

# *Springfield Public Schools*



## *DISTRICT ATTENDANCE POLICY*

**Amended January 17, 2019**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. STATE LAWS REGARDING ATTENDANCE	3
11. ATTENDANCE POLICY	4
111. ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE AND ABSENCE PROCEDURES	7

## STATE LAWS REGARDING ATTENDANCE

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires that every person in control of a child between the ages of 6 and 16 shall cause the child to attend school. (M.G.L.c.76 P)

The parents or guardians of each pupil shall, annually, at the commencement of each school year, be sent a notice instructing them to call a designated telephone number at a designated time to inform the school of the absence of a pupil and the reason therefor. Said notice shall also require such parent or guardian to furnish the school with a home, work or other emergency telephone number where they can be contacted during the school day. If a pupil is absent and the school has not been notified by the designated time, the school shall call the telephone number or numbers furnished to inquire about said absence. (M.G.L.c76 S IA)

On a complaint filed in district or juvenile court by the supervisor of attendance, a person in control of a child can be fined for failure to cause the child to attend school if the child is absent for seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions within any period of six months. M.G.L.c76 P.

A parent, legal guardian, or person with custody of the child may apply to the juvenile court for a child requiring assistance (CRA) petition if the child repeatedly fails to obey the lawful and reasonable regulations of the child's school M.G.L.c119 and M.G.L.c1 19 \*39E.

A person may petition under oath the juvenile courts alleging on behalf of a child within its jurisdiction that the child is without necessary and proper educational care and discipline. M.G.L.c.119 524.

A mandated reporter shall file under M.G.L.c119 S5 IA for suspected abuse or neglect of a child.

The school committee of each city, town or regional school district shall have a pupil absence notification program in each of its schools. The program shall be designed to ensure that each school notifies a parent or guardian of the child's absence if the school has not received notification of the absence from the parent or guardian within 3 days of the absence.

Each school committee shall have a policy of notifying the parent or guardian of a student who has at least 5 days in which the student has missed 2 or more periods unexcused in a school year or who has missed 5 or more school days unexcused in a school year. The notification policy shall require that the school principal or headmaster, or a designee, make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent or guardian of a student who has 5 or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attendance. The action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal or headmaster, or a designee, the student and the student's parent or guardian and with input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies. M.G.L.c76S 1B

## SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular student attendance is a priority of the Springfield Public Schools.

Regular attendance in school and class establishes safe, nurturing and respectful working and learning environments, and improves academic achievement.

Regular school and class attendance is linked to higher graduation rates and lower drop-out rates.

The academic impact of missing time from school or class is the same whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

Students are expected to be in attendance every day of the school year, and in attendance every class of the school day.

Parents/guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is in attendance each day school is in session.

Parents/guardians have a legal responsibility to notify the school by calling a designated telephone number at a designated time to inform the school of the absence and the reason therefor.

Attendance is taken electronically by the classroom teacher every day and in every class period for grades 6 through 12.

Parents/guardians shall be promptly notified regarding their child's unexcused absence from school or class.

The Assistant Superintendent has the responsibility for district attendance. Pursuant to M.G.L.c76S 1 9, the Supervisor of Attendance reports directly to the Assistant Superintendent. School Attendance Specialists, who report to the Attendance Supervisor, will support school principals in addressing regular school and class attendance. The School Attendance Specialists will communicate with the Parent/Guardian by telephone calls, emails, and text messages, and/or visit the home to support the student's regular attendance at school and class.

### Excused Absences

An excused absence occurs when a student is absent for ONLY one of the following accepted reasons for absence from school or class AND is able to provide adequate written documentation (as defined below) within 3 days of when the student returns to school.

- Excused absences are ONLY an absence from school or class for the following reason:
  1. Student illness
  2. Medical/dental appointment for the student (Parents/guardians are encouraged to schedule medical/dental appointments outside of school hours. When scheduled during school hours, the student's excused absence is only limited

to the amount of time for the appointment. The student is expected to attend school and class before and/or after the appointment.)

3. Death in the immediate family
4. Observance of a religious holiday
5. Legal matters requiring a student's personal appearance

- An absence is unexcused if it does not meet one of the above five reasons for an excused absence and if the Parent/Guardian's note does not provide adequate written documentation explaining the reason for the absence.

### Adequate Written Documentation

Preferred adequate written documentation is a written note from the doctor' s/dentist's office, court or religious official, or obituary notice.

