office.
3. The building principal will determine if the absence is unexcused. When the student has four (4) unexcused absences, a referral will be made to the appropriate staff. The appropriate staff will arrange a meeting with the parent or other person having control of the student to review and evaluate the reason for the student being a truant. This meeting shall be held not later than ten (10) days after the child is identified as a truant. If the parent or other such person declines to attend the meeting, that fact shall be documented and the meeting will be held. The appropriate staff will develop a plan to help improve the student's attendance.
4. If the parent or other person having control of a child identified as "truant fails to attend the required meeting or fails to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem, the building principal or designee shall notify the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall file a written complaint with the Superior Court under the Family with Service Needs law.
5. If the student has ten (10) unexcused absences, a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting shall be held. The PPT will review the student's academic achievement and previous evaluations to determine if additional testing for special education is necessary.
6. After twenty (20) unexcused absences, the student will be identified as an habitual truant.
7. The appropriate staff shall coordinate services and refer truants and habitual truants to community agencies providing child and family services.

At the beginning of each new school year, any student who has had ten or more unexcused absences will be identified as an "at risk student" and will be monitored by the appropriate staff. A letter will be sent to parents and the appropriate staff will meet with the student to discuss the importance of regular attendance.

Attendance Procedures (Grade 9-12)

Note: Students at the high school, through sixteen, are covered by the applicable definitions and procedures pertaining to "truancy."

**Administrative Reg.
(3 of 6)**

1. Absence Limitation

- a) Credit will be withheld in a semester or year course if a student exceeds five (5) absences in a semester. Parents will be informed in writing of any loss of credit.
- b) For purposes of this regulation all absences will count, except for the excused absences previously defined (number two of Definition Regulations).
- c) Family trips and vacations will not generally be regarded as reasons for exceeding the absence limitation. Parents are strongly discouraged from scheduling vacations during times when school is in session. Any parents contemplating family vacations during school should contact the school at least two weeks prior to the vacation to ascertain its probable impact on their child's absence and credit situation. Class work missed shall be obtained upon the student's return and all work must be completed within a two week period following the student's return.
- d) At Grades 9-12, the teaching staff will provide parents and the administration with notification of absences that could affect academic progress or loss of credit.

2. Explanation of Student Absences

A. Procedure for Parents to Explain Absences:

(1) Absence from School

If a student is absent from school, the parent or guardian should call the school that morning to report the absence or he student will be required to bring a note from the parent to the office upon returning to school within two (2) days of return to school.

(2) Tardiness to School

If a student will be late to school, parents are requested to call the school office prior to 9:30 a.m. to inform the school.

(3) Early Dismissal from School

If a parent wishes to have a student dismissed from school early, the student should bring in a note from the parent to the office before school and secure an Early Dismissal Pass.

Students are not permitted to leave the building or school grounds without securing an Early Dismissal Pass.

- B. The Board of Education treats all students equally regardless of age. Students who are 18 or older are responsible for abiding by all attendance regulations including absences, dismissal, tardiness and class cutting. Students age 18 and over who do not live at home and who have filed with the high school office a verification of their legal and financial emancipation may provide their own verification.
- C. Failure to account for absences as described above will result in the absence being treated in the same manner as cuts.

3. Cuts (Grades 9-12)

- A. A cut is an absence from a scheduled class unless (1) authorized in advance by appropriate school personnel, or (2) explained by a parent to the satisfaction of the administration, as described in the previous section.
- B. Refer to High School Student Handbook for procedures regarding class cuts.

C. Appeal Process

The student and parent shall be provided an opportunity for a hearing when loss of credit for a course is imminent due to the lack of student attendance.

- 1. Upon notification by the school that credit for a course or courses will not be obtained because of excessive absence, the parents or the student (if 18) may request a hearing on the matter. The request must be in proper written form.
- 2. The building administrators will arrange the convening of the Hearing Board to hear the appeal.
- 3. The hearing will consist of the building administrator, guidance counselor and teacher(s) (if appropriate).
- 4. The appeal hearing will be conducted during school working hours.
- 5. The student's parents and the student will have the opportunity to present all corroborating information in support of the appeal.
- 6. The Hearing Board will render a decision within three (3) school days after the conclusion of the hearing and so notify the parents and student of the decision.
- 7. The parent and student who have attained the age of majority has the right to appeal to the Superintendent of Schools and the Cromwell Board of Education.

Administration Discretion

The administration will reject any explanation which it finds is not factual. The administration reserves the right to excuse any absence which it concludes has occurred because of mitigating circumstances.

Legal Reference:

Connecticut General Statutes
10-184 Duties of Parents
10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised 1995 - PA 95-304)
10-221 (b) Board of education to prescribe rules.
46-149 Family with Service Needs
Campbell v New Milford, 193 Conn 93 (1984).

CROMWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CROMWELL, CONNECTICUT

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF OBLIGATIONS UNDER C.G.S. 10-184

Dear _____,

Connecticut law requires that the Cromwell Public Schools provide you with this written notice of your obligations under Connecticut General Statute 10-184. This law provides that each parent or other person having control of a child seven years of age and older and under sixteen years of age is obligated to cause the child to attend school regularly during the hours and terms school is in session, unless such parent or other person shows that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction. Connecticut General Statute 10-185 provides that each day's failure to comply with these requirements is a separate offense, punishable by a \$25.00 fine.

Regular student attendance is essential to the educational process. So that we may seek to inform you if your child is absent without explanation, the law also requires that we obtain from you a telephone number or other means of contacting you during the school day. Please meet this obligation by filling out and promptly returning the form below.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

(Principal)

Father

Mother

Mother's Name (please print)

Address

Address

Home Phone

Home Phone

Home Phone

Father's Name (please print)

Work Address

Work Address

Name(s) of student(s):

Work Phone

Work Phone

Emergency Phone #1

Emergency Phone #1

Emergency Phone #2

(Relative, Friend, Neighbor)

CROMWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CROMWELL, CONNECTICUT

Dear _____,

As you know, children must attend school on a regular basis in order to be successful. There is a compulsory school attendance law in Connecticut and parents and guardians are legally responsible for keeping their children in school. I'm sure that you want your child to do well in school and, therefore, I'm writing to ask for your help. _____ has _____ unexcused absences from school. You have already received information from the Cromwell Public Schools explaining the attendance policy. This policy states that if a student is absent for more than twenty (20) days, he/she may not be promoted to the next grade.

This is a serious problem and we all need to work together to solve it. Please contact _____, _____ immediately for an appointment. _____ will work with you and your child to improve school attendance.

Please call _____ immediately at _____.

Respectfully,