

MHS Attendance Information

(As taken directly from the 2023-24 MHS handbook — Pages 8-12)

The Montgomery Township Board of Education requires students enrolled in Montgomery Township schools to attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the state. The consistent contact of students in the classroom with one another and their participation in a well-planned instructional activity under the direction of our faculty is vital to our students' success. Parents are encouraged to work in partnership with their children and school to minimize excessive or unnecessary absenteeism.

Attendance (Policy 5200)

The Montgomery Township Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to provide a thorough and efficient education for every student within the district in keeping with the prevailing laws of the State of New Jersey. In order for administrators and teachers to successfully fulfill their responsibilities to students, it is essential that all students accept their responsibility to attend school as scheduled, and that parents/guardians support and reinforce their child's regular attendance.

To conform to state regulations requiring school districts to define “**excused**” and “**unexcused**” absences:

a. “An **unexcused absence** that counts toward truancy” is a student's absence from school for a full or a portion of a day for any reason that is not an “excused absence” as defined below.

b. “An **excused absence**” is a student's absence from school for a full day or a portion of a day for any absence for the reasons listed below. Although an absence may be excused, it may count against a student's 90% attendance requirement and thus cause diminished success and/or academic loss of credit (ALC) for a course:

- (1) The student's required attendance in court;
- (2) Where appropriate, when consistent with Individualized Education Programs, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. §§ 794 and 705(20), and individualized health care plans;
- (3) The student's suspension from school;
- (4) College visits, up to three days per school year, for students in grades 11 and 12;
- (5) Interviews with an admissions officer of an institution of higher education;
- (6) Examination for a driver's license;
- (7) Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day with documentation from the doctor's office;
- (8) Take Our Children to Work Day;

- (9) Religious observance, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 through 16;
- (10) Participation in observance of Veterans Day, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-13.2;
- (11) Participation in district board of election membership activities, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33;
- (12) Closure of a busing school district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school;
- (13) An absence considered excused by the Commissioner of Education and/or a New Jersey Department of Education rule;
- (14) An absence for a reason not listed above, not to exceed two days, but deemed excused by the Principal upon a written request by the student's parent stating the reason for the absence and requesting permission for the absence to be an excused absence.

"Unexcused tardiness" may constitute an unexcused absence that counts toward truancy in accordance with Policy 5240.

For necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day, documentation from the doctor's office **must be on official office script pad or stationery-Must include duration of absences to be excused and date of appointment. * All doctor's notes will be subject to MHS validation of appointment date.**

An "**unexcused absence**" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed above. Though a student may be absent with parental approval for reasons other than those listed above, the absence will be defined as verified but **unexcused**.

Notice to School of Student Absence

Parents should report student absences in the Genesis Parent Resources application or call the attendance line at 609-466-7610, (select #6, then #1) as early as possible to report an absence. **This does not "excuse" an absence but informs the school that your child is absent with your knowledge.** The student's absence will be deemed either "**excused**" or "**unexcused counting toward truancy**" "based upon the documentation explaining the reason for the absence(s) that is presented to the Main Office by the student following their return to school. The school will make every effort to contact parents/guardians of any student who is absent for whom a phone call from home was not received.

School Response to Unexcused Absences Counting Toward Truancy

N.J.A.C.6A:16-7.6, school staff responses for unexcused absences are as follows:

For up to four cumulative unexcused absences counting towards truancy, the school district shall: make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day; make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parents; identify in consultation with the student's parents needed action designed to address patterns of

unexcused absences, if any, and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance; proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10, if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected; and cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

For between five and nine cumulative unexcused absences counting towards truancy, the school district shall: make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day; make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the students' parents; evaluate the appropriateness of prior action taken; develop an action plan to establish outcomes based upon the student's patterns of unexcused absences and to specify the interventions for supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance, which may include any or all of the following: refer or consult with the building's intervention and referral services team (I&RS), pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8; conduct testing, assessments, or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral, and health needs; consider an alternate educational placement; make a referral to or coordinate with a community based social and health provider agency or other community resource; refer to a court or a court program; proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A.9:6-1 et. Seq. and N.J.A.C.6A:16-10, if a potentially missing or child abuse situation is detected: and engage the student's family. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

For cumulative unexcused absences counting towards truancy of 10 or more, a student between the ages of 6 and 16, is truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25, and the school district shall: make a determination regarding the need for a court referral for the truancy; continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance; cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required; and a court referral may be made as follows: when school officials determine unexcused absences education law, pursuant to **N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25**, and the district board of education's policies, the parent may be referred to municipal court; a written report of the actions the school has taken regarding the student's attendance shall be forwarded to the municipal court; or when there is evidence of a juvenile-family crisis, pursuant to **N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-22.g**, the student may be referred to Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part; a written report of the actions the school has taken regarding the student's attendance shall be forwarded to the juvenile-family crisis intervention unit.

For a student with a disability, the attendance plan and disciplinary and remedial procedures shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the student's individualized education program, pursuant to 20 U.S.C 1400 et seq., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; the procedural protections set forth in **N.J.A.C. 6A:14**; accommodation plan under 29 U.S.C. 794 and 705(20); and individualized healthcare plan and individualized emergency healthcare plan, pursuant to **N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(b)5xii**.

