

**MONMOUTH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**POLICY-ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES AND EXCUSES
PROLOGUE:**

5113

The Monmouth Regional High School board of education believes that the regular attendance of students in each class and in school in general is critical to its educational mission. The district shall endeavor to achieve at least the ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). Continuity of instruction is an essential element in student performance and allows students the greatest opportunity to succeed at meeting the state learning standards in the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The Superintendent shall oversee the development of effective strategies that maximize student attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities and strive to:

- A. Encourage good attendance;
- B. Discourage unacceptable absences;
- C. Identify patterns of absence, tardiness and early departures from school; and
- D. Intervene to prevent and correct problems with attendance.

Definitions

- A. A day in session for purposes of attendance shall be a day on which the school is open and students are under the guidance and direction of a teacher or teachers engaged in the teaching process. Days on which school is closed for such reasons as holidays, teachers' institutes and inclement weather shall not be considered as days in session.

A school day shall consist of not less than four hours of actual instruction.

A day of attendance shall be one in which a student is present for the full day under the guidance and direction of a teacher while school is in session. Where there are two sessions in a day due to overcrowding, either session of four hours or more, exclusive of lunch or recess, shall be the equivalent of a full day's attendance.

A student shall be recorded as absent in the school register when not in attendance at a session, except students excused due to religious holidays who shall be recorded as excused. An excused absence for any reason other than due to religious holidays shall not be counted as a day of attendance in the school register.

The mere presence of a student at roll call shall not be regarded as sufficient attendance for compliance with law (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3). In a school which is in session during both the forenoon and the afternoon, a student shall be present at least one hour during both the forenoon and the afternoon in order to be recorded as present for the full day. In a school which is in session during either the forenoon or the afternoon, a student shall be present at least two hours in the session in order to be recorded as present for the full day.

A student not present in school because of his or her participation in an approved school activity, such as a field trip, meeting, cooperative education assignment, or athletic competition will be considered to be in attendance.

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B An "unexcused absence" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed as excused absences in "A" above. An unexcused absence may be counted toward retention, truancy, loss of course credit, ineligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance. Absence is expressly not excused for any of the following reasons (this list is intended to be illustrative and is not inclusive):

1. Family travel;
2. Performance of household or babysitting duties;
3. Other daytime activities unrelated to the school program;
4. Leaving school without permission when school is still in session. Such absence from class is a "class cut"
5. Leaving class because of illness and not reporting to the school nurse as directed. Such absence from class is a "class cut". or
6. Being present in school but absent from class without approval. Such absence from class is a "class cut."

Tardiness

The orderly conduct of class activity depends upon the prompt and precise beginning of the program. Tardiness hinders the proper conduct of school activity. Students are expected to arrive to school and class on time. A student who is tardy to any class will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in board policy 5131 Conduct and Discipline and the student code of conduct. Consequences for accumulated occurrences of tardiness may include detention, loss of credit and an unacceptable school day absence.

Attendance

In order for the Monmouth Regional High School board of education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each student, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and students is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of students from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of students to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully. The following rules shall apply for student absences:

- A. A student shall be considered absent from class for tardiness in excess of one half of the total class period.
- B. A student shall be considered absent from school for participation in less than 2 instructional hours during the school day.

A student must be in attendance for 155 (180 days – 25 days) or more school days in order to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which he/she is assigned. A student who has 25 or more unacceptable absences will not be permitted to repeat the grade/course during summer school. A student who has 24 or less unacceptable absences will be permitted to attend summer school to complete the grade/course.

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Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a student will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence.

Procedures for Unexcused Absences

When a student fails to report to class or school accumulating up to four unexcused absences, the district shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parents;
- C. Identify in consultation with the student's parents needed action designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any, and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance;
- D. Follow all procedures according to law and board policy 5142 Safety and 5141.4 Child Abuse and Neglect if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected;
- E. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

If contact through these means is unsuccessful the district may follow-up with another attempt to contact the parents/guardians or send a letter reporting the unexcused absence and requesting the parent/guardian to contact the school.

