

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance



Every Day Counts!



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Dear School Community,

Academic success can be achieved in many ways and being physically present in school every day is critical to future success. If a child is present and engaged, this will ensure that he/she is on the path to tapping into and maximizing their individual potential. We are working together to make school a memorable experience beginning in kindergarten and lasting through high school into post-secondary education and/or training.

We must work together to strengthen our bond and enhance our communication between the schools and families. Because as students grow older and take more ownership for their own learning, it is even more important that we emphasize the need to attend school daily.

Absences: Some absences we know are unavoidable due to health related issues or other serious circumstances. However, when students miss too much school—**excused or unexcused**—they can easily fall behind academically.

A chronically absent child, **missing 18 or more days**, is less likely to have academic success and will have social challenges as well. We know that chronic absenteeism in:

- **Kindergarten and 1st grade:** students are much less likely to read at grade level by the end of 3rd grade.
- **6th grade,** chronic absence is a proven early warning sign for students at risk for dropping out of school.
- **9th grade,** good attendance can predict graduation rates more than 8th gradescores.

School Engagement is Critical!

We want all our children to be mentally prepared, physically ready and excited to learn each day. To help ensure that your child is ready each day here a few practical tips to help support regular attendance:

- Establish regular bed time.
- Develop a consistent morning routine.
- Prepare clothes and backpacks the night before.
- Ensure your children go to school every day unless they are truly sick.
- Do not schedule vacations or doctor's appointments during the school day.
- Communicate with teachers and counselors if your child has anxiety about going to school.
- Create back-up plans for getting to school in unforeseen circumstances.
 - Call on a family member, neighbor, or another parent to take your child to school.

Let us know how we can best support you and your children, so they can be in school and engaged in the lesson every day. Student success is our collective achievement. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact your child's school.

Sincerely,



Thomas Anderson, Superintendent

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance

General Attendance Information

At the start of every school year, the New Bedford Public Schools Attendance Protocol will be distributed to all families in the NBPS district. A copy of this protocol will also be made available online on the New Bedford Public Schools website, www.newbedfordschools.org. You may also find the link to this protocol in your school's handbook.

Research shows that students who attend school every day are more likely to graduate from high school, more likely to be ready upon high school graduation, and are more likely to be successful in their career. Students who miss school frequently are at greater risk for dropping out of school, incarceration, substance abuse and homelessness. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education defines chronic absenteeism as **“any student who misses more than 10% of school due to excused and/or unexcused absences”** (e.g. school is in session for 30 days and the student is absent a total of 3 or more excused and unexcused days). If a student is absent for 18 days out of the 180-day school year, this student is considered chronically absent by the DESE.

Tardiness is also detrimental to a child's education. A student who is 10 minutes late for school every day will end up missing 30 hours of instruction during the year, which equals a full week of school.

The New Bedford Public Schools is committed to helping all students reach their goals. Our school-based attendance teams work closely with school administrators, teachers, counselors, nurses and community partners to ensure students are attending school regularly and following school rules. For the school-based protocol and other important attendance information, please visit this link.

Role of Attendance Officers

School Attendance Officers support schools in improving attendance, minimizing habitual school offenses, preventing truancy, and intervening in cases of chronic absenteeism. School Attendance Officers are committed to the success of students, and maintain communication via telephone, letters, perform residency verification, consult with juvenile court, and make home visits with parents/guardians of children who have difficulty with attendance. Attendance Officers work with various community partners and agencies, such as the Family Resource Center and the Department of Children and Families, to offer support and assist families in ensuring their children are in school every day, on time. School Attendance Officers are mandated to take legal action if truancy continues and children are being denied a consistent and comprehensive education.

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance

Frequently Asked Questions

What is an excused absence?

Excused absences may include:

- An illness or injury that prevents the student from attending school.
- A death in the immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) or other significant personal or family crisis.
- Court appearances: Students should present evidence of the requirement of the court appearance.
- Medical or psychological tests during the school day: The parent must show evidence (such as a note from the health center) that the tests could not be scheduled outside of school hours.
- Religious holy days: In order to accommodate the religious beliefs of students, such absences will be marked “constructively present” upon submitting a valid note signed by a parent or guardian.
- Visits to special education schools for students with disabilities.
- Dismissal from school by a nurse: If a nurse dismisses a student from school due to illness, this student is excused from school for 24 hours.
- Students of active duty personnel shall have additional excused absences at the discretion of the District for visitations relative to leave or deployment.
- Other situations: From time to time, situations over which the school, parent, and student have little, or no control may cause absences (for example, transportation that does not operate during inclement weather). These absences are excusable. The principal may determine that the student in this situation shall be marked “constructively present.”

Is a suspension considered an absence?

- Suspension from school is not an absence. In cases of suspension, the school will provide an opportunity for the student to maintain academic standing in school by being provided a list of assignments, homework, and tests. Students will be expected to use the time out of school constructively. Suspensions will be recorded as constructively present (CP).

What is an unexcused absence?

Unexcused absences may include:

- Family vacations: School vacations and holiday periods allow ample time for family vacations. Each absence for this reason is unexcused. School-based rules will regulate make-up work.
- Babysitting
- Skipping class
- Other situations: From time to time, situations such as “illness of members of an extended family,” or “conflicts with parents’ work schedule” may develop. These are viewed as unexcused absences.

What is truancy?