Absence and Student Activities

In order for any student to participate in after-school activities (clubs, team practices, games, plays, concerts, etc.), the student **must be in school for four (4) hours on the day of the activity**. Any student who is absent or serving a suspension on the day of a scheduled school event will not be allowed to attend the school event as a participant or spectator.

Making Up Work Following an Absence

Upon returning to school, students must arrange with their teachers to make up any assignments or assessments missed during their absence. Work must be made up within a time equal to the class time absent. Responsibility for making up work and scheduling any necessary assistance from the teacher(s) rests with the student. Teachers shall make reasonable accommodations to extend time for students.

Late Arrival to School

Students are expected to be in their first class block at 7:45 am during a normal school day. Until 7:55 students should report directly to class where their teacher will record their late. The consequences for late arrival to school under 10 minutes are the same as those listed in the section: Class Tardiness. Students arriving after 7:55 am with documentation must sign in at the Main Office. Students arriving after 7:55 am without documentation must sign in at the Main Office by scanning their student identification card and printing their class admittance pass.

NOTE: A student arriving in any class block after the first ten (10) minutes of the class block will be recorded as absent for that class. If the reason for arriving late is a result of any of the reasons defined as “**excused**” (see “excused” absences) the absence will be recorded as an excused absence providing that the student presents the appropriate documentation.

Class Tardiness

A student arriving to any class block within the first ten (10) minutes of the class block without a pass or proper documentation will be considered tardy, when students are tardy, they run the risk of jeopardizing their education. Teachers plan a full eighty-three-minute lesson and it is imperative that students be present for the entire class. Students are expected to be in their assigned class when the bell rings to begin each class block. Students entering class late should have a signed pass. To protect the education of all students, the following policy is in effect:

1st Tardy: Student will be issued a warning by teacher.

2nd Tardy: Student will be issued a warning by teacher and be informed that a 3rd tardy will result in a teacher detention.

3rd Tardy: Student will receive a teacher detention.

4th – 5th Tardy: Student will receive a Saturday detention.

6th Tardy and every subsequent third tardy: Student will receive a Saturday detention, potential loss of extra and co-curricular activities, and loss of early dismissal (ED) privilege for seniors.

Class Cut

A cut is defined as absenting oneself without permission from scheduled periods, including classes, lunch, or activities such as assemblies. Students demonstrating a pattern of missing class time, including but not limited to, time during class or at the end of class, will receive a cut.

A class cut occurs when a student is in school but absent from a class block without the approval of an administrator or teacher whose class block is missed. A class cut is considered an **“unexcused absence.”** The consequences for a class cut may result in the student receiving a zero on an assignment and/ or assessment. Additional consequences are found in the section: Pupil Discipline/Code of Conduct of this handbook.

Early Dismissal from School Procedures

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to schedule doctor/dentist appointments after school hours. However, personal circumstances may arise requiring a student to be released early from school. To ensure the smooth and safe handling of such situations, parents/guardians must send a note requesting permission for the student to be released early from school. **Students must present this note to the Main Office prior to the start of school at 7:45 a.m. Parents must include the reason (doctor/dentist appointment-doctor's/dentist's name, appointment time and telephone number, etc.) and a telephone number where the parents/guardians may be reached during the school day.** The student will be given an Early Dismissal Pass for the time specified in order to present to their teacher at the appropriate time. The school recognizes that certain situations exist that create a legitimate need for release from school and as a result students will be allowed to make-up all work missed. **Parents/Guardians are required to meet their child in the Main Office at the time indicated in their note. The student must present his/her approved Early Dismissal Pass to their teacher before reporting to the Main Office. The parent/guardian will sign out their child in the Main Office. Students returning to school after signing out earlier in the day must re-enter via the Main Office and sign back in. If someone other than the parent or guardian is to meet the student, a note is required indicating that the person has the student's parent's/guardian's permission to pick up that particular child.**

NOTE: Please refer to the section on Health Services for early dismissal due to unexpected illness.

Denial of Course Credit

A student may be denied course credit when he/she exceeds ten (10) **“unexcused absences”** in a full year course or five (5) **“unexcused absences”** in a semester course. The student's parent/guardian will receive written notification of their child's loss of course credit due to attendance. If a student and their parent/guardian believe there are extenuating circumstances

that have prevented the student from attending school on a regular basis they may be awarded the opportunity to appeal the loss of credit due to attendance. ***This is not a permissive policy establishing or licensing a limit of days that may be missed with no harm.***

Credit Appeal Process

This process grants a student the right to appeal the loss of credit due to attendance. Students must submit appeals to the office of the administrator in charge of attendance no later than five (5) school days after receipt of no credit status. The appeal should state the reasons for admitted “**unexcused absences**”, documentation that would reduce the number of absences, and reasons why they should receive course credit. A Credit Review Committee composed of a teacher, school nurse, school counselor, and child study team caseworker may evaluate the student’s appeal. The Credit Review Committee will consider each appeal on a case by case basis and, if deemed necessary, develop an appropriate credit recovery plan. Keep in mind that appeals deal with the attendance record of the entire semester or the entire year.