



Attendance Policy Overview

[Translations](#)

The Promotion Policy and School Attendance

In addition to meeting academic requirements, students must meet state laws and BPS requirements for school attendance. Excellent attendance and school success go hand in hand. Students who are **chronically absent**—missing 10% or more of school days for any given time period—are more likely to fall behind in their classes and will have difficulty staying on-track academically over the long term. In addition, students with consistent attendance are more likely to show proficiency on MCAS.

BPS Attendance Policy

A student must attend school for at least a half-day to be marked “present.” Check with the principal or Head of School to find out what a half-day is. In most schools, it is:

- 3 hours in elementary school
- 3 hours and 5 minutes in middle school
- 3 hours and 10 minutes in high school.

Students who arrive after the beginning of the day must follow the school’s tardy procedures in order to be considered present for the day.

- **Please note that the Boston School Committee approved a revised attendance policy that is effective for the 2021-2022 school year.** Key changes include:
 - Schools may no longer convert tardies to an absence. This includes high schools.
 - In order to facilitate competency-based grading across the district, schools may no longer assign grades of “No Credit (NC)” to students. The following guidance has been provided regarding credit recovery for students:
 - Passing grades should be competency based, which may be impacted by attendance due to missed assignments or school work, but should not be tied exclusively to attendance or participation.
 - It is essential that schools outreach early and often for students at risk of a failing grade.
 - As an alternative, schools may mark a student with an “incomplete” grade to enable equitable learning recovery.

- In all cases, a student not earning a passing grade must be given the opportunity and responsibility to equitably recover any learning loss or make up the work missed within a marking period to earn a passing grade.

Early Dismissal

It is important that your child is in school for the duration of the school day. Early dismissal should only occur in the event of an emergency, and a note should be provided to school administrators to verify and approve the reason for the early dismissal.

Excused Absences

Certain absences may be excused, meaning they will not be considered as it relates to a referral to truancy court by a Supervisor of Attendance under Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L. c.119). However, it is important to understand that all missed instructional time has the potential to negatively impact student outcomes. In addition, all absences are included as they relate to chronic absenteeism, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. For an absence to be excused, students must bring in a note after each day they are absent.

- The note must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, a phone number where a parent or caregiver can be reached, and the parent or caregiver's signature
- The note must be provided upon return to school, no later than **seven** school days after the absence.
- Excused absences may include:
 - **An illness or injury that prevents the student from attending school.**
 - **If the illness or hospitalization results in absence for three or more consecutive days, a note from a health care provider documenting the health problem or hospitalization should be attached to the parent/caregiver note.**
 - **Parents/caregivers are not expected to have a note from a health care provider for an illness of fewer than three days.**
 - **These requirements may be adjusted based on specific public health guidance. Contact your school nurse regarding any questions or changes to this policy based on specific circumstances.**
 - A death in the immediate family (parent/caregiver, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) or other significant personal or family crisis
 - Suspension: Students should be marked as suspended. In cases of suspension, the school will provide an opportunity for the student to maintain academic standing in school by being provided a list of assignments and such other services which might enable the student to use the time out of school productively.

- Students assigned to Succeed Boston shall be assigned work by the school of assignment and shall be marked as suspended.
- Court appearances: Students should present evidence of the requirement of the court appearance.
- Medical or psychological tests during the school day: The parent/caregiver must show evidence (such as a note from the health center) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
- Visits to special education schools in some cases for students with disabilities.
- Other situations: From time to time, situations over which the school, parent/caregiver, and student have little or no control may cause absences (for example, transportation that does not operate during inclement weather). These absences are excusable. The school leader may determine that the students impacted shall be marked with an excused absence.
- Other extraordinary situations, such as a family emergency, as approved by the School Site Council.
- Cultural holidays and religious holy days.
- Detailed information regarding excused absences can be found in the Superintendent Circular for attendance (ACA-18).
- **Absences that do not meet the above criteria will be considered unexcused.** In all instances of student absence, students must be given the opportunity to equitably recover any missed work or learning loss during a marking period.

What Is an *Unexcused Absence*?

Some parents think that any absence will be excused as long as the parent sends a note. This is not true. Here are a few examples of **unexcused absences**—even if the parent sends a note:

- Repetitive and chronic absence due to illness or injury without a letter from a healthcare provider verifying that the student was too sick or injured to go to school. **Students who will be out for 14 or more days during a school year due to illness or injury should be referred to the Home and Hospital Instruction Program** (sholland@bostonpublicschools.org)
- The student needed to babysit
- Cutting class (including checking in and leaving the building early)
- Family vacation during a time when school is in session
- Trip to the homeland extended beyond school vacation
- Extension of a religious or cultural holiday beyond the designated day or days on the school calendar

Whenever possible, parents should check with the principal before allowing a child to miss school if they are not sure the absence will be excused. *Teachers do not have the authority to excuse a student from school.*

Students must be given the opportunity and responsibility to equitably recover any learning loss or make up the work missed within a marking period to earn a passing grade.

Students with four or more unexcused absences will be referred to the school's Student Success Team (SST). The SST will review the case and work with the family to develop a plan to help the student improve attendance.

Complete Attendance and Punctuality Policy

- ⇐ For the complete Attendance and Punctuality Policy, please go to **bostonpublicschools.org/SuptCirculars** and click the Attendance folder. The policy is ACA-18.
- ⇐ Copies of the policy, with translation in major BPS languages, can be found [here](#).

Punctuality

Students who arrive after the beginning of the school day are tardy. They must follow established tardy procedures in order to be considered present for the day. All students are expected to report to school on time every day. It is the policy of the Boston School Committee (approved May 24, 2006) that tardy students should be permitted into the school building and not excluded.

It is important to remember that the requirement that tardy students be admitted to school does not equal a relaxation of the rules covering attendance or tardies.

Supervisors of Attendance

Coordinating with school-based staff, the BPS supervisors of attendance investigate and provide prevention and intervention support to address chronic attendance problems. They work in the community, visit homes, and counsel students and their families. When necessary, the supervisors of attendance file and represent chronic cases in Boston Juvenile Court.