

Students

Attendance

It is the policy of the New London Public Schools that each student shall attend each scheduled day of school and each scheduled class from the beginning of the day or class period to the end. Absences, class cuts and tardiness deprive students of educational opportunities, student-teacher interaction and learning experiences shared with their classmates. Make-up work does not fully reproduce or recapture classroom activity. Therefore, it is the policy of the New London Public Schools to minimize absenteeism, class cutting and tardiness through a process of accounting, investigation, intervention, discipline and incentives.

Parental Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of each student to see that the student arrives at school promptly every day that school is in session. In the event the student cannot attend school for any reason, it is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to notify the school on or before the day of the student's absence of the reason for the absence, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) shall provide written verification of the reason for the absence within three (3) days of the absence, if requested. A student shall not be absent from school without the knowledge and consent of his or her parent(s) or guardian(s). Furthermore, in the event of any planned absences, such as doctor's visits, religious holidays and court appearances, the parent(s) or guardian(s) shall notify the school at least five days in advance of the absence to make arrangements for obtaining class assignments.

Annually at the beginning of the school year and upon any enrollment during the school year, the Superintendent or his or her designee shall (1) notify each parent or other person having control of each child enrolled in the New London Public Schools of the obligations of the parent or such other person pursuant to General Statutes §10-184 to assure that children between the ages of 5 and 18 attend school or otherwise to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction; and (2) obtain from the parent or other person having control of each child enrolled in the New London Public Schools a telephone number or other means of contacting such parent or such other person during the school day and the name, address and telephone number or other means of contacting a person living outside the student's household (such as a relative, co-worker or employer) who can be contacted in the event that the parent or such other person cannot be reached during the school day.

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Attendance (continued)

Leaving School Premises

No student shall be permitted to leave the school premises during the school session without authorization from the Principal or his or her designee. In cases where the parents or guardians of a student are divorced, legally separated or unwed, it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to provide to the Principal or his or her designee a written statement or court order designating the custodial parent(s) or guardian(s). The Principal or his or her designee shall place the written statement or court order in the student's file as a decision-making guide regarding the release of the student from the school premises.

Definitions

Absences, class cuts and tardiness have consequences. In accordance with the following definitions, the Principal or his or her designee shall determine whether each absence is "excused" or "unexcused." Regardless of whether an absence is "excused" or "unexcused," all students who are absent are required to complete make-up work to the satisfaction of their teachers. A student accumulating unexcused absences shall be subject to the Absenteeism Procedures described herein. Absences, class cutting and tardiness may result in loss of class credit and failure to qualify for promotion or graduation.

For purposes of this policy, and any regulations implementing this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

1. A "truant" means a child age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in Grades K-12 of the New London Public Schools and has four unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused absences from school in any school year.
2. A "habitual truant" means a child who has twenty unexcused absences within a school year.
3. "Unexcused absence" means any absence from an entire regularly scheduled school day, which absence is not an "excused absence" as defined below.
4. "Excused absence" means an absence from a regularly scheduled school day which, as determined by the building principal or his or her designee, is for:
 - a. reasons of health, including illness, incapacity, or doctor's visits. The administration reserves the right to require physician or other appropriate certification for absences of five (5) consecutive days or of a total of fifteen (15) days in any school year.
 - b. religious holidays.
 - c. court appearances.
 - d. funeral or death in the family.
 - e. approved school activities, including field trips.

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Definitions (continued)

- f. suspension or expulsion.
- g. college visitation or college interviews.
- h. other serious extenuating circumstances dependent on the judgment of the building administrator.

It is the student's responsibility to provide adequate proof of an excuse.

A planned absence of five or more consecutive school days shall be excused only if the student or the custodial parent(s) or guardian(s) have made prior arrangements to pick up all of the student's class assignments for the period of the absence.

- 5. A student is "tardy" if he or she does not arrive on time for homeroom or for any scheduled class or study hall unless excused by the homeroom or classroom teacher under the same criteria used for excused absences. It is the student's responsibility to provide adequate proof of an excuse.
- 6. A student is "cutting class" if he or she has arrived at school and is more than fifteen (15) minutes late for any scheduled class or study hall or fails to appear in class or study hall altogether unless excused by the classroom teacher under the same criteria used for excused absences. It is the student's responsibility to provide adequate proof of an excuse.

