



# Lawrence Public Schools

## Policy of the School Committee

**Section J: STUDENTS**

**JEA-R3**

**Subject: HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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### **POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Lawrence Public Schools recognizes that regular attendance in class, participation in class activities and interaction between student and teacher are an essential and integral part of the learning process. Classroom participation is vital to the instructional process and must be considered in evaluating the performance and content mastery of students.

At the Lawrence High School Campus, the Principals, acting in conjunction with the Headmaster and the Superintendent of Schools, shall develop attendance rules and regulations, impose such measures as may be appropriate for infractions of these regulations, and further establish procedures for grades and/or credit for failure to comply. The rules and regulations will align with Massachusetts General Laws. Such information shall be published and made available to parents and students in the Student/Parent Handbook of each of the high schools.

The purpose of the Lawrence High School Campus Attendance Policy is to support students as learners. Explicit goals are:

- To develop personal responsibility, accountability and positive behaviors to ensure college readiness and future employment
- To recognize that learning and social growth occur within the classroom environment, so attending and taking part in class is fundamental to student success
- To ensure that the policy is another means to teach students rather than as a punitive measure
- To ensure that all components of the policy function in accordance with the state truancy and compulsory attendance guidelines

Given that the purpose of the policy is to ensure that all students are successful as students, it is the expectation of the Lawrence High School Campus that all students are to attend all classes, unless they have a valid reason to miss class. To receive credit, student absences cannot exceed more than nine absences per year, unless the absences are waived and the course work completed towards required content and performance standards in accordance with this policy. The attendance policy must have meaningful consequences, while still providing opportunities for students to continue learning and remain engaged in school.

#### **Student Academic Requirements**

To earn credit in any course, a student is obligated to:

1. Fulfill the course requirements as defined by the content and performance standards for the course;
2. Maintain at least a 95% attendance rate in all courses (no more than nine (9) absences in a year or four (4) during first semester and five (5) during second semester).



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#### **Student Attendance Rules and Regulations**

Attendance at school on every day that school is in session is required of every student on the Lawrence High School Campus. Successful academic performance depends upon the student's presence in the classroom and upon the dialogue, which takes place among student, teacher, and all of the students in the class.

#### **A. General Attendance Reporting**

1. The student or his/her parent or guardian is required to call the student's High School Office on the day of absence and notify the office that the student will be absent. When the call-in procedure is not followed, a call to the student's home will be made.
2. If a student is not present in school and in their assigned class prior to 11:30 a.m., he/she shall be conclusively presumed to be absent for that day. If a student is dismissed from school prior to 11:30 a.m., he/she will also be listed as absent from school
3. If a student is participating in a school-approved field trip, he/she will be regarded as present on the day of the field trip.

#### **B. Non-Attendance**

Non-attendance is defined as an absence or absences from school or classes that are due to illness, family emergencies, or personal circumstances that require a student to miss school. If a student accrues four (4) absences in a course during first semester or five (5) absences in a course during second semester, he/she will not have completed the prescribed course of study and will be required to participate in extended day classes to make the lost credits and shall have the right to appeal the placement in the extended day classes. If the student fails to attend the extended day classes and make up the course time and work that was missed due to absences, he/she will lose the semester credit for the course. The number of absences permitted for semester courses and courses that meet only a few days a week are pro-rated according to the number of credits assigned to the course. The number of permitted absences will also be prorated for students who begin at one of the High Schools on the Lawrence High School Campus after the official opening of school or the start of a new semester. For courses that meet two periods a day, one absence or one tardy will be recorded if a student misses any class time in either period.

In addition to the above, the following forms of absence are considered to be days of non-attendance:

#### **1. Absences resulting from class cuts and school truancy**

These absences will also be addressed in accordance with the provisions of the Lawrence Public



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Schools Discipline Code. No make-up work provisions will be granted.

#### **2. Absences due to out-of-school suspensions for violation of the Lawrence Public Schools Discipline Code**

Make-up work provisions within a two-day period will be granted for days of suspension.

#### **3. Tardiness**

- A. Tardiness to school resulting in absences from courses and late arrival to courses shall be considered as absences unless they are the result of one of the following reasons and satisfactory proof is presented to substantiate the cause and necessity for such tardiness.
  - i A late arrival of a district school bus
  - ii Fulfillment of a religious obligation as permitted by law
  - iii An extraordinary circumstance determined by the Administration upon presentation of satisfactory proof as to the cause and necessity of the tardiness.
- B. If a student is late for school, he/she will be required to participate in the extended day class established by their high school on the day they are tardy. The student will be required to remain in the extended day class making up work missed for the number of minutes that he/she was late that morning. Exception tardies will be granted for the reasons lists above.
- C. After a student arrives at school, if he/she is more than fifteen minutes late for a class or missing from class for more than fifteen minutes, he/she shall be considered as absent from the class unless he/she has officially documented school business with a teacher, counselor or administrator.
- D. Three incidents of tardiness to class or time out of class of less than fifteen (15) minutes shall be considered as one absence from the class.

