



Danbury Public Schools Student Attendance Philosophy



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 exchange 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 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 from school. Such parent or person shall personally appear at the school district office and sign a 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.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Connecticut General Statute 10-184, Chap. 168, Sec. 1-199

Key Points

All Students:

- Students should be in school every scheduled day as mandated by Connecticut State Law
- Absences should be called in as early as possible, preferably within the 1st hour of school
- If a student is absent, and no contact was made with the parent/guardian then the parent/guardian must provide a letter explaining the reason for the absence.
- Students involved in school-sponsored activities such as field trips are considered excused up to 10 days per year, administrator approval required beyond 10 days.
- 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.
- Any student with 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences will be considered to have left the school and will be exited. Students, who wish to return after exiting will need to re-register at the school. There is no guarantee that students in this case will be able to have the same teacher/course(s) as they did when previously enrolled.
 - Students who are exited from the Magnet School due to unexcused absences are not guaranteed a spot in the Magnet School should they choose to return to Danbury.

Elementary School:

- Attendance is taken every day within the first 10 minutes of the official start of the school day.
 - Students who arrive after the official start of the school day will be marked tardy.
 - Students who leave school prior to the official end of the school day will be marked as early dismissal.

Middle and High School: Students are expected to attend all classes during the day. Attendance is taken every period. All attendance consequences apply to each course individually.

- Students who arrive after the bell will be marked tardy.
- Students arriving in a class more than fifteen minutes after the bell without a pass will be marked unexcused absent from that class.

High School

- Grade penalties will be imposed at the High School level for unexcused absences.
- High School students wishing to attend or participate in athletic events must be present a minimum of 4 periods in order to participate that day (Refer to the DHS Athletic Handbook for specific requirements).

Danbury Board of Education:

Excused student absence may be granted for illness, recognized religious observances, family emergency, or other circumstances that are clearly emergencies that prevent school attendance. Unexcused absences are those not included, and which are in violation of the Board's requirement of regular attendance for all students.

- Student – Any child, age 5 to 22, enrolled in Danbury Public Schools.
- Unexcused absence – Those absences that are not excused (as defined below) and which are in violation of the Board's requirement of regular attendance of all students.
- Excused absence – Any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for:
 - a) 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.
 - b) Recognized religious observances
 - c) Family emergency
 - d) Other circumstances that are clearly emergencies that prevent school attendance.
- Truant – A student who leaves school without parental consent, is absent from school on a regular basis without school authorization, has a high rate of absenteeism or has four (4) unexcused absences in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in any school year shall be reported to the Department of Children & Families. Parents/Guardians are compelled to send their child to school and could incur legal liability for failure to do so.

Perfect Attendance may be calculated monthly, quarterly or annually.

Student's striving for perfect attendance shall have no absences, late arrivals or early dismissals for the time period being calculated.

Attendance Codes:

- ILL – Illness
- OEA- Other Excused Absence as identified in this document
- 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

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 procedures written 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 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 school or upon the onset of the student 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.
- **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.
- **Extra-Curricular Activity Absences:** Activity absence is any absence that is school related or school sponsored. Extra-curricular activities include, but are not limited to field trips, competitive events, student activities and college visits. Absences beyond 10 in a school year require prior administrator approval.
- **Exceptional Circumstances** - The principal may approve prearranged absences 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 or guardian must report in writing the rationale for the absence, dates of absence, and siblings within the school division for whom the exception will be also 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 days, the request must be endorsed by the principal and approved by the superintendent/designee.

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 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 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.