

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## PURPOSE

The goal of Stonington Schools is to bring students and teachers together so that a maximum of learning can take place. Attendance at school is a serious matter, and time lost from class is irretrievable. Studies show that attendance is often related to students' success in school. In addition, attendance records are part of students' permanent records, which may be passed on to the colleges and places of employment seeking references. **Finally, Connecticut state law requires all students through age eighteen to be registered in and attend school regularly.**

## POLICY

All students are expected to attend school. Appointments with doctors, dentists, etc. should be made at times other than during school hours. **It is the parents' responsibility to notify the school regarding a child's absence prior to 7:30 A.M. on the day of the absence. Please note: parental permission in and of itself is not recognized as a legitimate reason for absence.**

**The responsibility for make-up work lies with the student, not the teacher.** Unless a student has an extended illness, all make-up work must be completed at the discretion of the teacher within five (5) days upon return to school. Students absent from school on a regular school day shall not attend or participate in any after school activity on the day of the absence. **Students with an unexcused absence on the last school day of a week or before a holiday or vacation may not participate in any school-related activity, e.g., athletic event, drama, dances, etc., until they return to school.** This is not applicable if the student has been excused from a class or classes by school authorities and has received clearance from the office to attend the after school activity.

After an absence on "off days" students are expected to check agendas posted in the classroom (*While You Were Out bins*) and get handouts and homework from missed classes. Students must complete homework assignments for the next class so they will not be further behind. Project and activities are due the first day back after an absence. **Students will be penalized for lateness in turning in work at the discretion of the teacher.**

Unexcused absences (including tardiness) from school and/or classes will be considered as truancy. Under these circumstances, a student will be considered for disciplinary action (including detention and/or suspension) and will not be permitted to make up work missed as a result of the truancy; such missed work will be given a failing grade by the teacher(s) involved.

## COURSE CREDIT

In order to receive credit for a course, students must earn a passing grade.

- A passing grade cannot be earned when a student exceeds eight (8) absences in a semester course, fifteen (15) in a yearlong course, or thirty (30) in a class that meets daily. In these situations an *E* will be recorded on the report card indicating excessive absences. In such cases an appeal can be made by completing an Attendance Appeal Application Form and submitting it to the administration.
- Daily class participation will be one of the factors used in determining course grades.
- All class absences will count towards the 8, 15, and 30 days. (Exceptions: a student's participation in an approved school-sponsored activity, suspension days, religious holidays, an approved college visit, a death in the family, a doctor approved extended illness or injury, driving test, or court appearance.)

## INTERVENTION

The administration will notify parents/guardians of absences in the following manner:

- First Stage: Whenever a student is absent, the school will attempt to contact his/her parent or guardian to ascertain the reason.
- Second Stage: When a pattern of absenteeism develops, resources within the school, such as involvement of the guidance counselor and/or referral to the Student Assistance Team, will be utilized to improve the behavior.
- Third Stage: After 5 absences in a yearlong course, 10 absences in a course that meets daily, or 3 absences in a semester course, the parents will be notified of the situation in writing. A conference may be scheduled with the parents/guardians, the student, an administrator(s), and other interested professionals to define the problem and explain the consequences. Parents will be warned that the student is in danger of receiving an *E* on the report card indicating excessive absences.
- Fourth Stage: After 10 absences in a yearlong course, 20 absences in a course that meets daily, or 5 in a semester course, a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian notifying them of absences and outlining the consequences of continued absences. Parents will be warned that the student is in imminent danger of receiving an *E* on the report card, and immediate action should be taken to remedy the situation.
- Receiving an *E*: After 15 absences in a yearlong course, 30 absences in a course that meets daily, or 8 for a semester course, the student will receive an *E*.

## UNEXCUSED CLASS ABSENCES (CLASS CUTS)

- Unauthorized absences from classes are prohibited.
- All class cuts will be added to the number of class absences.
- All class cuts will result in administrative intervention.

- Teachers will be asked to submit class attendance data on a form provided by the administration.
- Students may not make up work missed or receive a participation grade as a result of an unexcused absence from class or a class cut.

### **TARDINESS TO CLASS**

- All students are expected to be on time to all classes.
- If a student is detained or required to be out of class for part of a class period, the student must present a pass when arriving to class. Unexcused tardies of more than fifteen (15) minutes will count as a class absence.
- Teachers will be responsible for handling discipline for a student's first five (5) tardies. Beyond the five (5) tardies, teachers will complete a discipline referral form specifying the student's tardy dates to the Assistant Principal, who will then take action in the form of office detention and/or an ISS.