Attendance Accounting

- 1. It is the responsibility of each homeroom teacher to take daily attendance for each child assigned to each homeroom at the opening of the school day. It is the responsibility of each classroom teacher to take attendance for each child registered in each class throughout the school day. All teachers shall report absences to the building Principal and cuts to the Dean of Students as soon as possible.
- 2. It is the responsibility of the Principal or his or her designee (1) to keep school and class attendance records for each child enrolled in his or her school; (2) to place an annual summary of each student's attendance in the student's permanent record folder; and (3) to annually report in writing to the Superintendent the names of all truants and documentation pertaining thereto.

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Attendance (continued)

Enforcement

Absences

1. High school students may accumulate no more than 20 unexcused absences in order to receive graduation credit for full year courses and no more than 10 unexcused absences for semester courses. High school students who exceed this maximum may appeal their loss of graduation credit to the Truancy Review Board, in accordance with the Absenteeism Procedures set forth herein, to determine if any absences should be excused.
2. High school students accumulating between 21 and 30 unexcused absences during a full school year course (11 to 15 for semester courses) will be permitted to attend summer school if they have been in attendance a minimum of 150 days for full year courses and 75 days for semester courses. High School students who do not meet this minimum requirement may appeal their loss of summer school enrollment to the Truancy Review Board, in accordance with the Absenteeism Procedures set forth herein, to determine if any absences should be excused.
3. For students in the elementary and middle schools, unexcused absences will be considered as a factor for promotion or retention in accordance with the Promotion and Retention Policy.
4. In the case of “transfer students,” defined as students who were not enrolled in the New London Public Schools in the previous school year, the limits set forth in this policy shall be prorated from the date of enrollment to the end of the school year.
5. In the case of special education students, in lieu of the foregoing, discipline for unexcused absences shall be determined by the student’s Planning and Placement Team in accordance with the student’s Individual Educational Plan.

Tardiness

Students shall be disciplined according to the Code of Conduct within the Student Handbook for unexcused tardiness.

Class Cutting

It is imperative for students to be present in class in order to benefit from the process of teaching and learning. It is the student’s responsibility to be present for every class when present in school. The following guidelines are intended to promote the development of this responsible attitude.

1. A class cut is a day’s (unexcused) absence from class.

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Enforcement (continued)

Class Cutting (continued)

2. Students who cut study hall shall be disciplined according to the Code of Conduct within the Student Handbook.
3. The classroom teacher will refer each class cut to the appropriate administrator for the appropriate action according to the Code of Conduct within the Student Handbook. The administrator shall advise the student of the consequences of future class cuts.
4. Except as set forth below, course credit will be denied to students with ten or more unexcused class cuts in the same class in a year (five or more for semester courses).
5. Students who stand to lose course credit in a class due to excessive class cuts will be given the option of agreeing to a contract that will enable students to be eligible for course credit if they do not cut that class again for the remainder of the school year, provided that the contract is in force on or before April 30 of each school year, provided that the student has no discipline referrals for the remainder of the school year and provided that the student earns a passing grade. Such students may also appeal the loss of credit under this rule to the Principal or his or her designee to determine if any cuts should be excused.

Absenteeism Procedures

A. New London High School and Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School

The following procedures shall apply to students enrolled in New London High School and Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School:

1. A secretary in each school (the "Attendance Secretary") shall compile an attendance list every day. Whenever a child enrolled in school in any grade fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child's parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel under the direction of the building Principal or his or her designee to notify the parent or such other person by telephone.
2. All calls shall be logged, and the logs shall be given to the Attendance Secretary who shall change the attendance list as appropriate daily. A copy of the daily logs shall be kept on file, and the entries pertaining to each student shall be placed in the student's file.

Students

Attendance

Enforcement (continued)

Absenteeism Procedures (continued)

3. If three attempts to reach the parent, guardian or an emergency person by telephone have been unsuccessful, the caller shall inform the motivation officer in writing. The motivation officer shall attempt to reach the student in school to ascertain a new telephone number and/or visit the home of the student. The motivation officer shall attempt to determine the reasons for the absence and try to prevent recurrence of absenteeism.
4. The Attendance Secretary shall send an “attendance letter” to the parent or guardian of each student who has had four (4) unexcused absences in a school year. The “attendance letter” shall inform the parent or guardian that the student has had four (4) unexcused absences in a school year and shall notify the parent or guardian of the impact of absences on promotion, credit acquisition and/or graduation. A copy of each “attendance letter” shall be kept in the student’s file.
5. The Attendance Secretary shall send another “attendance letter” to the parent or guardian of each student who has had seven (7) unexcused absences in a school year. The “attendance letter” shall inform the parent or guardian that the student has had seven (7) unexcused absences in a school year and shall notify the parent or guardian of the impact of absences on promotion, credit acquisition and/or graduation. A copy of each “attendance letter” shall be kept in the student’s file.
6. When a student has had seven (7) unexcused absences in a school year, the school social worker shall present the name of the student at a student support team or student assistance team meeting, and that team shall determine the best way to assure the student’s faithful attendance in school, which may include one or more of the following;
 - a. Effecting parental contact or a home visit to determine and eliminate the root cause of the absences;
 - b. Assigning detention(s) to the student;
 - c. Again referring the student to the motivation officer;
 - d. Referring the student to the Time Out Room;
 - e. Referring the student to the school social worker; and/or
 - f. Referring the student to the Truancy Review Board.