Persistent Absences

If the pattern of unacceptable absences continues and five to nine unacceptable absences are accumulated the district shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unacceptable absence the day of the unacceptable absence;
- B. Attempt to contact the parents/guardians by telephone, email and/or cellular phone to determine the cause of the unacceptable absence;
- C. Evaluate the appropriateness of action taken as identify in consultation with the student's parents;
- D. Develop an action plan to establish outcomes based upon the student's patterns of unexcused absences and to specify the interventions for supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance, which may include any or all of the following:
 - 1. Refer or consult with the building's intervention and referral services team;
 - 2. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;

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3. Consider an alternate educational placement;
4. Make a referral to or coordinate with a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
5. Refer to the court or a court program as follows:
 - a. When the unexcused absences are determined to be violations of the compulsory education law and board policy;
 - b. When there is evidence of a juvenile-family crisis the student may be referred to Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part. "Juvenile-family crisis" pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-22(g) means behavior, conduct or a condition of a juvenile, parent or guardian or other family member which presents or results in a threat to wellbeing and safety of the juvenile, serious conflict regarding the juvenile's conduct, unauthorized absence from home, pattern of unauthorized absence from school, or human trafficking;
6. Implement all required procedures for potential abuse, neglect or missing child including cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
7. Engage the student's family.

Discipline

All discipline regarding the attendance of students shall be consistent with the board policy 5131 Conduct and Discipline and the code of student conduct. Consequences for absences may include:

- A. Students may be denied participation in co-curricular activities if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
- B. Students may be denied participation in athletic competition if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
- C. Loss of partial or total course credit;
- D. Detention or suspension.
- E. Attendance Probationary Contract

No student who is absent from school for observance of a religious holiday or other acceptable absence shall be disciplined and/or deprived of any award or of eligibility for or opportunity to compete for any award because of the absence.

Students, parents and guardians shall be notified of disciplinary actions for attendance including loss of credit and may appeal this determination through the procedure as set forth in board policy 5145.6 Student Grievance Procedure.

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Truancy

For cumulative unacceptable absences of 10 or more, any student younger than 16 is truant, pursuant to law. The district shall:

- A. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of the mandatory referral;
- C. Continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
- D. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
- E. Follow all procedures required by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School and other applicable state and federal statutes.

Unexcused Absences for Students in Special Education

The attendance guidelines, discipline and remedial measures set forth in this policy shall apply to classified students where appropriate and in accordance with the student's:

- A. Individualized education program (IEP);
- B. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)
- C. Procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14;
- D. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities as required by law;
- E. Requirements of a student's individualized health care plan and individualized emergency healthcare plan.

District Sending and Receiving Relationships

The receiving school shall report attendance problems to the sending district responsible for the student. Following five or more cumulative unacceptable absences school officials shall proceed in accordance with the sending district's board attendance policy and procedure.

Regular Release of Students Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations which may justify release of certain students from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the student's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the student.

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Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The Monmouth Regional High School board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a student be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day.

As agent responsible for the education of the students of this district, the board shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the student's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- B. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan;
- C. Requirements of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- D. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
- E. Medical disability;
- F. Motor vehicle driver's test;
- G. Interview for college entrance or employment;
- H. Family emergency;
- I. Court appearance;
- J. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed shall be cumulative, and may affect course credit.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the custodial status of each student. The custodian shall be responsible for informing the board of any change in the student's custodian. The principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the student is released only to the proper legal custodian.

