

## **Students**

### **Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy**

Regular attendance is essential for an effective school experience and necessary for annual promotion. The responsibility for regular attendance rests with the parents or guardians of the student. The Southington Public Schools shall make every effort to keep the appropriate person informed in this most critical area.

Students in the Southington Public Schools, by Connecticut State Statute, are required to attend school regularly during the hours and days the public school is in session. It is the intent and purpose of the Board of Education to develop and foster the maximum potential in each and every student.

A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent. A student not meeting the definition of “in attendance” shall be considered absent.

It is our belief that successful performance in school is closely related to regular attendance. When a student is absent, he/she misses the important interaction that occurs in the classroom. For that reason, the Southington Public Schools establishes the following procedures and regulations which are aimed at the prevention and evaluation of absences for unexcused reasons.

When possible, authorized parents/guardians requesting dismissal before the normal end of the school day shall make a written request to do so. The parent, guardian or designee identified in such request must come into the school office and provide appropriate identification in order to pick up the student and sign the student out.

Early dismissal should be requested only in emergency or unusual situations.

### **Excused Absences**

A student’s absence from school shall be considered “excused” if verification of the reason for such absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student’s return to school and meets the following criteria:

- A. For absences one through nine, a student’s absences from school are considered “excused” when the student’s parent/guardian approves such absence and provides appropriate verification to school officials.

## **Students**

### **Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy**

#### **Excused Absences (continued)**

Such verification may include a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, verification from a school official that spoke with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, voicemail from a parent/guardian, or a note confirming the absence by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Verification must explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate verification must be provided for each incidence of absenteeism.

Some absences, such as those resulting from medical treatment or the observance of religious holidays are known ahead of time. In order to promote the most effective education in light of these absences, parents and/or guardians shall inform a school official in advance of the known absence.

- B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
1. Student illness (must be verified by a licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of the absence);
  2. Student's observance of a religious holiday;
  3. Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
  4. Mandated court appearances (documentation required);
  5. The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation required and does not apply to exclusion from transportation for disciplinary reasons);
  6. Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administration and to be in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

When a student is out of school or class because of an excused absence, appropriate provisions will be made by school personnel regarding make up of missed assignments, homework, tests, and other class activities missed.

**Students****Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy****Excused Absences (cont.)****Excused Absences for Children of Service Members**

An enrolled student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of the Board of Education, additional excused absences to visit such child's parent or legal guardian with respect to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of such excused absences, such child and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible to obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by such child prior to his or her return to school from such period of excused absence.

**Unexcused Absences**

It is the philosophy of the Board of Education to stress 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.

A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless

1. The absence meets the definition of an excused absence and meets the documentation requirements; or
2. The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence, which is the result of school or District disciplinary action and are excluded from these State Board of Education approved definitions.

An unexcused absence occurs when a student is out of school for reasons other than those approved as excused absences. When a student is absent for an unexcused reason, the amount and kind of assistance provided shall be at the discretion of the student's teacher(s) after consultation with the building administrator.

## Students

### Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy

#### Unexcused Absences (cont.)

#### Chronic Absenteeism

As used in this section, the applicable definitions are as follows:

1. **Chronically absent child:** an enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.
2. **Absence:** An excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education or an in-school suspension that is greater than or equal to one-half of a school day.
3. **District chronic absenteeism rate:** The total number of chronically absent children in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the board of education for such school year.
4. **School chronic absenteeism rate:** The total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

The Board of Education, in compliance with statute, requires the establishment of attendance review teams when chronic absenteeism rates in the District or at individual schools in the District meet the following circumstances:

1. A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
2. A team for the school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
3. A team for either the District or each school must be established when (a) more than one school in the District has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher or (b) a District has a district chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in the District have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.

The membership of attendance review teams may consist of school administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers, chronically absent children, parents or guardians of chronically absent children, and representatives from community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing programs and services to truants.

Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community

## **Students**

### **Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy**

#### **Unexcused Absences (cont.)**

referrals for such truants and chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians. Each attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.

