



July 29, 2014

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE:

Approval of Revisions to the Student Attendance Policy

Recommendation: That the School Committee approve the revisions to the Student Attendance Policy for the Cambridge Public Schools as detailed in the attached document.

Description: Cambridge Rindge and Latin School seeks to revise the language regarding the Attendance Violation Failure ("AVF") provisions of the Student Attendance Policy in order to continue to hold students accountable for their attendance and timeliness in attending classes but reducing the high stakes consequence of an AVF on a student's transcript as detailed in the changes in the attached document.

This is a first reading of the proposed revisions to the policy.

Supporting Data: Attached redline revision of Cambridge Public Schools Student Attendance Policy

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey M. Young".

Jeffrey M. Young, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Regular and consistent attendance is essential to learning, to improving the achievement of all students, to maintaining a respectful school climate and to a student's successful school performance. The goal of the student attendance policy is to promote consistent, daily school and class attendance. The expectation is that all students will have, at a minimum, at least ninety-five percent (95%) attendance in school and in each class during each school day. A student who is truant, frequently absent or frequently tardy to school without adequate reason is in violation of this policy.

- a. Parents/Guardians must call the school to give notification of an absence by no later than the morning of the absence.
- b. If a call is not made, a note from the parent/guardian or the student's medical provider is due on the day that the student returns to school explaining the absence. No student, however, shall be sent home to obtain a written explanation from his/her parent/guardian during a school session.
- c. In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school principal may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable.
- d. If an extended absence of a student is foreseen, the parent/guardian should contact the principal to make arrangements for the completion of academic requirements.
- e. A student who is truant, chronically absent or tardy will be referred to the Office of the Safety and Security. The Director of Safety and Security, after consultation with the appropriate Principal, will review each matter and initiate corrective action which may include referral to the Middlesex County Court if the student is deemed to require additional services under the direction of the Court.

Excused absences include:

- a. personal illness or quarantine;
- b. absences attributable to personal trauma; grieving, death in the family or serious illness in the family;
- c. observance or practice of a religious holiday;
- d. medical appointments that absolutely cannot be made outside of school hours or counseling visits;
- e. legal matters requiring a personal appearance;
- f. suspensions or expulsions in or out of school;

- g. school-related trips, assemblies or meetings;
- h. college visits (two days in junior year of high school and three days in senior year of high school);
- i. one trip or educational experience of no more than five days during a student's years at high school; or
- j. weather so inclement as to endanger the health or safety of the child.

A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons, with the approval of the school administration not exceeding seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any six month period.

Unexcused absences include:

- a. Truancy from school or from individual classes or study halls;
- b. Trips not approved in advance by the principal;
- c. Looking for employment without prior approval from the principal;
- d. Staying home to avoid an examination in a given subject or to study for an examination;
- e. Leaving the school building during the school day without signing out in the principal's office;
- f. Oversleeping or otherwise being tardy to school (three unexcused tardies will be counted as one unexcused absence);
- g. Remaining on or near school grounds, but not attending assigned classes; or
- h. Any other absence that is not excused or any excusable absence that is not reported by a parent/guardian by a telephone call or written note from a parent/guardian or the student's medical provider upon the student's return to school.

When a student is at school, the student is under the supervision of all teachers and school authorities and must get permission from the principal's office to leave early. Any student who does not sign out of school in the principal's office before leaving will be unexcused and receive no credit for all class activities or assignments missed. Each teacher shall keep a record of the absence or tardiness of students. A student who enters the classroom after the time appointed for the beginning of the session shall be recorded as tardy. Parents/guardians will be notified when a student has any unexcused absence, or unexcused tardy or unexcused misses of two (2) or more periods of school. The school must ensure that it notify the student's parents/guardians of a student's absence within three (3) days of the absence if the school has not received notification

of the absence from the student's parent/guardian. When a child has been tardy five (5) times, has been absent five (5) days or ten (10) half-days in the previous six (6) months for which there is no lawful excuse for said tardies or absences, misses five (5) or more school days unexcused in a school year or two (2) or more periods unexcused in a school year, it shall be the duty of the principal or head of upper school or designee in which such child is enrolled to report such attendance record to the Superintendent of Schools. The principal or head of upper school or designee also shall make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent/guardian of the student who has five (5) or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attendance. The action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal, head of upper school or designee, the student and the student's parent/guardian and with input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies, as appropriate.

Any student with an excused absence from school or classes has the privilege of making up the class assignments, missed homework, quizzes, exams, papers, projects and other assignments. The principal or head of upper school shall ensure that there is a school-wide education service plan in place for all students who are suspended or expelled from school for more than five (5) consecutive days, whether in or out of school. Additionally, the principal or head of upper school shall ensure that any student suspended or expelled from school for more than five (5) consecutive days, whether in or out of school, has an opportunity to make academic progress during the period of exclusion, to make up assignments and earn credits missed, including, but not limited to, homework, quizzes, exams, papers, projects and other assignments.

For any student who is legally absent for five (5) or more days, the school will make arrangements with families to have the student make up home assignments and upon return, the student will have the opportunity to make up class work, including tests, quizzes, class assignments, missed homework, exams, papers, projects and other assignments. The parent/guardian of any student who will have a prolonged absence (2 weeks or longer) due to illness or injury must notify the school to make the necessary arrangements for homebound instruction.

Absences or tardiness without satisfactory explanation shall be grounds for disciplinary action. School officials are encouraged to take all other appropriate disciplinary action before resorting to suspension in an effort to help a student with problems of truancy, tardiness and class cutting, including referral of the student to the Juvenile Court as an habitually truant child in need of services and/or referral for evaluation as a child in need of special education. No credit will be given to students who miss school work due to truancy, tardiness or class-cutting, unless the student makes up the missed work as directed by his teacher and teachers should afford students a reasonable amount of time upon their return to class to make up missed homework, quizzes, exams, papers, projects and other assignments. No adverse, prejudicial or discriminatory effect shall result to any student because she/he is absent to observe a religious holiday. Teachers should, to the extent feasible, refrain from scheduling any important tests, culminating activities, and/or major papers/reports during religious holidays.

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School and the High School Extension Program will treat four (4) unexcused absences, or twelve (12) unexcused tardies to class or any combination thereof where

three (3) unexcused tardies equals one (1) unexcused absence in any class, as an Attendance Violation Failure (AVF) for the quarter. An AVF will result in a ten percent (10%) deduction from the student's term grade with no ability to buy or earn back this percentage deduction from the student's grade. After a fourth absence the school will notify the parent/guardian. Parents/guardians may seek a medical waiver for any chronic condition, reoccurring illness or for any illnesses that exceed four (4) days. Parents/guardians will have the right to appeal any AVF to the Appeals Review Committee at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School or the High School Extension Program within ten (10) days of the issuance of the AVF and, if the appeal is denied, the parents/guardians may within ten (10) days of the denial, submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools for his/her review. The decision of the Superintendent of Schools shall be final.

M.G.L.c. 76, §§1, 1B, 16 & 20

Adopted: October 2, 2012