

ATTENDANCE POLICY GRADES 9 – 12

The outside workplace is an environment that expects individuals to be punctual and demonstrate commitment. The Agawam Public Schools district Attendance Policy is dedicated to preparing students for both the workplace and life's environment. We encourage good school attendance, since only through regular attendance can a student take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered. We believe in a direct and positive correlation between good school attendance and academic success. Furthermore, attendance in school is mandated by Massachusetts General Laws, specifically Chapter 76 sections 1, 2, and 4.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGES

Massachusetts law establishes the state Board of Education as the agent, which determines mandatory and permissible school attendance ages, with exceptions listed. Generally, the State Board requires that all children be enrolled in school beginning in September of the calendar year in which they attain the age of 6 and that they attend school regularly until they reach age 16.

Under law, the School Committee of each city must enforce the school attendance of all children of compulsory school age residing therein. File: JCA/JG-1 Legal Refs: M.G.L., c. 76, §1.

DUTY OF PARENT – SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF CHILD – PUNISHABLE

Every person in control of a child shall cause him/her to attend school as therein required, and, if he/she fails to do so for 7 day sessions or 14 half-day sessions within any period of 6 months, he/she *shall, on complaint by a supervisor of attendance, be punished by a fine of not more than twenty dollars*. No physical or mental condition capable of correction, or rendering the child fit subject for special instruction at public charge in institutions other than public day schools, shall avail as a defense unless it appears that the defendant has employed all reasonable measures for the correction of the condition and the suitable instruction of the child. (Legal Ref.: M.G.L., c. 76 § 2)

INDUCING ABSENCES

Whoever induces or attempts to induce a minor to absent him/herself unlawfully from school, or unlawfully employs him/her or harbors a minor who, while school is in session, is absent unlawfully there from, shall be punished by a fine of not more than two hundred dollars (\$200.00). (M.G.L., c. 76 § 4)

TRUANCY

Unnecessary absence due either to a student's willful decision or a parent's inability or unwillingness to ensure attendance is a violation of law and district policy. Parents who support or enable a chronic pattern of unnecessary absences for children under the age of 16 may be subject to agency or court action. The Assistant Superintendent for Business/Hr or building Principal may file a report with the Department of Children and Families for educational neglect and/or file a "Failure to Cause" at Springfield Juvenile Court on said parent or guardian. Chronic truancy and excessive absenteeism may also result in the Attendance Officer filing a "Child in Need of Services" (CHINS) or Care and Protection petition with the Springfield Juvenile Court.

STUDENTS IN THE CUSTODY OF A STATE AGENCY

If a student under the care or custody of a state agency is absent for five (5) or more consecutive days, the Assistant Superintendent for Business/HR or building Principal shall contact the agency's educational liaison, case manager, or supervisor on the fifth (5th) day of nonattendance and every five (5) days thereafter regarding the student's absenteeism. The District shall keep a record of this contact.

ABSENCES FOR STUDENTS OVER 18 YEARS OLD

For purposes of any procedure for verification of absences from school, a student 18 years of age or over, with respect to his/her own absences from school, shall have all the responsibilities and powers, which in the case of a minor, would be charged to the parent or guardian. Form "M" from the Agawam High School Code of Conduct Student Handbook must be completed by the parent/guardian to allow the 18-year-old student to be responsible for his/her own verification of absences.

CREDIT/PROMOTION IMPLICATIONS

When a student's unexcused absences exceed 5 days in a semester course or 10 days in a full-year course, the school may deny credit for that course. Students will receive the grade that they earned in a course for which credit is denied due to nonattendance. If a student receives a passing grade in a course required for graduation but is denied credit due to excessive absence, the student may fulfill the necessary requirements by retaking the course for credit during the normal school day or summer school. If the student exercises the summer school option, upon successful completion of summer school, the grade the student received (if passing) prior to receiving a "NC" or "No Credit" designation will be reinstated.

ABSENCES

The following are excused reasons for absences:

1. Doctor or dentist appointment
2. Court appearance
3. Bereavement
4. Religious observance
5. Suspensions
6. DCF commitment
7. DYS commitment
8. Any other reason that the Administration deems appropriate.

Students in attendance at school-sponsored activities, (i.e., field trips, job shadowing, etc.) are considered present. Students in attendance in an approved alternative educational program are subject to policies of said school. Students who are absent from school may not participate in any school related activity without securing permission from an administrator. The Agawam Public Schools encourages open channels of communication between the home and school as the key to understanding and resolving problems that may occur regarding attendance. NOTE: Family trips/vacations are NOT excused absences.

All the above reasons must be documented as follows:

1. Parental note for bereavement
2. Appointment confirmation note from doctor or dentist
3. Court document for court appearance

CREDIT DENIAL APPEALS PROCESS

- a. When a decision to deny credit is made, the school will notify the parent or guardian of the intended action.
- b. The parent/guardian and the student will have the right to appeal the denial of credit only for the reasons listed above. The student and parent must write a letter requesting a review of the circumstances and the restoration of credit to the Assistant Superintendent for Business/HR or building Principal. All letters must be received within 10 calendar days from the date of notification of loss of credit. At this point, the parent and the student will have the opportunity to provide documentation related to absences or explain extraordinary circumstances.
- c. The Attendance Committee will consist of the Assistant Superintendent for Business/HR or building Principal, student's guidance counselor, Assistant Principal, and two staff members.
- d. The parents/guardians and student will be notified of the Committee's decision within 5 school days.

CLASS CUTS AND SCHOOL TRUANCY

Class cuts and truancy from school are considered absences.

TARDINESS TO CLASS

When a student is tardy to class for more than half of the period, it will be counted as an absence. If a student enters class with a legitimate pass from a school official – administrator, teacher, nurse, guidance counselor, or adjustment counselor – the student will not be considered tardy. If a student is tardy to class without a pass, the teacher must accept the student and follow discipline outlined in the Code of Conduct Student Handbook.

TARDINESS TO SCHOOL – SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Students arriving tardy during first period must report directly to said first period class and sign in. Teacher attendance will be taken at the end of first period. The attendance sheet will reflect the tardy and time of arrival. When arriving to school after first period, students must report to the office. Discipline is referenced in the Code of Conduct Student Handbook. The following are acceptable reasons for tardiness:

1. Doctor or dentist appointment
2. Court appearance
3. Bereavement
4. Religious observance
5. Any Other reason that the Administration deems appropriate

All of the above reasons must be documented as follows:

1. Parental note for bereavement
2. Appointment confirmation note from doctor or dentist
3. Court document for court appearance

REVIEW/APPEAL

In cases where a student in grade 9 through 12 receives no credit or is not promoted as directed by this policy, or whenever a student's total number of school absences exceeds 20 cumulative days in any school year, an automatic review will occur at the school level. A response by the Principal or his/her designee will be made in writing by the last day of school in June. The student or parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may appeal the decision on the school review level to the Superintendent of Schools. The appeal must be submitted in writing within ten (10) days of receipt of the review decision. The decision of the Superintendent of Schools is final and cannot be appealed to the School Committee.

Students whose absences exceed fifteen (15) consecutive or twenty (20) cumulative days shall receive written notice that they will be administratively withdrawn from the Agawam Public Schools on the twentieth (20th) consecutive or twenty-fifth (25th) cumulative day of nonattendance. This notice shall include a statement of their rights under state and federal law and be copied to the Department of Special Services. For students with disabilities, a Team Meeting invitation shall accompany this notice.

DISSMISSAL FROM SCHOOL

Dismissal from school is referenced in the Code of Conduct Student Handbook.