

## I. Objectives

- A. **Overall Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to encourage good attendance as vital to instruction and classroom participation and to identify the role that each individual in the school community plays in supporting student attendance. The major objective is to reduce the current level of unexcused absences by reducing cutting and truancy by at least 10 percent annually in order to meet or exceed the attendance rate of similar schools (as defined by the State School Report Card).
- B. **Dissemination:** Effective implementation of an attendance policy requires that all participants be informed and fully understand its purpose, procedures, and the consequences for noncompliance; therefore ensuring that students, parents, staff, and teachers are notified and understand this policy is important.
- C. **Due Process:** In addition, it is the intention of this policy to provide appropriate notice to parents regarding student attendance, develop and implement appropriate interventions and consequences, and institute a fair system for appeals related to the accuracy of student attendance.

## II. Strategies

- A. To implement and disseminate an attendance policy.  
To ensure that students, parents, teachers, and administrators are notified and understand this policy, the following procedures shall be implemented:
  1. Students shall receive a copy of the attendance policy, which will be reviewed in assemblies and/or homeroom within the first two days of school. Each student and parent will be asked to sign and return a statement indicating that he or she has read and understands the policy;
  2. The attendance policy will be discussed at grade-level assemblies and in individual classrooms;
  3. The attendance policy will be included in the Student Handbook;
  4. The attendance policy will be posted in individual classrooms;
  5. The attendance policy will be available on the district's website <http://shs.portchesterschools.org>;
  6. Parents/guardians will receive a copy of the attendance policy through the mail;
  7. The attendance policy will be reviewed with parents at orientation and PTSA meetings;
  8. The school newspaper and district publications will include periodic reminders of the components of the attendance policy;
  9. The attendance policy will be part of the New Teacher Orientation program;
  10. The attendance policy will be periodically reviewed at faculty meetings;
  11. The attendance policy will be included in the Faculty Handbook.
- B. To provide due process elements in an attendance policy.
  1. Establish a process for calling parents daily to notify them of unexcused absences;
  2. Establish a continuum of interventions to attempt to modify student attendance behaviors;
  3. Establish a process for parents and students to appeal the accuracy of student attendance.

## III. Absence Determination

State regulation authorizes school districts to adopt minimum requirements that distinguish between excused and unexcused absences for the purpose of awarding course credit. Port Chester distinguishes between excused and unexcused when determining the total number of days absent from each course.

- A. Excused Absences
  1. An absence shall be considered excused if a student is authorized by school officials to be somewhere other than in a regularly scheduled class. Students must make up work in all such instances. See *IV. Coding of Absences*.
  2. An absence shall be considered excused if a student's parents/guardians contact the Assistant Principals' Office to notify the Office of their child being absent, for instance, in the case of illness or family emergency. All absences in which the Office has not been notified will be recorded as unexcused until a written note from the parent is received. All students are required to return to school with a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian on the first day following an absence. **Notes presented beyond two (2) school days after return from an absence will not be accepted and the absence will be counted as unexcused against the student's record.** All excused absences permit a student to make up work missed.
  3. An absence shall be considered excused if a student is absent for a mandatory college orientation (documentation and advanced approval required by Guidance Counselor) or a maximum of three college visitation days (with documentation and advanced approval required by Guidance Counselor).

B. Unexcused Absences

The following absences are Unexcused Absences and make-up privileges are not permitted except in the case of tardiness. They include, but are not limited to:

1. Absence without permission (i.e. cutting [absent from a class] and truancy [absent an entire day]);
2. Leaving school due to illness without the permission of the school nurse or an administrator;
3. Leaving school due to an emergency situation without the permission of the high school administration;
4. Excuses such as vacation, shopping, oversleeping, car trouble, job responsibilities, babysitting, etc. are not acceptable and will be listed as unexcused.

C. Tardiness

1. A student who is chronically late to school will receive an Administrative Detention after every fifth infraction.
2. Port Chester High School has "Zero Tolerance" for lateness to class.
  - a) Teachers will close doors to class after the bell rings to begin class.
  - b) Students loitering in the hallways after the bell rings may be assigned Administrative Detentions.
3. Tardiness to class of less than 20 minutes (Tardy) five times shall count toward the equivalent of an unexcused absence.
4. Tardiness to class of 20 or more minutes (Illegal Tardy) will be considered an unexcused absence.