The District shall annually include information for the strategic school profile report for each school and the District that it submitted to the Commissioner of Education, data pertaining to truancy and chronically absent children.

#### **Truancy**

The Board of Education must provide each child with a continuing education which will prepare the student to assume adult roles and responsibilities. Therefore, regular attendance and punctuality are expected from all children enrolled in our schools. By state statute, responsibility for assuring that students attend school rests with the parent/guardian. Every effort must be made to keep absences and tardiness to a minimum. To assist parent/guardian and others in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education has developed the following procedures:

1. Annually notify parent(s) or other person(s) having control of each child enrolled, inclusive in writing of the obligations of the parent/guardian pursuant to student attendance (C.G.S. 10-184).
2. Obtain from each parent or other persons having control of an enrolled child a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or other person during the school day.
3. Establish a system for monitoring student's individual attendance.
4. Make a reasonable effort to notify the parent(s)/guardian whenever a child fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no verification has been received by school official that the child's parent /guardian is aware of the student's absence.
5. Identify a student as "truant" when the student has four (4) unexcused absences in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in any school year.
6. Hold a meeting with appropriate staff and the parent or other person having control of the child identified as a "truant" or chronically absent within ten (10) days of such designation to review the reasons for the truant behavior and to evaluate the situation.

**Students****Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy****Truancy (continued)**

7. Identify a student as a "habitual truant" when the student has twenty (20) unexcused absences in any school year.
  - A. Referral will be made to the Planning Placement Team to determine whether or not an educational evaluation is appropriate, prior to a written complaint to Superior Court.
  - B. File a written complaint, by the Superintendent, with the Superior Court not later than fifteen calendar days after the failure of a parent/guardian to attend the meeting (item #6) or upon the failure to cooperate with the school attempting to solve the truancy problem, alleging that the acts or omissions of any child identified as an "truant" are such that the student's family is a "family with service needs" if the parent or other person having control of the child identified as "truant" fails.
    - a. to attend the required meeting to evaluate why the child's truant; or,
    - b. to cooperate with the school in trying to solve the truancy problem.
8. Provide for the coordination of services and refer enrolled students who are truants or habitual truants to community agencies providing child and family services.
9. If in existence, refer the child to the children's probate court truancy clinic.

A student who is identified as a "truant" may be subject to the following consequences:

- A. Promotion to the next grade may be contingent upon the student successfully completing a summer school program.
- B. The student may be retained in the same grade in order to acquire the skills necessary for promotion to the next grade level.

**Limits of Liability**

School personnel who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to subdivision (4) above, shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give notice.

## Students

### Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy

#### Truancy (continued)

The Board recognizes the need for students to be in school for the full instructional day. It is encouraged that early dismissal should be requested only in emergency or unusual situations.

Students who become ill during the school day may be excused by the school nurse and transportation home must be provided by the parent or his/her designee.

#### Legal Reference:

##### Connecticut General Statutes

10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)

10-184 Duties of parents (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)

10-185 Penalty

10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy - in general

10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 11-136)

10-220(c) Duties of boards of education (as amended by PA 15-225)

45a-8c Truancy clinic. Administration. Policies and procedures. Report. (as amended by PA 15-225)

PA 15-225 An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism

*Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define "attendance."*

*Action taken by State Board of Education on June 27, 2012, to define "excused" and "unexcused" absences.*

Policy Adopted: February 1989  
 Policy Revised: August 2002  
 Policy Revised: June 23, 2016  
 Policy Revised: September 8, 2016

## 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 instructional 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.

The Southington Public Schools has established 150 days as the minimum days of attendance to be eligible for matriculation to the next grade level. Absenteeism in excess of 30 days in any one school will result in an administrative review (K-8). Attendance for Southington High School students (9-12) follows the Southington High School Handbook requirements.

### Definitions

The following 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 or class or school with or without parental or guardian permission.

A student is considered to be "in attendance" if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.