Potentially Missing Students

- A. If daily attendance records indicate a student is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact them;
- B. If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance officer shall investigate;
- C. If the attendance officer cannot locate the student, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the appropriate local authorities;

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D. If a student who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

Marking Missing Student's School Record

Whenever the Superintendent receives notice from the Missing Persons Unit that a student has been reported missing, he/she shall mark the student's records in such a way that whenever a copy of or information regarding the record is requested, district personnel will be aware that the record is that of a missing student. If a copy of a marked school record is requested, the Superintendent shall supply the record to the requestor without alerting him/her to the fact that the record has been marked, according to provisions in code and statute on accessing student records (see policy 5125 Student records). After the Superintendent has complied with the request for copies of records or information, he/she shall immediately report the inquiry or any knowledge as to the whereabouts of the missing student to the Missing Persons Unit.

Regulations

The Superintendent/designee shall develop procedures for the attendance of students which include:

- A. The expectations and consequences regarding students' timely arrival of students to school and classes;
- B. The expectations and consequences regarding attendance at school and classes;
- C. A definition of unexcused absence that counts toward truancy that is consistent with the definition of a school day;
- D. School staff responses for unexcused absences for:
 - a. Cumulative absences up to four;
 - b. Cumulative absences of between five and nine;
 - c. Cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more; and
 - d. Referral to court.

Hospitalized or Students in Crisis:

If a student is sent to the hospital for a crisis evaluation, whether admitted or not, there must be a fit to return school note as well as a mandatory re-entry meeting prior to returning to school. The members of this meeting should consist of an administrator, SAC, Guidance Counselor, Nurse and Case Manager (if applicable). This meeting must include the parents/guardians and the student.

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Dissemination and Implementation

The Superintendent shall take all necessary steps to publicize this policy and may include these rules in district handbooks and/or on the district website. Parents/Guardians and students shall be notified annually of the attendance policy.

The Superintendent shall ensure that the rules for this policy are applied consistently and uniformly, and that all disciplinary sanctions are carried out with necessary due process.

The board shall review the attendance policy on a regular basis.

- Legal References:** N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.9 Student promotion and remediation; policies and procedures
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14, -15, -16 Religious holidays; absence of students on; effect
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-19a Newly enrolled students; records and identification
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-24 through -26 Missing children; legislative findings and declarations
N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions
N.J.S.A. 18A:38-26 Days when attendance required; exceptions
N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27 Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined
N.J.S.A. 18A:38-31 Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties
N.J.S.A. 18A:38-32 District and county vocational school attendance officers
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-7 Exclusion of students who are ill
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-8 Exclusion of students whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-9 Failure of parent to remove cause for exclusion; penalty
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-10 Exclusion of teachers and students exposed to disease
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-11 Exclusion of students having communicable tuberculosis
N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12 Closing schools during epidemic
N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20 Powers of board (county vocational schools)
N.J.S.A. 52:17B-9.8a through -9.8c Marking of missing child's school record
N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 Graduation requirements
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1 et seq. Programs to support student development
See particularly:
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6 Attendance
N.J.A.C. 6A:30-1.1 et seq. Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1 et seq. Student Attendance and Accounting
N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3 Student attendance
N.J.A.C. 8:61-2.1 Attendance at school by students or adults with HIV infection

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794 (Board may impose penalties for unjustifiable tardiness, improper absences from classes, truancy, and other unexcused absences)

Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851 (Board may adopt policy to deny students course credit after a student was late or absent a specified number of times.)

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C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)(board acted unreasonably in applying its attendance policy to student with excessive absences due to chronic medical illness)

Student Attendance Policies and Procedures Compliance Checklist, New Jersey Department of Education

www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/behavior/attendance/checklist.pdf

2014-2015 List of Religious Holidays Permitting Student Absence from School

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/holidays1415.htm>

Jerkins v. Anderson, 191, N.J. (2007)

Possible

Cross References:

- *5020 Role of parents/guardians
- *5111 Admission
- *5114 Suspension and expulsion
- *5124 Reporting to parents/guardians
- *5125 Student records
- *5141.2 Illness
- *5141.4 Child abuse and neglect
- *5142 Student safety
- *6146 Graduation requirements
- *6146.2 Promotion/retention
- *6147 Standards of proficiency
- *6147.1 Evaluation of individual student performance
- *6154 Homework/makeup work
- *6171.4 Special education
- *6173 Home instruction

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.