IV. Coding of Absences

A. Excused absences will be coded as one of the following:

1. COU—Counseling Appointment
2. GUI—Guidance Appointment
3. DOC—Doctor Appointment
4. MED—Medical
5. NUR—Nurse Visit
6. EDU—School Service
7. PLG—Peer Leadership Group Activity
8. FTP—Field Trip
9. SPT—Sports
10. SEC—Sectional Lesson
11. PRI—Meeting with Principal/Assistant Principal
12. REL—Religious Observance
13. ISD—In-School Detention
14. COL—College Visit
15. SUS—Out-of-School Suspension
16. CRT—Court Appearance
17. FAM—Family-related Absence
18. ABS—Other Excused Absence (e.g. Impassable Roads, etc.)

B. Unexcused absences will be coded as one of the following:

1. CUT—Unverified Absence
2. TRU—Truant
3. ILV—Vacation
4. ILA—Other Unexcused Absence

V. Attendance Requirements

A. Minimum Attendance Policy

The Board of Education Attendance Policy will establish a minimum attendance standard for course credit. According to Board of Education Policy, Port Chester High School students will lose credit when they exceed:

- 14 unexcused absences in a one-credit course
- 7 unexcused absences in a one-half credit course
- 21 unexcused absences in a one-credit lab course

**Students who exceed the number of unexcused class absences are in violation of the attendance requirements and will be denied course credit.** These students will be responsible for completing course assignments while they continue to attend the course in order to maintain eligibility for summer school. (A new entrant to the District must maintain an acceptable attendance record proportional to the entrance date to the remaining portion of the year.)

B. Eligibility for Summer School

Students who fail a course will be eligible for that course in summer school if they do not exceed 36 total absences (excused or unexcused) in a one-credit course. Any students exceeding this minimum attendance requirement will be required to repeat the course.

## VI. Attendance Incentives

The school will offer incentives for attendance excellence and/or improved attendance. These may include:

- A. Publication of an Attendance Honor Roll each month;
- B. Monthly prize drawings from among those students with exemplary attendance;
- C. Attendance recognition certificates and rewards given to students with exemplary attendance each semester;
- D. Other incentives as suggested, investigated, and implemented.

## VII. Parent/Guardian Notification, Appeals Process, and Credit Recovery Option

### A. Parent/Guardian Notification

1. Parents/Guardians will be notified daily by phone of unexcused student absences.
2. When students reach certain milestone absences, formal letters will notify parents/guardians.
3. When students reach certain milestone absences, parents/guardians will be scheduled to meet with guidance counselors and/or administrators, per the attendance policy.
4. When students reach the maximum attendance threshold, parents will be notified by formal letter and phone call home.

### B. Appeals Process

An Appeals Committee will be established to hear students' appeals related to unexcused attendance and extenuating circumstances. A written appeal for a hearing must be received in the Assistant Principal's Office within 5 school days of the date of the loss of credit notice. The Appeals Committee will consist of an administrator, teacher, parent, and student, and the appeal will be heard in a timely basis by the end of the quarter. The student and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to appear at this meeting with appropriate, verifiable documentation to present to the committee. The committee will then rule on credit eligibility circumstances. Any further unexcused absence during the appeals process will be considered during the hearing. Decisions of the Appeals Committee may be appealed to the High School Principal.

### C. Credit Recovery Option

Students and parents/guardians of students will be informed after the fourteenth unexcused absence in a one credit course (or after the seventh unexcused absence from a one-half credit course) that credit in that course will not be received due to excessive unexcused absences. The student and parents/guardians will meet with the student's Assistant Principal to outline conditions of a credit recovery option. The plan is a last chance to earn credit in the course where a student has exceeded the maximum number of unexcused absences.

1. The student and parent must commit to the following conditions in the course or courses in question:
  - a. The avoidance of further absences during the recovery period.
  - b. The student must complete all work and have a passing average for the year.
2. With these conditions met, a student will regain credit.

## VIII. Intervention Strategies

The following pertains to the number of unexcused absences in a one-credit course and one-half credit course. Note that a parent will be notified multiple times during this process and multiple intervention strategies will be attempted to modify student behavior. At every step through this process, **all** unexcused student absences will trigger an automated call from the "Night Caller" system to notify parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student's unexcused absence.

### A. One Credit Course

#### 1. Unexcused Absences 1-4

- a. *Notification:* Automated "Night Callers" will notify parent(s) or guardian(s) with a phone call in the evening.
- b. *Intervention:* Teachers will confer with students **and** their parents concerning initial academic and attendance issues.

#### 2. Subsequent Absences: As soon as possible after the fourth, seventh, and eleventh, unexcused absence from a full-year course, the high school administration shall send written notification to the student's parent(s) and guidance counselor. The letters shall notify the parents(s) or guardian(s) as follows.