For special education students, a planning and placement team meeting will be requested.

Students

Attendance

Enforcement (continued)

Absenteeism Procedures (continued)

7. In the case of truancy, appropriate school personnel shall arrange an attendance review team meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant, provided such meeting shall be held not later than ten school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or tenth unexcused absence in a school year. The Attendance Review Team shall consist of a building administrator, the school social worker, the school nurse, the motivational officer and the parent or other person having control of the child. The Attendance Review Team shall determine the best way to secure the child's faithful attendance in school including, but not limited to any combination of the following: continuing to monitor attendance, referral of the family to an outside agency, referral of the case to the Truancy Review Board, referral of the child to Juvenile Court for truancy, and/or referral of the family to the Department of Children and Families. For special education students, a planning and placement team meeting will be requested.
8. If the parent or other person having control of a child who is a truant fails to attend the meeting held pursuant to subsection (4) of this section or if such parent or other person otherwise fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, the Superintendent of Schools shall file for each such truant enrolled in the schools under his or her jurisdiction a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to General Statutes §46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.
9. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any New London Board of Education Employee who is a "mandated reporter" as defined by Connecticut General Statutes § 17a-101, must determine, while acting in his or her professional capacity, whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a student's repeated absences have been caused by abuse and/or neglect on the part of the student's parent(s) and/or guardian(s). If such a determination is made by the employee, then he or she must report or cause a report to be made with the Department of Children and Families or law enforcement officials, as required by Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a, et seq. Ordinarily, in any case where a Family With Service Needs Petition is recommended, the school social worker will complete the necessary packet and forward it to the Superintendent.
10. In order to strike at the roots of absenteeism, the staff shall coordinate their services with those of community agencies providing child and family support services and shall refer children and families to such agencies or the courts as appropriate.

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Enforcement (continued)

Absenteeism Procedures (continued)

11. There shall be a Truancy Review Board (“TRB”) which shall consist of the Superintendent or his or her designee, the building Principal or his or her designee, the New London Probate Judge or his or her designee, a community member (to be chosen by the Superintendent and the Board President) and a member-at-large which could be a student (to be chosen by the Superintendent and the Board President). 4 out of the 5 TRB members will constitute a quorum. Following one or more unexcused absences, a student may be referred to the TRB by an administrator, social worker, motivation officer, student support team, student assistance team, planning and placement team or attendance review team. When a student is referred to the TRB, it shall hold a hearing to determine the root cause of the unexcused absences. The student and the parent or other person having control of a child shall attend the hearing and shall be allowed to present such evidence as may be relevant to the issue. The TRB shall view all the facts and circumstances causing the unexcused absence(s). The TRB may take any such action as it deems appropriate to secure the student’s faithful attendance in school. Such action may include, but is not limited to, referral of the family to the New London Probate Court and/or Juvenile Court, expulsion, suspension, detention or exclusion. The parent or other person having control of a child or the student may appeal the decision of the TRB to the Board of Education or a committee thereof. Further appeal shall be only as allowed by law. The parent or other person having control of a child and student shall comply with the TRB’s determination or the final decision on appeal, as the case may be.
12. Building principals may allow awards, prizes or other incentives for individual students or groups of students who show exemplary attendance.
13. The Superintendent may adopt regulations in furtherance of this policy. The principals of New London High School and Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School or their designees shall meet at least annually to develop any additional uniform absenteeism procedures that they feel will increase student attendance. Any such uniform procedures shall be forwarded to the Superintendent with the recommendation that they be adopted as regulations.