#### **4. Early Dismissal**

- A. All early dismissals shall be regarded as absences for each class that is missed.
- B. If a student desires early dismissal from school or a class, he/she must present a written request from his/her parent or guardian indicating the time and the reason for early dismissal to his/her High School Office prior to the beginning of classes for the day. The student's parent/guardian must come to their High School Office to dismiss him/her. No student can be dismissed via a telephone call during the school day.



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#### **5. Illness During the School Day**

Illness during the school day will be regarded as absences from the classes not attended.

#### **C. Exceptions**

Absences from school that will be considered as exceptions are determined by the student's High School Principal or Assistant Principal. Exceptions are those absences represented by the following explanations:

1. An extended illness or hospitalization (five (5) or more consecutive school days) that is accompanied by a signed doctor's note detailing the illness and the recuperation period.
2. Absences that occur because of a chronic illness documented by a medical diagnosis through the School Nurse's Office and completion of a chronic illness form.
3. Absences due to the exercise of religious obligations on those days of religious observance as authorized by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
4. Absences due to funeral leave in the case of a person in the immediate family. The term "immediate family" shall include only the student's mother, father, guardian, sister, brother, grandparent, or relative living in the student's house.

Upon return to school, a student will have a maximum of two (2) days to present the documentation required for exception absences to his/her High School Office. Upon receiving notification of the High School Office's approval of a request that an absence or absences be considered exceptions, a student must be certain to have all of his/her teachers sign this form within three (3) class days. Otherwise, the absence will remain as it is regardless of what happens at a later date. Students are encouraged to save the form as proof of the absence as an exception, should they be questioned at a later date.

#### **D. Make-up Work Provision**

For each absence and other excused absences, a student is required to make up missed work within two days of his/her return to school. However, if a student is absent as a result of truancy or unauthorized cuts (AWOL's), he/she shall not be granted make-up work provisions.

#### **E. Extended Illness**

If a student is absent for up to five (5) days or is expected to be more than five (5) school days because of illness or an accident, the student's High School Principal or Assistant Principal should be contacted so he/she can ask teachers to prepare work that can be performed at home in order to



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allow the student to stay up to date with course work. If an absence is expected to be more than fourteen (14) school days, the student's physician must complete a Physician's Statement (Form 28RJ3 from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) and submit it to the student's Guidance Counselor in order for arrangements to be made for a tutor to provide home instruction in as many subjects as possible.

#### **F. Parent Notification of Cumulative Absences**

Parents will be notified of total absences from a class by way of the progress reports and report cards issued approximately every five weeks. At the third absence in a semester or course, the student and his/her parents or guardians will receive a notification from the school to arrange a meeting to discuss the impact of further absences.

#### **G. School Functions**

A student may not participate in a school function unless he/she is in attendance during the regular school day.

#### **H. Appeals**

An appeal process is available to students and parents or guardians, if a decision is made that results in loss of course credit due to excessive absenteeism. An Attendance Review Panel composed of faculty and administrators from the student's high school shall hear any appeal to discuss the circumstances that may have led to the excessive absenteeism. The decision of the Attendance Review Panel will be submitted to the High School Principal for final action.

#### **Additional Information Regarding Attendance**

**Chronic Illness Procedure** - If a student has a chronic illness that forces him/her to be absent, a "Chronic Illness Form" signed by the student's doctor must be on file in the Nurse's Office in order to have that absence excused. The Chronic Illness Form becomes effective as the basis for an exemption absence(s) on the day the form is filed in the Nurse's Office and is not retroactive.

A note from the student's parent or guardian must be presented within two days upon return to school requesting an exception absence(s) related to a chronic illness. Once the Exception Absence Form is issued by the High School Principal or Assistant Principal, the student has three class days to get the form signed by his/her teachers.

**Attendance Review Panel Hearings** - If a student has a reasonable basis for an Attendance Review Panel Hearing, he/she may obtain an appeal form from the High School Principal or Assistant Principal. This appeal form should be submitted to the High School Office as soon as



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possible after a warning has been issued. Do not wait until all allowable days of absence have been used to file an appeal.

A student is encouraged to appeal in person before the Attendance Review Panel so that issues requiring clarification or questions needing answers may be handled without delay. Parents are invited to join the student at this meeting.

The Attendance Review Panel can excuse only specific dates. A student should specify those dates on the appeal form. The student should provide appropriate verification of absences such as doctor's notes, court documents, etc. and be prepared to provide clear evidence of extenuating circumstances.

The High School Office will confirm the Hearing's time and place when the student submits his/her appeal form.

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