

**NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES**

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays.

A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

Accordingly, parents/guardians will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of their child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. Absences for family vacations will be treated as an unexcused absence.

In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

Student Absence Notification Program

Each Principal or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each Principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

Dropout Prevention

A student who has not graduated from high school and has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence shall not be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to the student, and that student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day

timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed 14 days.

The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian.

The Superintendent or designee shall convene a team of school staff to participate in the exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

SOURCE: MASC - Updated 2021

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); [76:1A](#); [76:1B](#); [76:16](#); [76:18](#); [76:19](#); [76:20](#)

NOTE: [DESE'S minimum requirements for policies and protocols](#) include the following items which are most appropriate for inclusion in student handbooks so that Districts can most effectively meet student and family needs.

- **When and how absences will be reported by parents or guardians to the school, by the administrative designee to classroom teachers, and by teachers to the administrative designee for classroom attendance.**
- **Parent/guardian responsibilities for reporting a child's absence including method of reporting (e.g., phone, email, text), expected time of notification, any required documentation verifying the reason for the absence, and deadline for submitting said documentation.**
- **Timeline for school notification to parents of an absence in the event the parent or guardian did not report the absence.**
- **When and who from the school will check-in and follow-up with students and families (e.g., after 1 unexcused absence; after 5 excused absences) and how this will take place.**
- **Any academic consequences for excessive absenteeism (e.g., loss of credit).**
- **Interventions and services the school may use to encourage consistent student attendance and reengagement.**

1/2/25: Reviewed and Edited by New Salem/Wendell Policy Committee

2/6/25: First Read by NS/W School Committee

3/6/25: Second Read, First Vote by NS/W School Committee

4/3/25: Final Vote by NS/W School Committee