- Students are considered truant by DESE when they have an unexcused absence

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance

Parent / Guardian **Attendance Information and Impact**

Parents/guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure their child is in school every day school is in session. It is a high priority for the New Bedford Public School District to monitor attendance and address the reasons why some students are chronically absent. In addition, it is the mission of the New Bedford School District to work with families and community partners to ensure students arrive at school on time, every day, ready to learn. Please visit [this website](#) for more information on the MA state law.

All absences must be verified with proper documentation. Failure to submit proper documentation will result in an unexcused absence. A parent/guardian note does not excuse an absence if the absence does not meet the criteria to be excused.

What do I do if my child is absent?

Please notify the school if your child is absent. A list of school phone numbers can be found on the next page. In addition, please send a note to the school to request an excused absence. This note does not guarantee the absence will be excused. Consistent documentation helps to improve communication and collaboration between home and school and helps to determine and document excused absences.

A student must be in attendance at least half of the school day in order to be considered present. If the student arrives to school later than the times listed below, they will be considered absent:

Elementary School: 11:30am (except Pulaski School)

Pulaski School: 12:00pm

Middle School: 10:55am

New Bedford High School: 10:57am

Whaling City Jr./Sr. High School/Trinity Day Academy/Parenting Teens Program: 10:10am

Similarly, if students are dismissed with more than half the school day remaining, they will be considered absent. If a student is absent, they must submit a note of explanation for absences. Written explanations must comply with the existing school policy. The note must include the dates of the absence(s) and the reason for the absence(s). Additionally, it must be written in ink and signed by the parent/guardian. The teacher who takes the official attendance for an absent student must keep the note(s) on file.

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance

Phone Numbers and Contact Information

If your child is going to be absent from school, it is your responsibility to **call your child's school** and inform them that your child will not be present. You may find your school's phone number here:

Elementary Schools	Phone Number
Ashley Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 40550
Brooks Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 41550
Campbell Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 42550
Carney Academy	508-997-4511 Ext. 43550
Congdon Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 44550
Devalles Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 45550
Gomes Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 46550
Hathaway Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 48550
Hayden-Mcfadden Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 49552
Jacobs Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 47550
Lincoln Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 51550
Pacheco Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 52550
Parker Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 53550
Pulaski Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 54550 & 54551
Renaissance Community School	508-997-4511 Ext. 55550
Rodman Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 56550
Swift Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 57550
Taylor Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 58550
Winslow Elementary	508-997-4511 Ext. 59550
Middle Schools	Phone Number
Keith Middle School	508-910-0900
Normandin Middle School	508-985-4300
Roosevelt Middle School	508-961-3170
High School and Other Schools	Phone Number
New Bedford High School	508-997-4511 Ext. 20732 and 20730
NBHS Grade 9	508-997-4511 Ext. 20277
NBHS Grade 10	508-997-4511 Ext. 20278
NBHS Grade 11	508-997-4511 Ext. 20275
NBHS Grade 12	508-997-4511 Ext. 20276
Trinity Day Academy	508-997-4511 Ext. 28550
Whaling City Jr./Sr. High School	508-997-4511 Ext. 38550
Parenting Teens	508-997-4511 Ext. 34550

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance

Parent / Guardian:

Template to Notify School of Child's Absence

Parents: This is a helpful template that you may use anytime you need to submit a note regarding your child's absence. Please refer to pages 5-6 for a list of excused absences.

_____ (Street)

_____ (City) (Zip Code)

_____ (Home Telephone)

_____ (Date)

Dear Principal _____:

The purpose of this letter is to request that you excuse the absence of my child,

_____ (Name of Student), on _____ (Date(s) of Absence)

My child was absent from school for the following reason:

- An illness or injury
- A death in the immediate family
- Significant personal or family crisis
- Court appearance
- Medical or psychological test
- Religious holy day
- Visits to special education school
- Other: _____

Please provide a brief explanation: (Additionally please attach any medical or other necessary documentation).

I understand that he/she must make up any class work and homework missed as a result of this absence.

If you have any questions, I can be reached either at work _____ (Telephone Number) or at home _____ (Telephone Number)

Sincerely,

_____ (Signature of Parent/Guardian)

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance

Glossary of Terms

Chronic Absenteeism: Percent of students absent more than 10% of the days they are enrolled in school.

Constructively Present (CP): Excused absence due to religious holiday, inclement weather, verified medical reasons, or academic work completed during a suspension.

Truancy: When a student has an unexcused absence.

Excused Absence: When a student is absent from school for a pre-determined reason deemed appropriate by the school district (see page 5-6).

Unexcused Absence: When a student's absence does not meet the criteria for an excused absence (see page 6).

In-School Suspension (ISS): When a student is given a mandatory punishment in school during which the student should expect to learn and conduct all school activities under the supervision in ISS. Student will not be marked absent.

Tardy: When a student is late to school, they must arrive at school before half the school day is finished (for specific times, see page 8.)

Out of School Suspension (OSS): When a student is given a mandatory leave from school as a form of punishment. Students will be marked absent, except on the days when the student is receiving academic instruction to complete missed school work.

Robocalls: Robo-calls are automatic calls generated by the school system to notify parents that a student is not in school. Robocalls should be recorded in the voices of school attendance officers and should be delivered in multiple languages. If a student is tardy, a robocall will still go out to the family until the student is coded from "absent" to "tardy" in the system.

CHIPS (Child In Need of Possible Services): Team comprised of support personnel, which may include school guidance counselor, school adjustment counselor, and wraparound coordinator.

Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP): An Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP) is a tool to help families, students, and schools remain in communication about a student's goals for attendance during the school year. This plan is a working document, shared between school staff, student's family, and attendance officer. The Attendance Intervention Plan will be generated by the school-based attendance team after the student's 6th unexcused.