### **TARDINESS TO SCHOOL**

- Students who arrive to school after the 7:30 a.m. bell must report to the office for a tardy slip that must be signed by office staff. Legitimate excuses such as doctor's appointments and college interviews must be approved by the administration **prior to the day** the student will be tardy. An excuse such as oversleeping IS NOT considered legitimate.
- After the fourth (4th) tardy in a quarter, students will be assigned an office detention that must be served within 24 hours. After the sixth (6th) tardy in a quarter, an In-School Suspension (ISS) will be assigned and a parent conference will be held.
- Class time missed due to unexcused tardiness to school will be considered as an unexcused class absence and the class cut policy will take effect unless approved by administration. (See above.) It will count toward the eight (8) absences in a semester and fifteen (15) absences in a yearlong course, and thirty (30) absences in a course that meets daily.
- **Students arriving to school after 8:52 a.m. must have a doctor's note or other official documentation (court note, driving permit, college visit) specifying why the student arrived after this time in order to be eligible to participate in co-curricular events and/or athletics.**
- Students are required to present absent/tardy notes from their parent/guardian within two school days of an absence/tardy.
- Students with an unexcused tardy will be assigned x-block detention on the day of the offense or the day following the unexcused tardy.

### **FAMILY TRAVEL/VACATION**

Student absence from class for purposes of family travel or vacation is a loss of valuable class time. If circumstances demand that students accompany their parents during the school year, disciplinary action will not be taken; **however, the number of days missed will be counted in the total number of days absent in determining course credit.**

Students who plan to be absent for reasons other than those listed above should seek approval by presenting a note from home to the assistant principal who will then indicate approval or disapproval.

### EARLY DISMISSALS

- Parents or guardians requesting dismissal before the normal end of the school day must make a written request or a request by phone stating the reason for the request and must come into the school office to pick up the student and sign the student out unless other arrangements have been approved by administration in advance. Students with an automobile registered at the school may sign themselves out of school after school personnel have received a phone call and a signed letter from the parent or guardian prior to the student leaving the building.
- This request must contain the date, time, reason for dismissal, telephone number for verification, and parent/guardian signature
- A student who misses more than half of a class due to an early dismissal is subject to class absence as it pertains to the attendance policy.
- A student must report to school by 7:30 A.M. (excluding senior release policy) and remain in school until 11:44 A.M. to be eligible to attend and/or participate in after school activities including athletics and all dances.

### APPEAL PROCESS

A student who has an *E* recorded on his/her report card as a result of excessive absences may appeal this action by submitting an Attendance Appeal Application. **All requests for appeals must be made prior to the beginning of the exam schedule.** *Please note: an application for an appeal does not necessarily mean that the appeal will be granted.*

- An Appeal Committee will hear all cases of appeal. Students and/or parents are responsible for initiating an appeal and requesting a hearing.
- The committee is comprised of one administrator, three faculty members, and one guidance counselor. An administrator will chair the committee. The faculty will select three teachers to sit on the Appeal Committee.
- The parent/guardian/student must submit to the committee all necessary documentation supporting the appeal (doctor appointments, court appearances, religious obligations, etc.) at that hearing.
- At any stage of the intervention, an administrator may convene the Appeal Committee and recommend, for their approval, an alternate strategy to address an individual situation.
- Students will receive written notification of the Appeal Committee's decision.

The Appeal Committee will consider the following criteria when making a credit decision:

- Extenuating circumstances for the absences in question with supporting documentation.
- Class attendance since the date of the student reaching eight (8) absences in a semester course, fifteen (15) absences in a yearlong course, or thirty (30) absences in courses that meet daily.

- Recommendations by teachers or other school personnel.
- Evidence of improvement.
- Students are reminded that all cuts will weigh heavily against granting approval of the appeal. (Appeal may not be considered.)

### **WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL**

If for any reason a student withdraws from school, he/she will indicate to his/her guidance counselor. He/she will discuss this with the student and prepare the necessary papers if the withdrawal becomes a reality. The student then signs out with each of his/her teachers and obtains a grade to date. Guidance will issue transcripts only after all obligations have been met in returning books and other materials loaned by the teacher to the student.

### **HOMEWORK REQUESTS**

If a student is absent for two or more days, a call may be made to the guidance department (599-2180) to obtain assignments. **School staff is given a minimum 24 hours to process this request.** Homework may be picked up in the main office between the hours of 7 A.M. and 3 P.M. (Other arrangements to pick up assignments may be made by contacting the student's guidance counselor.)