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ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDE**

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DEFINITIONS

Regular attendance is defined as being present for all classes and activities on his/her individually approved instructional program except as enumerated below.

Absence from school is defined as nonattendance in regular classes and assigned locations for the entire or part of the school day. Excessive absences are defined – four (4) days for a quarter course, eight (8) days for semester course, twelve (12) days for a three-quarter (3/4) course, and sixteen (16) days for a full-year course. *

Unacceptable absence such as babysitting for younger siblings, shopping, hunting, vacations, working, oversleeping, faulty private transportation, hairdresser appointments, personal prom preparation etc.

Truancy is an unacceptable absence defined as any absence from school without a parents note within two school days of returning or absence from class(es) or assigned location(s) for the whole school day will result in disciplinary action.

Cutting is defined as any unacceptable absence from class or assigned location for a portion of the school day selectively once the student has arrived to school and will result in disciplinary action.

Tardiness to class or school is defined as not being in an assigned seat or at an assigned station by the time the bell or signal ceases. Tardiness will result in disciplinary action.

* For the purpose of this policy, authorized attendance at School Sponsored Functions, or School Field Trips, a Verified Appointment with a Physician or with a Dentist, a Verified Court Appearance, a Verified College Visitation (Maximum 2), Verified Driving Test or a religious holiday as noted on the calendar published by the Commissioner of Education will not be considered as an absence counted towards withholding of credit.

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RULES AND REGULATIONS**

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1. Course credit can be withheld if a student's total number of absences (acceptable and unacceptable) is excessive. Excessive is defined as four (4) days for a quarter course, eight (8) days for semester course, twelve (12) days for a three-quarter course and sixteen (16) days for a full-year course.

2. For each truancy or cut, students will be subject to disciplinary action by the school administration. In addition, course credit can also be withdrawn if a student's total number of absences reached one (1) in a quarter course, two (2) in a semester course, three (3) in three-quarter course, and four (4) in a full-year course.

3. Students absent from school or class(es) for any reason are responsible, within a reasonable period of time, for the completion of the work missed. (The maximum amount of time to make up missed school work would be ten (10) school days.)

4. In order to remain on the rolls of the school, a student must continue to attend a full schedule of classes even when excessive absences have denied that student credit in one or more courses.

5. Students absent from school or class (es) more than sixteen (16) times in full-year courses, eight (8) times in semester courses, twelve (12) times in a three-quarter course, or four (4) times in quarter year courses may not receive the assigned credit in those courses. Withdrawal of credit will only be considered when the student is passing course. If a failure is apparent, the grade will remain on the student's record. Students who are absent between seventeen (17) and twenty-four (24) times per school year may make up the course and gain credit for the same by taking the course in Summer school. * Students missing in excess of twenty-five (25) times may not take the course in Summer School.

* Students may not withdraw from a course and still be eligible to receive credit for the course by repeating it in Summer School.

6. Students who are tardy to school must report to the Attendance Office to sign in and obtain a pass to class. Students who are excessively tardy will be subject to disciplinary action by the school administration. Repeated excessive tardiness, however, may result in a parental conference and/or suspension. Tardiness resulting from a dentist appointment, a doctor appointment, a court appearance, a driver's license appointment for which a note is submitted to the Attendance Office prior to or upon arrival to school, will not result in disciplinary action. Any student tardy more than one (1) period to school must have an explanatory parental note, must have a

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parent call, or must be accompanied by a parent to avoid disciplinary action.