B. Elementary Schools

The following procedures shall apply to students enrolled in Edgerton, Jennings, Harbor, Nathan Hale and Winthrop Schools:

1. A secretary in each school (the “Attendance Secretary”) shall compile an attendance list every day. Whenever a child enrolled in school in any grade fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the child’s parent or other person having control of the child is aware of the child’s absence, a reasonable effort shall be made by school personnel under the direction of the building Principal or his or her designee to notify the parent or such other person by telephone.

Students

Attendance

Enforcement (continued)

Absenteeism Procedures (continued)

2. All calls shall be logged, and the logs shall be given to the Attendance Secretary who shall change the attendance list as appropriate daily. A copy of the daily logs shall be kept on file, and the entries pertaining to each student shall be placed in the student's file.
3. In the case of truancy, appropriate school personnel shall arrange an Attendance Review Team meeting with the parent of each child who is a truant, or other person having control of such child, to review and evaluate the reasons for the child being a truant, provided such meeting shall be held not later than ten school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or tenth unexcused absence in a school year. The Attendance Review Team shall consist of a building administrator, the school social worker, the school nurse, the motivational officer and the parent or other person having control of the child. The Attendance Review Team shall determine the best way to secure the child's faithful attendance in school including, but not limited to any combination of the following: continuing to monitor attendance, referral of the family to an outside agency, referral of the case to the Truancy Review Board, referral of the child to Juvenile Court for truancy, and/or referral of the family to the Department of Children and Families. For special education students, a planning and placement team meeting will be requested.
4. If the parent or other person having control of a child who is a truant fails to attend the meeting held pursuant to subsection (4) of this section or if such parent or other person otherwise fails to cooperate with the school in attempting to solve the truancy problem, the Superintendent of Schools shall file for each such truant enrolled in the schools under his or her jurisdiction a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to General Statutes §46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.
5. Notwithstanding the foregoing, any New London Board of Education Employee, who is a "mandated reporter" as defined by Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101, must determine, while acting in his or her professional capacity, whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a student's repeated absences have been caused by abuse and/or neglect on the part of the student's parent(s) and/or guardian(s). If such a determination is made by the employee, then he or she must report or cause a report to be made with the Department of Children and Families or law enforcement officials, as required by Connecticut General Statutes §17a-101a, et seq.
6. In order to strike at the roots of absenteeism, the staff shall coordinate their services with those of community agencies providing child and family support services and shall refer children and families to such agencies or the courts as appropriate.

Students

Attendance

Enforcement (continued)

Absenteeism Procedures (continued)

7. There shall be a Truancy Review Board (“TRB”) which shall consist of the Superintendent or his or her designee, the building Principal or his or her designee, the New London Probate Judge or his or her designee, a community member (to be chosen by the Superintendent and the Board President) and a member-at-large which could be a student (to be chosen by the Superintendent and the Board President). 4 out of the 5 TRB members will constitute a quorum. Following one or more unexcused absences, a student may be referred to the TRB by an administrator, social worker, motivation officer, student support team, student assistance team, planning and placement team or Attendance Review Team. When a student is referred to the TRB, it shall hold a hearing to determine the root cause of the unexcused absences. The student and the parent or other person having control of a child shall attend the hearing and shall be allowed to present such evidence as may be relevant to the issue. The TRB shall view all the facts and circumstances causing the unexcused absence(s). The TRB may take any such action as it deems appropriate to secure the student’s faithful attendance in school. Such action may include, but is not limited to, referral of the family to the New London Probate Court and/or Juvenile Court, expulsion, suspension, detention or exclusion. The parent or other person having control of a child or the student may appeal the decision of the TRB to the Board of Education or a committee thereof. Further appeal shall be only as allowed by law. The parent or other person having control of a child and student shall comply with the TRB’s determination or the final decision on appeal, as the case may be.
8. The Superintendent may adopt regulations in furtherance of this policy. The principals of the elementary schools or their designees shall meet at least annually to develop any additional uniform absenteeism procedures that they feel will increase student attendance. Any such uniform procedures shall be forwarded to the Superintendent with the recommendation that they be adopted as regulations.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-184 Duties of parents. (as amended by PA 98-243 and PA 00-157)
10-198a Policies and procedures concerning truants (as amended by PA 00-157)
10-199 through 10-202 Attendance, truancy in general. (Revised, 1995, PA 95-304)
10-202e-f Policy on dropout prevention and grant program.
10-221(b) Board of education to prescribe rules. *Campbell v New Milford*, 193 Conn 93 (1984).
New London High School Student Handbook, 2004-05, pp. 10-13

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