2. "Excused Absence" include absences from school for absences one through nine, and appropriate verification is provided by the student's parent/ guardian approving the absence, due to
  - A. Illness or injury (with doctor's verification after the tenth absence and all subsequent absences thereafter)
  - B. Death in the family
  - C. Religious holidays
  - D. Court appearances
  - E. Lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the students attends (This reason does not require documentation and does not apply to exclusion from transportation for disciplinary reasons.)
  - F. Limited absence from school for special activities or extraordinary educational opportunities with parental or guardian consent, subject to the advance approval of the Principal or his/her designee, in accordance with SDE guidelines.

## Students

### Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy

#### Definitions cont.

3. For the tenth absence and all others thereafter, the same reasons cited above shall constitute "excused" absences. Documentation by a medical professional is required for illness, regardless of the length of the absence.

The administration will determine whether absences are excused or unexcused. The school does not consider all absences from class or school which have been explained by parents/guardians to be excused. However, for purposes of the reporting of truancy to the SDE, the state approved definitions of "excused" and "unexcused" absences will be used. The District is not precluded from using separate definitions on such absences for its internal uses.

Students who have been absent from school must turn in a note from a parent/guardian or have a parent/guardian call to explain the student's absence if it is to be considered excused; otherwise it will be treated as an unexcused absence. The school does not consider all absences from class or school which have been explained by parents/guardians to be excused.

4. "Unexcused Absence" is an absence from any entire regularly scheduled school day for which the absence is not excused as defined above. A student's absence shall be considered unexcused unless the absence meets the definition of an excused absence, listed above, including the fulfillment of the verification requirements, or if an absence is the result of school or District disciplinary action.
5. "Chronically absent child" is an enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.
6. "Absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education or an in-school suspension that is greater than or equal to one-half of a school day.
7. "District chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent children in the previous school year divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for such school year.
8. "School chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

## **Students**

### **Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy**

#### **Definitions cont.**

9. A "Class Cut" occurs when a student misses a class and has no legitimate reason for doing so or is tardy to or leaves school and does not have a legitimate excuse.
10. A "Tardiness" occurs when a student arrives at school later than the beginning of school. Tardiness may be explained by a parent/guardian 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 given or due.
11. A "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.
12. A "Habitual Truant" is any student who has twenty (20) unexcused absences within a school year.

#### **Attendance procedure K-8**

1. If a student is absent from school, the parent or other person having control of the student, will contact the school no later than 9:30 a.m. (grades 6-8) or 11:00 a.m. (grades K-5).
2. If no contact is received, the school will make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or such person having control of the student of the student's absence. A record of these attempts shall be kept.
3. The building principal will determine if the absence is unexcused. When the student has four (4) unexcused absences in a month or (10) unexcused absences in a year, 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 or his designee shall file a written complaint with the Superior Court under the Family with Service Needs law.

## **Students**

### **Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy**

#### **Definitions cont.**

5. If the student has twenty (20) 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 testing for special education is necessary or if advancement to the next grade is appropriate.
6. After twenty (20) unexcused absences, the student will be identified as a 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/guardians to discuss the importance of regular attendance if attendance continues to be an issue.

#### **Attendance Procedures (Grades 9-12)**

As outlined in the Southington High School Student Handbook.

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

#### **Administrative Discretion (K-12)**

The principal will reject any explanation for absence which is not found to be factual. The principal reserves the right to excuse any absence which it concludes has occurred because of mitigating circumstances. The judgment of the principal shall be considered final. The principal is responsible for the annual review, changes to, and publication of the school's attendance policy.

**Students**

**Attendance, Excused Absences and Truancy**

**Legal Reference:**

**Connecticut General Statutes**

10-184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157) 10-198a  
Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157 and  
PA 11-136)

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).

*Action taken by State Board of Education on January 2, 2008, to define "attendance."*

*Action taken by the State Board of Education on June 27, 2012 to define "excused" and  
"unexcused" absences.*

Regulation approved: October 3, 1996  
Regulation Revised: February 12, 2007  
Regulation Revised: May 16, 2013  
Regulation Revised: September 8, 2016