

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE/ LOSS/ RESTORATION OF CREDIT

Policy Statement

The Shelton Board of Education believes that regular school attendance is essential for an effective and productive learning experience. The sequential presentation of school learning requires a continuity of instruction. The maximum benefits for each individual child can be achieved only from participation and interaction in daily activity.

Regular school attendance is both encouraged and mandated. The primary responsibility for adherence to regular attendance rests with the student's parents/guardians and the individual student. The District will comply with Connecticut State Statutes related to compulsory school attendance.

The Connecticut General Statutes requires students over five and less than eighteen years of age to attend school on a regular basis, unless (1) they graduate from high school or (2) their parents/guardians consent to the student leaving school at age seventeen. The student's parent/guardian must appear at their home school to sign a form for withdrawing the student from school. The District will provide the parent/guardian with information about educational options available outside of the school system and in the community. This policy applies to all students attending the Shelton Public School System.

Shelton Public Schools recognizes that students may occasionally miss school or class for legitimate reasons. These reasons, when documented by a parent/guardian/school administration/physician, will be reviewed and **may** be taken into consideration when a student's absences become excessive and/or chronic. Excessive/Chronic absences will warrant appropriate follow-up action by the school and **may** lead to loss of credit and/or promotion.

Note: The use of the state approved definitions of "excused" and "unexcused" absences are for state purposes in reporting of truancy. Districts are not precluded from using separate definitions of such when involving decisions on areas such as class credit, promotion, and grading.

The Board of Education strongly believes that family vacations should not take place when school is in session.

Protocols

The Shelton Public Schools attendance policy follows the Response to Intervention (RTI) formula to offer a multi-tiered approach to attendance monitoring and behavior correction. Each time a student reaches the next attendance threshold, more faculty/school personnel become involved in informing the student and the student's family of the upcoming consequences and changing the student's behavior. The formal notification process will be supplemented with daily calls through an automated calling system to the homes of absent students. In addition, a pattern of absenteeism may trigger a referral to an individual school's Attendance Team.

Annually at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, parents/guardians will be notified of their obligations pursuant to student attendance. (Please see individual school's Student Handbook or Board of Education Policy Book on the district website at www.sheltonpublicschools.org.)

A. General Principles:

- Attendance will be taken every day in every school.
- Attendance will be recorded electronically every day.
- Students/Parents/Guardians are responsible to communicate with his/her teacher when he/she will/was absent from class and arrange to complete missed work.
- Communication is essential for success in teaching and learning.
- Student seat time is important to learning but not the only determining factor related to academic credit.
- Students who intentionally arrive late or miss class will incur attendance penalties that may affect their grades and/or participation in school activities.
- Attendance issues need to be resolved as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours from the student's return to school.

B. Parent/Guardian Responsibility:

- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to monitor his/her child's attendance via the District parent portal at www.sheltonpublicschools.org, student report card, and/or contacting the student's School or House Office to report an absence.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report his/her child's absence to the school each day.
- Absences are to be reported to the student's School or House Office between 7:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. depending on the length of the school day of the student's school.
- A note must also be provided to the School/ House Office within 48 hours of the student's return.
- Notes must be received within 48 hours and must include the following:
 - student's name
 - date(s) of absence
 - reason for the absence

C. Student Attendance Reporting:

Student attendance reporting will consist of a total calculation of excused/verified and unexcused / unverified absences. Once a student reaches a certain level of absenteeism a multi-tiered intervention response will begin. Communication between the school and student/parent/guardian will be the first level of intervention.

Additional absences will prompt formal school based team meetings where attendance concerns will be addressed and strategies outlined. The school system will coordinate services with community agencies and referrals of truant and chronically absent students to agencies providing child and family services.