7. Students who are absent from school for the entire day or tardy (**not in school prior to 9 AM**) ~~more than one period~~ are not eligible to participate in practice, game, meet, special program, evening activity event, or contest scheduled for that day without the approval of the school administration.
8. Students will only be released early with authorization from Assistant Principal or School Nurse. Students may request early release from classes through one of the following steps:
 - Parent or legal guardian written contact with the Assistant Principal
 - Parent or legal guardian telephone contact with Assistant Principal
 - Parent or legal guardian contact with School Nurse if a Medical or Dental appointment

In all cases, the student must report to the Attendance Office to sign out. Excessive requests for early release are subject to a parental conference. The Board recognizes that the following situations may occur which will require a student to request an early release from school:

- a. An illness which manifested itself after the student reported to school and verified by the Nurse.
- b. A verified appointment with a physician/dentist
- c. A verified college visit (Maximum 2)
- d. A verified driver's test or court appearance.

STUDENTS MUST COMPLETE FOUR (4) HOURS OF SCHOOL TO BE COUNTED PRESENT FOR THE ENTIRE DAY. STUDENTS ON OPTIONAL AND/OR WORK-STUDY SCHEDULES MUST COMPLETE TWO (2) HOURS OF SCHOOL. ANY CLASS ABSENCE RESULTING FROM AN EARLY RELEASE WILL BECOME PART OF THE STUDENT'S ATTENDANCE RECORD.

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PROCEDURES

1. The total number of student absences will be scrutinized and notification of students and parents will be made on the following basis:
 - a. Full-year courses –on the sixteenth (16) absence from class(es) the student will be notified that no credit will be given for the course or courses but that the student must continue in school and follow the full schedule of classes. Notification of the same will be sent to the parent by registered mail. The parents and student will also be informed of the appeal procedure.
 - b. For three-quarter courses, notification as explained above take place at the twelfth (12) absence.
 - c. For semester courses, notification as explained above take place at the eighth (8) absence.
 - d. For quarter courses, notification will be made on the fourth (4) absence.
2. Truancy and cuts will be scrutinized and parent notification will be made. The method of losing course credit differs between total absences and unacceptable absences (see 2 under Rules and Regulations). The parent and student will be notified of no credit status and of the appeal procedure when truancy or cuts reach four (4) for a full-year course, three (3) for a three-quarter course, two (2) for a semester course, and one (1) for a quarter course.
3. In addition to notification to parents by attendance and administrative officials, teachers will make every effort to inform parents via progress reports and/or phone calls when absences for their particular classes indicate impediment to the student's instructional program.
4. All staff members shall maintain accurate attendance records for each student assigned to their classes and homeroom. Students not in class for any reason are to be marked absent. Students who are 'cutting' or 'in class and on the absentee list' should be reported to the appropriate office.
5. Generally, notes from parents or legal guardians are acceptable to explain students' absences and tardiness. However, this does not exclude the fact that a physician's note or other types of verification may be required at the request of the school administration. If a note is not received by the school's Attendance Office within forty-eight (48) hours of the student's return to school, the absence will be considered unacceptable. All notes will be dated and placed in the student's file in the Attendance Office.
6. In keeping with Statute 18A: 38-26, Days When Attendance Required, Exceptions, a student receiving Board approved home instruction as defined in the NJ Administrative Code 6:28-3:13 and 6:28-3:15, is not considered absent from school.

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AVENUES OF APPEAL**

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1. If a student's or parent's explanation to the Assistant Principal is approved, the Assistant Principal may prescribe an educational program designed to remediate the deficiencies incurred by the excessive absenteeism. Academic credit may be granted when the educational program has been completed to the satisfaction of the Assistant Principal. Until then, the student has a no credit status for the course or courses. A student must continue, however, to attend a full schedule of classes even when excessive absences have denied him/her credit.

If a sufficient number of absences are exempt through the appeal and all work has been satisfactorily made up, and a passing grade is indicated by the teacher(s), credit may be granted.

2. The student may appeal a decision in the following sequence:

- a. Assistant Principal
- b. Principal
- c. Superintendent
- d. Board of Education

**ALL APPEALS SHALL BE MADE IN WRITING WITHIN 2 WEEKS OF THE
LAST RENDERED DECISION.**

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