



## Danbury Public Schools Student Attendance Procedure/Guidelines



Research shows that few factors within students' and families' control are more closely associated with academic success than school attendance. Students need to be in the classroom to benefit from the teacher's instruction, and from interaction and exchanges of ideas with peers. Excessive absences affect the culture of the classroom, where the faculty seeks to build a community of learners. A student's excessive absences or tardiness can lead to incomplete and unsatisfactory work, a reduced capacity to meet curricular standards, and lower course grades.

Parents/guardians are partners with the school and faculty in assuring that students have good attendance and arrive in class on time and stay until the official end of the school day. The Danbury Public Schools maintain accurate records of student attendance, and will communicate promptly and consistently with parents/guardians regarding attendance issues.

This attendance policy is designed to foster a culture of learning in the Danbury Public Schools. This policy:

- Establishes firm expectations that on-time school and class attendance are important in sustaining the learning environment and in meeting individual learning needs.
- Provides significant flexibility to accommodate legitimate absence or lateness with a minimum of administrative procedure.
- Assures the timely flow of information from parents/guardians to school, and from school to parents/guardians about attendance at school and in class so that both can work to improve a situation before a student's education suffers.
- Clearly defines the responsibilities of students, educators, and parents/guardians regarding absences, tardiness and dismissals.

### **Connecticut State Law on Attendance:**

- All children over five and under eighteen years of age shall be required to attend a public day school, unless the parent or person having control of such child is able to show, to the satisfaction of the Board of Education, that the child is receiving elsewhere the equivalent instruction to that provided in a public day school. The parent or person having control of a child seventeen years of age may consent to such child's withdrawal form.
- The Board has the responsibility to monitor compliance with all laws and regulations governing student attendance. Student attendance shall be monitored administratively for compliance with Board policies and the administration will work with the parent and those persons having control of the child to assist them in the assumption of their responsibilities relative to State Laws and Board of Education policies. Parents who do not assume responsibility for their child's attendance as required by law may be referred to the State Prosecutor for prosecution. Procedures for implementation of this policy shall be governed by administrative regulations.

- A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip) for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent.

LEGAL REFERENCES: Connecticut General Statute 10-184, Chap. 168, Sec. 1-199, Public Act 11-136, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Education Statutes, Section 18, Public Act 15-225

### Key Points

#### All Students:

- Should be in school every scheduled day as mandated by Connecticut State Law.
- Absences should be called in as early as possible, preferably with the 1<sup>st</sup> hour of school.
- If a student is absent, and no contact was made with the parent/guardian then the parent/guardian must provide documentation explaining the reason for the absence.
- Absences are considered excused with parent or guardian documentation up to 9 days per school year.
- Absences exceeding 10 days l a school year are considered unexcused unless they meet the following criteria and appropriate documentation is provided:

Level	Total # of Days Absent*	Acceptable Reasons for a Student Absence to Be Considered Excused	Documentation Required within 10 Days
1	One through nine	Any reason that the student’s parent or guardian approves.	Parent or guardian note only.
2	10 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student illness (<i>Note: to be deemed excused, an appropriately licensed medical professional must verify all student illness absences, regardless of the absence’s length.</i>)</li> <li>• Student’s observance of a religious holiday.</li> <li>• Death in the student’s family or other emergency beyond the control of the student’s family.</li> <li>• Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required).</li> <li>• The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (parental documentation is not required for this reason).</li> <li>• Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators. (Opportunities must meet certain criteria. See below for details).</li> </ul>	Parent or guardian note and in some cases additional documentation (see details of specific reason).

\* Note: The total number of days absent includes both excused and unexcused absences.

- Vacations scheduled during school days are considered unexcused absences. School work will not be provided prior to the absence.
- In extenuating circumstances, a student or his/her parent/guardian may appeal to the administration to resolve attendance issues.
- Students who are truant and attend one of the district Magnet Schools, may be transferred from the Magnet School to their home schools.

**Attendance Codes:**

- ILL – Illness
- OEA – Other Excused Absence as identified in this document
- SRA – School Related Activity (Excused)
- ABVU – Absence Verified but Unexcused (Parent/guardian contacted school and reason for absence provided did not fall into excused categories)
- ABU – Absence Unverified (Parent/guardian did not contact the school to report absence and school personnel cannot reach you to determine reason for absence)
- TE – Tardy Excused
- TU – Tardy Unexcused
- EDE – Early Dismissal Excused
- EDU – Early Dismissal Unexcused
- ISS – In School Suspension
- OSS – Out of School Suspension
- HBD – Homebound
- LTH - Absent More Than Half Scheduled Day
- T15 - Tardy Unexcused Exceeding 15 Minutes

## Excused Absences

In support of the mandatory attendance law, Danbury Public Schools defines excused absences. The following conditions provide the *ONLY* acceptable reasons for a student's absence from school. Failure to follow the written procedures below may result in the absence being marked as unexcused.