Continual absences may result in a referral to the District Attendance Review Team for further discussion. At this level, students **may** lose credit upon reaching 20 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 11 absences in a half-credit course. Full-year physical education courses will follow the half-credit threshold of 11 absences, as those classes do not meet every day. School-approved trips/activities (field trips, school sports, in-school events), medical exemptions, and suspensions/expulsions do not count towards the accrual of absences. For students who do not earn credits promotion may be effected in accordance with Policy 6146.2

***Note: Medical /504/IEP Exemptions:**

A student with profound medical issues will be exempt from this policy if it is so noted on the student's IEP, Section 504, or Individualized Health Care Plans. (A student qualifies for Section 504 protection if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities and exhibits such. An Individualized Health Care Plan is a temporary accommodation to assist a student during that period of time the student needs support.)

***Note: Additional Information:**

Absences for students who have severe illnesses, whereby a physician requires/verifies them to be absent for five (5) or more consecutive days, will have those absences exempted from the accrued absence totals. Those illnesses must be documented by a note from the treating physician verifying that the absence was medically necessary. These notes must also be submitted to the School/House Office and school nurse within 48 hours but not more than 10 days from the student's return to school.

1. Excused/Verified/Exempt Absences from School/Class

*Absences will be considered excused/verified provided that official documentation is presented to the School/House Office within the previously mentioned 48 hours, but not more than 10 days from the student's return to school.

These are examples of excused/verified absences, but are not limited to:

- Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside regular school hours
- Emergency family situations
- Personal illness (sick day)

These are examples of exempt absences which include but are not limited to:

- Bus failure (confirmed by the transportation provider)
- College visitations, 3 per year, for 11th and 12th graders (documentation from the college)
- Court appearances (documentation from the court clerk or attorney)
- Death in family (documentation verifying relationship)
- Excused/verified visit to school nurse
- Field trips/athletic events/school-sponsored events
- "Take Your Student To Work Day"
- Illness requiring hospitalization or prolonged stay at home for recuperation (documentation from treating physician)
- Religious observation (documentation from parent for recognized religious holiday)
- Special testing/meetings (AP, PPT/Section 504, etc.)
- Support Personnel (School Counselor, Social Worker, Psychologist, Out-Reach) - initiated visits
- Administrative (Administrator contact for school business)
- In-School Suspensions
- Suspensions
- Expulsions

Students with excused/verified/exempt absences from school or class will be given appropriate opportunity within a reasonable timeframe to make up class work they have missed in order to complete curriculum requirements. Failure on the part of the student to complete his/her responsibility in making up missed work may impact his/her grade.

2. Unexcused/Unverified Absences from School/Class

Unexcused/unverified absences are those which are not reconciled within 48 hours of the absence.

The following will constitute unexcused/unverified absences:

- An absence which is not reported by a parent/guardian either by phone or note will be considered unexcused/unverified.
- Class cuts will also count as unexcused/unverified absences. (A class cut is defined as any time a student has reported to school but does not report to his/her designated class, and does not have staff permission to be in any other location.)
- All unexcused/unverified absences will be counted towards a student's absence accrual.
- Incomplete student work due to unexcused/unverified absences may be considered for submission by the classroom teacher for classroom credit.

*Note: Excessive Accrual of absences may result in loss of credit.

D. Absences and Participation In Extra-Curricular Activities:

Students must be in school for the entire day in order to be eligible for participation in those athletics or after school activities. Students involved in athletic or after school activities are not allowed to be dismissed from school on those days. This includes being on time for the school day.

E. Tardiness to Class:

A student is considered tardy to class when they report to class without a pass or written excuse by school official after said class begins.

F. Loss of Credit/Promotion/Appeals:

- Full year Courses: Once a student reaches 20 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, they are subject to loss of credit and/or promotion
- Half-year credit course: Once a student reaches 11 absences in a half-credit course, they are subject to loss of credit and/or promotion. Full-year physical education courses will follow the half-credit threshold of 11 absences, as those classes do not meet every day.
- For Grades K-8 loss of promotion in accordance with Policy 6146.2

School-approved trips/activities (field trips, school sports, in-school events), medical exemptions, and suspensions/expulsions do not count towards the accrual of absences.