##### a. After the 4<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence

- i. *Notification:* The student has been absent a quarter of the number of maximum absences and may lose credit if absences continue. The Assistant Principals' Office will contact parent(s) or guardian(s).
- ii. *Intervention:* Guidance will confer with students **and** their parent(s) or guardian(s) concerning academic and attendance issues.

##### b. After the 7<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence

- i. *Notification:* The student has missed half the allowed absences and will lose credit if absences exceed the limit. The Assistant Principals' Office will contact parent(s) or guardian(s).
- ii. *Intervention:* Students who begin to exhibit an excessive number of days absent or tardy will be referred to district pupil personnel service professionals (i.e., guidance counselors, social worker, and psychologist) to try to identify the causes and seek solutions to the problems. They will work with families to find ways to foster better family relationships and improve student attendance. Where necessary, they will assist parents in finding ways to set appropriate limits for children. Additionally, referrals to outside agencies may be made.

- c. After the 11<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence
  - i. *Notification:* The student has only three absences remaining and will lose credit soon if absences exceed the limit. The Assistant Principals' Office will contact parent(s) or guardian(s) and schedule a mandatory meeting.
  - ii. *Intervention:* The student's Assistant Principal will meet with the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) to review the student's serious attendance problem and consequences if his/her attendance does not improve.
- d. After the 14<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence: The student will not receive credit due to excessive absenteeism. The high school administration will contact the parent(s) or guardian(s). At this point, a credit recovery option may be initiated (see VII, C. *Credit Recovery Option*).

B. One-Half Credit Course

- 1. Unexcused Absences 1-3
  - a. *Notification:* Automated "Night Callers" will notify parent(s) or guardian(s) with a phone call in the evening.
  - b. *Intervention:* Teachers will confer with students **and** their parents concerning initial academic and attendance issues.
- 2. Subsequent Absences: As soon as possible after the third and fifth unexcused absence from a half-year course, or full-year alternating day course, the high school administration shall send written notification to the student's parent(s) and guidance counselor. The letters shall notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) as follows.
  - a. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> absence
    - i. *Notification:* The student has been absent nearly half of the number of maximum absences and may lose credit if absences continue. The Assistant Principals' Office will contact parent(s) or guardian(s).
    - ii. *Intervention:* Guidance will confer with students and their parent(s) or guardian(s) concerning academic and attendance issues.
  - b. After the 5<sup>th</sup> absence
    - i. *Notification:* The student has only two absences remaining and will lose credit soon if absences exceed the limit. The Assistant Principals' Office will contact parent(s) or guardian(s) and schedule a mandatory meeting.
    - ii. *Intervention:* The student's Assistant Principal will meet with the student and his/her parent(s) or guardian(s) to review the student's serious attendance problem and consequences if his/her attendance does not improve.
  - c. After the 7<sup>th</sup> absence: The student will not receive credit due to excessive absenteeism. The administration will contact parent(s) or guardian(s). At this point, a credit recovery option may be initiated (see VII, C. *Credit Recovery Option*).

In every letter to a student's parent, a request will be made for the parent to contact the child's guidance counselor and teacher(s). The counselor will discuss the impact of excessive absences on the student's education and the associated consequences. The student's teachers will reinforce the importance of attendance for academic success. The parent(s) or guardian(s) will have an opportunity to confer with the school staff; however, a conference with the parent(s) or guardian(s) is not a prerequisite to denying academic credit to a student who has failed to meet attendance requirements. **The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in class rests with the student and parent.**

**IX. Implementation Responsibility**

- A. Teacher
  - 1. Takes accurate daily attendance in classes
  - 2. Notifies students of absences that are identified as unexcused
  - 3. Corrects daily attendance in the event an absence is incorrectly recorded by the teacher, for example, changing attendance from "Absent" to "Tardy" when a student arrives late after attendance has been taken
  - 4. Confers with students and parents as to the influence of attendance on academic performance
- B. Guidance Counselor
  - 1. Reviews daily attendance in classes
  - 2. Notifies students and parents of absences that are identified as unexcused and reach a certain threshold
  - 3. Confers with students and parents as to the influence of attendance on academic performance
  - 4. Meets with students and parents when certain absence thresholds are reached to review and discuss the consequences of excessive absenteeism
- C. Administrator
  - 1. Reviews daily attendance in classes
  - 2. Notifies students and parents of absences that are identified as unexcused and reach a certain threshold
  - 3. Corrects daily attendance in the event an absence is incorrectly coded
  - 4. Confers with students and parents as to the influence of attendance on academic performance
  - 5. Meets with students and parents when certain absence thresholds are reached to review and discuss the consequences of excessive absenteeism