

## **Students**

### **Truancy**

### **Attendance**

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity. The attendance policy is intended to promote student success.

The New Milford Board of Education requires parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly during the hours and term's the public schools are in session.

Regular attendance at school is not only required by state law, but is an integral component in student success and a matter of self-discipline which will prove important later in life. Class time is an invaluable opportunity for students and teachers to interact with each other and exchange ideas. It is also the forum for a wide range of learning opportunities which cannot be duplicated outside of the classroom. Therefore, in order to avail themselves of the maximum opportunity for learning, students need to be present in each and every class.

The success of a student is determined by the cooperative effort of the student, parents, school, and the community. Failure of these groups to live up to their responsibilities can result in failure for the student. For this reason, responsibilities must be clearly defined and followed.

The procedures and regulations shall be in accordance with Board policy and Connecticut State law. The Superintendent shall insure that administrative procedures and disciplinary actions for student attendance will be contained in each student/parent handbook.

Procedures and regulations shall be maintained and implemented for the schools to provide age-appropriate measures which promote regular and punctual attendance. Schools that share the same grade levels shall have the same procedures and regulations. The procedures and regulations shall clearly define the responsibilities of parents and students regarding attendance in class and school, tardiness, early dismissal, completion of missed work, and other areas which affect the classroom learning experience.

The Principal will give annual written notice to parents/guardian of their obligations according to Connecticut General Statute 10-184. At the beginning of each academic year -- or, in the case of students who enroll during the school year, at the time of enrollment -- the school district will require from the parents/guardians a telephone number where they can be contacted during the school day (i.e. from first bell to dismissal).

The official school day, during which all students are the responsibility of the high school, begins when the student either boards a school bus to come to school or otherwise when the student arrives on campus for the day. Students may neither get off the bus prior to arrival at school nor may they leave campus once they have arrived, without prior approval of the Principal or the Principal's designee.

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#### **A. Student Responsibilities**

1. To attend all classes except for reasons stated under "Excused Absence" and to be punctual.
2. To report directly to the Attendance Office or School Office when tardy to school, in accordance with school procedures.
3. To notify teachers of anticipated absence and to make arrangements to make up work promptly upon return from an excused absence. In the case of an extended absence, to seek faculty assistance if needed and to make up work in a reasonable time frame.
4. To communicate with parents, teachers, and/or school administrators any problems related to lack of attendance and/or tardiness to school or any class.
5. To report one's own absences from school or class in accordance with school procedures if one is legally emancipated.

#### **B. Parent Responsibilities:**

1. To communicate and work cooperatively with the school for the benefit of the student.
2. To emphasize the importance of regular attendance and punctuality. To authorize only those absences that are included under "Excused Absence." Also, to make every effort to schedule appointments and vacations outside of school hours.
3. To contact the school regarding an absence or tardy the morning of that absence or tardy.
4. To assist students with arrangements to seek faculty assistance and make up missed work resulting from an absence.

#### **C. School Responsibilities:**

1. To take all actions necessary to ensure the success of the student, including parent conferences, counseling, and interaction with the community in making use of community services.
2. To keep accurate attendance records.

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3. To notify parents promptly (when parents have not called the school) of all absences whether, for one class or the entire school day.
4. To arrange opportunities for the students to make up missed tests, quizzes and assignments resulting from absences, upon their return to school. In the case of extended absence, to prepare with the student a plan for faculty assistance and an opportunity to make up work in a reasonable time frame.

### **D. Community Responsibilities:**

1. To realize that the success of students contributes to the success of the community.
2. To encourage regular school attendance as a prerequisite for student employment.
3. To encourage area businesses to refrain from allowing students to congregate during school hours.
4. To encourage medical and dental offices to arrange student appointments outside of school hours.
5. To do all that is possible under current state law to ensure that all students attend school regularly.

### **Definitions**

1. Truant - Shall mean a student age 5-18 inclusive who has four unexcused absences in any one month or ten unexcused absences in one school year.
2. Tardy - A student shall be considered tardy if he/she arrives at class after classes have begun.
3. Absence - any non-attendance of an enrolled 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.
4. Disciplinary Absence - an absence that is the result of school or district disciplinary action such as an out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Disciplinary absences are neither excused nor unexcused.

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5. Documentation of absence — a written explanation of the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. This includes a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism. Non-English speaking parents/guardians may submit documentation in their native language.
  
6. Excused Absence - A student's non-attendance from school shall be considered excused if written documentation of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten school days of the student's return to school or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (when the school medical advisor provides notice to a parent or guardian that a student has symptoms of a communicable disease) 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 submits appropriate documentation; and
  - 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 (all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
    2. up to two (2) “mental health wellness days,” during which a student attends to such student’s emotional and psychological well-being in lieu of attending school, which days may not be taken consecutively;
    3. student's observance of a religious holiday;
    4. death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;

