

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

The Mansfield School Committee recognizes that regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school, and the district shares responsibility with parents in ensuring that students attend school regularly, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and punctually, and the school is responsible for notifying parents consistent with state law if their child is absent from school.

Absences or Tardiness shall be excused for the following reasons, with parents/guardians providing appropriate written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

- Illness or quarantine (medical documentation required);
- Bereavement or serious illness in family;
- Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child;
- Religious observances;
- Other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his character. Parents can help their children by refusing to allow them to miss school needlessly.

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 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 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

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence. The notice

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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.

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LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:1B; 76:16; 76:18; 76:20