### **ILLNESS (ILL)**

- When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness. The District reserves the right to require a physician's or other appropriate certification for absences in excess of five (5) consecutive days or a total of fifteen (15) days in any school year.

**OTHER EXCUSED ABSENCES (OEA)** The following examples fall under the Other Excused Absence Code:

- **Prearranged Appointments –**
  - We strongly encourage parents/guardians to schedule appointments for their child outside of the school day. However we understand that in some cases an appointment may need to occur during the school day. Please notify the school of any such appointments as they arise. When your child goes to school, the office will mark the time of the arrival/dismissal. This includes student court appearances.
- **Family Death or Emergency –** For absences because of a death in the family or an emergency beyond the family's control, the parent/guardian must notify the school and provide documentation for the absence.
- **Chronic/Extended Illness –** For students who are absent because of chronic illnesses, a disability, or because of a need for homebound services, the parent/guardian must consult with the principal at the beginning of the enrollment of the student in the school or upon the onset of the student's condition that affects regular attendance.
  - Reasons of health, including illness, incapacity, or doctor's visits. The District reserves the right to require a physician's or other appropriate certification for absences in excess of five (5) consecutive days or a total of fifteen (15) days in any school year.
  - Documentation from a physician will be required. If the parent/guardian does not provide documentation from a physician of a chronic or extended illness, the principal will review the child's attendance for needed services and/or applicable sanctions of the attendance law.
- **Religious Observances –** Absences as a result of observances of religious holidays should be prearranged by the parent/guardian who is responsible for notifying the child's school of the religious holiday(s) to be observed. If the parent/guardian is unable to prearrange the absence, a request for exemption must be received no later than the third day after the student's return to school from the absence occasioned by the religious observance.
- **Extra-Curricular Activity Absence –** Activity absence that is not school sponsored but is school related such as college visits.
- **Exceptional Circumstances –** The principal may approve a prearranged absence for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interests of the student and his/her family.
  - Prior to the student's absence, the parent/guardian must report in writing the rationale for the absence, dates of absence, and siblings within the school division for whom the exception will also be requested.

- The principal must provide the response in writing to the parent/guardian.
- In documented extenuating circumstances, the principal may approve an absence after-the-fact as exempt from the sanctions of the attendance policy.
- For those circumstances which cause the student to be absent and prior request for approval is not possible, the parent/guardian must request in writing within two days of the student's return to school.
- No more than five (5) days may be approved by the principal for exceptional circumstances during a school year. For requests of more than five (5) days, the request must be endorsed by the principal and approved by the superintendent/designee.

**SCHOOL RELATED ACTIVITY:**

- **School Related Activity Absence** – Activity absence is any absence that is school sponsored. Extra-curricular activities may include but are not limited to field trips and athletic events. Absences beyond ten (10) in a school year require prior administrator approval.

**SUSPENSIONS**

- For absences because of suspension, the parent/guardian will be notified of the suspension and the date when the student will be expected to return to school. The student must return on the indicated date.

**Tardy and Early Dismissal**

In support of the mandatory attendance law, Danbury Public Schools defines excused absences. The following conditions provide the *ONLY* acceptable reasons for a student's late arrival or early dismissal from school:

- Health
- Recognized religious observances
- Family emergency
- Late bus

**TARDY EXCUSED (TE) and EARLY DISMISSAL EXCUSED (EDE):**

The following procedures must be followed in order to be excused:

- Late arrival – Call the office prior to the student's arrival at school to document the late arrival. When students arrive at school they must go to the office for a pass. The time of arrival will be documented.
- Early Dismissal – Call the office prior to the student's departure. Student must go to the office for dismissal. The time of dismissal will be documented. Written documentation must be provided in excess of 5 early dismissals.

**TARDY UNEXCUSED (TU) and EARLY DISMISSAL UNEXCUSED (EDU):**

- All late arrivals and early dismissal reasons that do not fit the excused criteria above will be marked as unexcused.

Excessive, more than five (5), tardies or early dismissals and/or a pattern of late arrival or leaving early will necessitate parent/guardian communication with the school to support regular attendance.

## Make Up Work

**Make up work will not be provided ahead of time for unexcused absences.**

### **Elementary**

- **Excused Absence of one or two days:** Student may make up work upon return to school.
- **Excused Absence of three or more days:** Parent/guardian will call the office to request assignments. Teachers need 24 hours to prepare assignments.

### **Secondary**

Make Up Work: Students are encouraged to get make-up work assignments before returning to school. They may do this according to the following procedures:

- **Excused Absences:** Students have as many days to make up the missed assignments as they were absent. Please allow 24 hours for teachers to prepare assignments.

When students are absent (this includes absences for suspension) an opportunity to make up work will be provided. Make-up work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction. It is the student's responsibility to ask the teacher for the make-up work. Work (including tests) missed due to an absence may be made up and credit given for such work provided that it is completed in the same amount of time that the student was absent.