

Students

Attendance, Truancy, and Chronic Absenteeism

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control of the child. To assist parents and other persons in meeting this responsibility, the Board of Education (the “Board”), through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures to implement this policy.

In addition, the Board takes seriously the issue of chronic absenteeism. To address this issue, the Board, through its Superintendent, will adopt and maintain procedures regarding chronic absenteeism in accordance with state law.

- Legal References:
- Connecticut General Statutes §10-220
 - Connecticut General Statutes §10-184
 - Connecticut General Statutes §10-186
 - Connecticut General Statutes §10-198a`
 - Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198b
 - Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198c
 - Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198d
 - Connecticut General Statutes § 10-198e
 - Guidelines for Reporting Student Attendance in the Public School Information System (Connecticut State Department of Education, January 2008)
 - Connecticut State Board of Education Memorandum, *Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences* (June 27, 2012)
 - Connecticut State Department of Education, *Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention* (April 2013)
 - Connecticut State Department of Education, *Reducing Chronic Absence in Connecticut’s Schools: A Prevention and Intervention Guide for Schools and Districts* (April 2017)

Connecticut State Department of Education Memorandum, *Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules* (February 22, 2018)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Youth Service Bureau Referral Guide* (February 2018)

Connecticut State Department of Education, *Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together* (June 29, 2020), available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/COVID-19/CTReopeningSchools.pdf>

Policy adopted: October 22, 2007
Amended: December 16, 2019
Amended: August 13, 2020 (sunsets July 1, 2021)

WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Westport, Connecticut

Students

Truancy

Introduction and Definitions

The district's policy on student truancy shall stress early prevention and inquiry leading to remediation of absences rather than imposition of punitive measures for students. Referral to legal authorities normally shall be made only when local resources are exhausted. For purposes of implementing this policy and for reporting purposes regarding truancy, the District will utilize the State Board of Education approved definitions of "excused", "unexcused" and "disciplinary" absences.

"Truant" shall mean a student age five to eighteen, inclusive, who has four unexcused absences in any one month, or ten unexcused absences in one school year.

"In attendance" shall mean a student 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.

"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.

"Absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the State Board of Education pursuant to CGS [10-198b](#).

"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.

"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.

Remediation of Truancy

School personnel shall seek cooperation from parents or other persons having control of such child and assist them in remedying and preventing truancy. The Superintendent of Schools shall develop regulations which will detail the following school district obligations under the district's truancy policy.

1. Notify parents annually of their obligations under the attendance policy.
2. Obtain telephone numbers for emergency record cards or other means of contacting parents or other persons having control of the child during the school day.
3. Establish a system to monitor student attendance.
4. Make a reasonable effort by telephone and by mail to notify parents or other persons having control of the child, enrolled in grades one through eight, inclusive, when a child does not arrive at school and there has been no previously approval or other indication which indicates parents are aware of the absence. (Note: Persons who in good faith give or fail to give notice pursuant to this section 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.)
5. Identify a student as "truant" when the student accumulates four unexcused absences in any month or ten in a school year.
6. Identify a student as "chronically absent" when the student accumulates a total number of absences at any time during a school year that is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at the school during the school year.
7. Appropriate school staff meet with parents of a child identified as truant or chronically absent to review and evaluate the situation, within ten days of such designation. Such meeting may involve the school or District Attendance Team.

Students so identified may be subject to:

- (a) retention in the same grade to acquire necessary skills for promotion or retention.
- (b) a requirement to complete a summer school program successfully before being promoted to the next grade.

8. When a petition is filed, an educational evaluation of the truant student shall be done by appropriate school personnel if no such evaluation has been performed within the preceding year.

9. Provide coordination of services and refer "truants" to community agencies which provide child and family services.

10. If in existence, refer the child to the children's probate court truancy clinic.

The Board, on or before 8/15/18, shall implement a truancy intervention model identified by the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE) for any school within the District that has a disproportionately high rate of truancy, as identified by the Commissioner of Education. The intervention models must also address the needs of students with disabilities. Parents or other persons having control of each child shall be notified of such truancy model. (Note: The SDE is required to identify these effective truancy intervention models by 8/15/18.)

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 District team must be established when the District's chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.

2. A school team 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 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 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 utilize the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education when it becomes available. Such plan must include the means for collecting and analyzing data relating to student attendance, truancy and chronic absenteeism. The data must be disaggregated by school district, school grades and subgroups such as race, ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free and reduced priced lunches, students whose primary language is not English, and students with disabilities.

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

The Principal or his/her designee of any elementary or middle school located in a town/city designated as an alliance district may refer to the children's truancy clinic established by the Probate Court serving the town/city, a parent/guardian with a child defined as a truant or who is at risk of becoming a truant. (An attendance officer or a police officer shall deliver the citation and summons and a copy of the referral to the parent/guardian.)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

[10](#) 184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243, PA 00-157 and PA 18-15)

[10](#)-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157, P.A. 11-136 and PA 16-147)

[10-198b](#) State Board of Education to define "excused absence," "unexcused absence," and "disciplinary absences"

[10-198c](#) Attendance review teams (as amended by PA 17-14)

[10-198d](#) Chronic absenteeism (as amended by PA 18-182)

[10-198e](#) Identification of truancy identification models (as amended by PA 18-182)

[10-199](#) through [10-202](#) Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised, 1995, PA 95-304)

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

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

[10-202e f](#) Policy on dropout prevention and grant program.

[10-221\(b\)](#) Board of education to prescribe rules. *Campbell v New Milford*, 193 Conn 93 (1984).

Action taken by the 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.

Policy adopted:

**Series 5000 C-19
Students**

Temporary amendments related to the COVID-19 pandemic have been made to this policy and to sections I.B and IV of the regulations. All temporary revisions appear in highlighted bold italics or strikethrough text.

Additional changes to this policy may be necessary when additional guidance from the State Department of Education is released. Boards of education are encourage to review and update as necessary any policies regarding student course credit linked to class attendance.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE, TRUANCY AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

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ADOPTED _____
REVISED: _____

8/12/18

Temporary Revisions 7/6/20