G. Protocol for Loss of Credit/Promotion/Appeals:

The parent/guardian will receive contact in writing from school staff upon a student's crossing of each attendance threshold.

- The first contact will be made upon 12 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 5 absences in a half-credit course.
- The second contact will be made upon 16 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 8 absences in a half-credit course, or 6 absences in a quarter-credit course.
- The third contact may be made when a student reaches the limit of 20 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 11 absences in a half-credit course, or 8 absences in a quarter-credit course, which will result in a loss of credit for the course.

*Note: Physical education courses will be viewed as half-credit courses

*Note: Outcomes in accordance with Policy 6146.2

Once a student is in danger of losing credit or is being considered for retention in a grade level, he/she will have the opportunity to provide evidence demonstrating that his/her excessive absences were medically or socially (documented religious holidays, death in family, legal, etc.) necessary. Whatever is submitted at this time should be supplemental to any documents that were required as per the current policy of reporting absences within a 48-hour time period after the student has returned from his/her absence. The completed appeals packet must be received no later than the last class day of the semester in which credit has been lost, unless otherwise notified.

There will be an Appeals Board in secondary schools. The Appeals Board will have five members made up of administration (school & central) and support personnel which could be a school counselor, psychologist, and social worker. This Appeals Board will review submitted documents and if appropriate forward to the District Attendance Review Team for a final decision. A decision will be based on submitted evidence and pertinent supplemental documents for credit recovery. It is the responsibility of the student/parent/guardian to provide in writing, a convincing level of evidence to prove there was an overwhelming reason for the great majority of the student's absences.

Students may have an opportunity to participate in coursework assessments, mid-terms, and final exams if students provide evidence that they can pass those evaluations even though attendance in those courses is excessive.

A student who loses credit for a particular course, due to excessive absences, may not be eligible to retake said course in summer school. If the total of class cuts (unexcused/unverified) amount to more than 50% of a student's total absences, he/she will automatically be disqualified for credit recovery.

*Note: Forms to support the implementation of this policy will be developed and reviewed periodically by the Assistant Superintendent or his/her designee.

H. Determining Truancy:

Solely for determining truancy, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, "absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence, or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the Connecticut State Board of Education. For purposes of this definition, a student is considered to be "in attendance" if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., a field trip), for at least half of the school day.

Based on the definition above, a "truant" is a child age five to eighteen, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences in one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in one year.

The Shelton Board of Education recognizes the importance of early intervention for students exhibiting truancy behavior, and for that purpose distinguishes between "excused absences" and unexcused absences" as follows:

A student's absence from school shall be considered "excused" if written documentation of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes and meets the following criteria:

- a. For absences one (1) through nine (9) in a school year, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation;

- b. For the tenth (10th) absence and all absences thereafter in a school year, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons: student illness if verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional; student's observance of a religious holiday; death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family; mandated court appearance if supported by appropriate additional documentation; the lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends; or extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administrators in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines.
- c. Legitimate medical documentation can be submitted at any time for exemption in order to maintain accurate individual student attendance records.

In accordance with State statute, the Board of Education shall annually report to the Connecticut State Department of Education, on a school-by-school basis, data pertaining to students enrolled in grades K - 12, inclusive, in schools under its jurisdiction who are truant or chronically absent.

References

- Connecticut Public Act 17-14, "An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education"
- Connecticut General Statutes §10-184, 10-186, 10-198a, 10-198b, 10-198c, 10-198d, 10-210, 46b-149
- Connecticut State Department of Education, "Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention"
- Shelton Board of Education Policy Code 5131: Student Standard of Conduct
- Shelton Board of Education Policy Code 6173: Homebound and Hospitalized Instruction

Policy Adopted September 26, 2018

Shelton Public Schools