Notes from parents/guardians regarding absence will be considered adequate written documentation ONLY if the following information is included in the note: the date of absence, the reason for the absence, a phone number where a parent or guardian can be reached, and the parent or guardian's signature. Should a school official become aware that written documentation for any absence(s) has been fabricated, the absence(s) will not qualify as "excused" and will not count for the purpose of filing an appeal.

After three consecutive days of absence due to illness, a formal doctor's written notification in addition to the Parent/Guardian's note, is required by the Principal for absences due to illness to be recorded as excused.

### Tardiness and Dismissal

A student who is not present at the start of school is tardy. A student must attend school for at least a half-day to be marked "present." If a student leaves school before half of the academic day then that student will be marked dismissed and credit for attendance for that school day will not be given.

### Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences are:

- 1) Any student absences that do not meet one of the five excused absence reasons listed in the Excused Absence Section AND
- 2) Any absence for which adequate written documentation for one of the five excused absences was not provided within 3 days of the absence.

### Attendance Recognition Program

Elementary: Each elementary school is required to design and implement programs to acknowledge a student's efforts to maintain and/or improve his/her attendance.

Secondary: Middle and high schools are required to design and implement programs to create incentives and recognition for student attendance.

Attendance Buyback Program

Secondary schools are to offer students opportunities to buy back time lost due to excused and/or unexcused absences. Any student who attends a buyback program must be engaged in and complete meaningful academic work that addresses the knowledge and skills missed during excused or unexcused absences. Absences will be changed to "excused — bought back absence."

Attendance Tracking

Schools must enter daily attendance into the District's electronic student information system by 11:30am each school day.

## Attendance Improvement Initiative

Principals shall be responsible for the implementation of the following Attendance Improvement Initiative Absence Procedures

### ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Springfield Public Schools

\*Must be documented in SSP under Communication with Family

1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> day of absence(s)	Automated calls or messages to Parent/Guardian notifying of absence Classroom teachers encouraged to contact Parent/Guardian and refer as needed for support services counselor, nurse, etc.
3 <sup>r</sup> or 4 <sup>t</sup> day of unexcused absences	All of the above and the following Mandatory referral to adjustment or guidance counselor for personal communication with Parent/Guardian Letter of Concern is mailed or emailed to the Parent/Guardian Student is contacted by staff member, as designated by the Principal, to inquire about the absence and refer as needed for support services
5 <sup>t</sup> or 6 day of unexcused absences	All of the above and the following Parent/Guardian/Teacher conference or home visit by attendance specialist or school staff as designated by the Principal* Attendance Intervention Form is completed and signed by the Parent/Guardian during home visit or conference* Referral to STAT Team for review of current interventions and incentives and consideration of additional or alternative interventions or incentives* Enroll student and monitor participation in Attendance Buyback Program (Secondary School Students)
7 <sup>th</sup> or 8 day of unexcused absences	All of the above and the following Letter of Warning is mailed or emailed to the Parent/Guardian* Administrator or designated staff, along with teacher and/or counselor, will meet with Parent/Guardian, via home visit or in school conference, to complete an Attendance Contractual Agreement and identify necessary support services*
9 <sup>th</sup> through 13 <sup>t</sup> unexcused absences	All of the above and the following Letter of Critical Status is mailed via certified mail to the Parent/Guardian* Review of case and discussion of appropriate interventions at regular STAT Team meetings* Reconvene IEP team to review special education services if student has an IEP or 504 Refer to Department of Children and Families via 51A *

14 or more unexcused absences	All of the above and the following Weekly personal communication with Parent/Guardian via home visit, phone call, or conference*
SPECIAL NOTES:	
After 7 <sup>th</sup> unexcused absence in a 6 month period	File a Failure to Send Petition with Juvenile Court (elementary) File a Child Requiring Assistance Petition with Juvenile Court (secondary) Note that Juvenile Court requires a 5 IA be filed prior to the above petitions.
Each marking period	For any student with 4 or more unexcused absences during the marking period, send home with the student's report card notice of the Attendance Bu back Pro ram.

2994726v1

### Unexcused Class Absence Procedures

*Principals shall be responsible for the implementation of the following procedures.*

- Parent/Guardian will be contacted when a student does not have an excused absence from all or a portion of an assigned school class
- Progressive discipline for the failure to attend all or a portion of an assigned school class, as noted in the assigned school handbook will be followed
- The student's assigned school will work with the student and family to develop a plan that outlines the steps the student must take to make up the classroom missed work.
- The developed plan will be monitored by designated assigned school personnel and reported to the Parent/Guardian.