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5. mandated court appearances (additional documentation required); the lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation is required for this reason); or
  6. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.
- C. Up to ten absences will be considered excused for students to visit with parents or legal guardians who are active members of the armed forces and have been called to duty for, are on leave from or have immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. The Board of Education may grant additional excused absences for such purposes.
7. Unexcused absence — Any absence that does not meet the criteria for an excused absence (including proper documentation) or a disciplinary absence.
  8. Dismissal - No school, grade, or class may be dismissed before the regularly scheduled dismissal time without the approval of the Superintendent or his/her designee. No teacher may permit any individual student to leave school prior to the regular hour of dismissal without the permission of the Principal. No student may be permitted to leave school at any time other than at regular dismissal without the approval of the student's parent/guardian. If a court official with legal permission to take custody of a child, or if a police officer arrests a student, the parent/guardian should be notified of these situations by the administration.
  9. Chronically Absent Child - a child who is enrolled in a school under the jurisdiction of the Board and whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten per cent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

### Attendance

Connecticut state law requires parents to cause their children, ages five through eighteen inclusive, to attend school regularly during the hours and terms the public school is in session. Parents or persons having control of a child five years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until age six or seven. The parent or person having control of a child of age five or six shall exercise such option by personally appearing at the school district office and signing an option form. At such time, school personnel shall provide the parent or person with information on the educational opportunities available in the school system.

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Mandatory attendance terminates upon graduation or withdrawal with written parent/guardian consent at age seventeen.

Classroom learning experiences are the basis for public school education. Time lost from class is lost instructional opportunity. The Board of Education requires that accurate records be kept of the attendance of each child, and students should not be absent from school without parental knowledge and consent. Parents and guardians shall be notified when a student has reached nine (9) absences and reminded of the stricter rules that apply to further absences for the remainder of the school year.

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall periodically audit a small percentage of the documentation provided for student absences in order to ensure general compliance with this policy.

### **Excessive Absences/Truancy**

It is the policy of the Board of Education to monitor school attendance so as to identify students who are truant, and to enlist the cooperation of parents and, when necessary, the juvenile justice system, in order to address the problem when it arises. The following truancy procedures are hereby adopted:

For purpose of these procedures, "Parent" means the parent, guardian or other person having control of a child.

1. Whenever a student in grade K-8 is absent from school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the parent, guardian or other person having control of the child is aware of the student's absence, school personnel or volunteers under the direction of the building principal shall make a reasonable effort to notify the parent of the student's absence by telephone.
2. When a student is identified as a truant, the Superintendent or his/her designee will conduct a meeting with the parent, guardian or other person having control of the student, the student, if appropriate, and with such school personnel where involvement is determined appropriate. The meeting will occur not later than ten (10) school days after the child's fourth (4th) unexcused absence in a month or the tenth (10th) unexcused absences in a school year and will be for the purpose of reviewing and evaluating the reasons for truancy. In reviewing and evaluating the reasons for the student's truancy, the participants of the meeting should consider the appropriateness of referring the student to the school's [Student Assistance Team] or planning and placement team.

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At the meeting, school personnel shall be designated to coordinate services with and referrals of children to community agencies providing child and family services if appropriate. Additionally, school personnel shall provide notice to the parent or guardian of the student identified as truant of the availability of the 2-1-1 Infoline program, and other pediatric mental and behavioral health screening services and tools.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

The Board will report data to the state regarding the number of students who are truant and chronically absent as required by law. In the event that a school experiences high rates of chronic absenteeism, the Superintendent will form an attendance review team to address the problem. Such attendance review teams may utilize resources developed by the State Department of Education for chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention.

### **Legal References:**

#### Connecticut General Statutes

10-184 Duties of parents

10-185 Penalty

10-198a through 10-202 Attendance, truancy - in general

10-220 Duties of boards of Education

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rules, policies and procedures

46b-149 Child from family with service needs

Connecticut State Board of Education Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences Adopted June 27, 2012

Connecticut State Board of Education Statewide Definition of Attendance for Public School Districts in Connecticut, Adopted January 2, 2008.

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Connecticut State Department of Education's "Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention," April 2013

Policy adopted: June 12, 2001  
Policy revised: June 24, 2004  
Policy revised: June 12, 2007  
Policy revised: June 8, 2010  
Policy revised: October 11, 2011  
Policy revised: October 9, 2012  
Policy revised: October 8, 2013  
Policy revised: October 14, 2014  
Policy revised: October 13, 2015  
Policy revised: September 19, 2017  
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Policy revised: September 20, 2022

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
New Milford, Connecticut



## Appendix A

NEW MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
New Milford, ConnecticutANNUAL NOTIFICATION OF PARENTAL OBLIGATIONS  
UNDER C.G.S. 10-184

Dear (Parent Name),

Connecticut law requires that annually the school district provide you a written notice of your obligations under Connecticut General Statute 10-184. This law requires each parent or guardian of a child five years of age and older and under eighteen years of age to ensure that the child attends school regularly when school is in session unless such parent or other person shows that the child is receiving equivalent instruction elsewhere, or that the child has graduated from high school. Parents or persons having control of a child five or six years of age have the option of not sending the child to school until age six or seven by personally appearing at the school district office and signing an option form. The parent or person having control of a child seventeen years of age may consent to such child's withdrawal from school by signing a withdrawal form at the school district office.

Regular student attendance is essential to the educational process. So that we can inform you if your child is absent without a previous explanation, Connecticut laws also require that we obtain from you a telephone number or other means of contacting you during the school day. Please complete and return the form attached.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Principal