

New Bedford Public Schools

2021-2022 School Year



Parent/Guardian Guide to Attendance



Wraparound Services

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Letter from the Superintendent

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 grade scores.

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 are 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.
 - o 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

The Importance of School Attendance

There is a growing body of research that highlights the connection between school attendance and student achievement (Attendance Works, 2014). Our philosophy at New Bedford Public Schools is that we all own and impact school attendance. Everyone from our students' families to the classroom teachers, front office staff, support staff, administrators and all the other school employees have an opportunity to positively impact the lives of our students. When a student is absent from school, they cannot learn at the same rate as their peers. Absenteeism puts the student at risk of falling behind and missing out on achieving critical learning objectives to be successful in the future.

Consistent and regular attendance in all classes, every day, is essential for student growth and life-long achievement. Regular attendance is linked to higher graduation rates, lower drop-out rates, higher college attendance rates and higher paying jobs. It is therefore most important that a specific set of expectations be established to ensure a clear understanding of the conditions under which a student may have an allowable absence.

At the start of every school year, the New Bedford Public Schools Attendance Protocol link will be distributed to all families in the NBPS district. This protocol is visible online on the NBPS website, www.newbedfordschools.org you may also find the link to this protocol in your school's handbook. A hard copy of this protocol will be available at any NBPS Family Engagement Center upon request.

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 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 NBPS 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.

General Attendance Information

Roles

The Role of Schools and School-Based Attendance Teams:

All schools will create and sustain an attendance team to monitor and analyze student attendance data, attendance trends, and its impact on learning in order to build and support systems and relationships for improved school attendance. The attendance teams will work to ensure students are receiving the necessary supports and services in school to be successful.

School-Based attendance teams will monitor data on tardiness and attendance, review at-risk students, develop action plans for students, and engage families, resources, and interventions to support the student. Teams will meet at least 2 times per month to discuss progress, and or barriers to improving the attendance and evaluate what changes to interventions, support, or resources are needed. School-Based attendance teams may consist of support personnel such as school adjustment counselors, nurses, guidance counselors, wrap around coordinators, administrators, attendance officers and any other appropriate staff.

The Role of Attendance Officers:

School Attendance Officers support schools in improving attendance, by intervening in cases of chronic absenteeism, addressing habitual school offences, and preventing truancy. School Attendance Officers are committed to the success of students, and maintain communication with families via telephone calls, letters, and other technology adopted by their assigned schools. Attendance Officers perform residency verification, outreach, perform home visits and attend CHIPS/TIP, Pre CRA school meetings with families.

Attendance Officers consult with Juvenile Court, work collaboratively 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. Attendance Officers utilize the NBPS Attendance Outreach process flowchart (page 23-24) for interventions and checkpoints while interventions are progressively intensifying. School Attendance Officers are mandated to take legal action if truancy continues, and children are being denied a consistent and comprehensive education.

Clarifying Questions/Definitions

Constructively Present (CP):

Excused absence due to school-based field trip, religious holiday, inclement weather, verified medical reasons, buy back or academic work completed, while absent, during a hospitalization or during a suspension, for example, as approved by the School Principal.

General Attendance Information

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 care center) that the tests could not have been 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 **authorized by the School Principal**.
- Visits to special education schools for students with disabilities.
- Dismissal from school by a nurse: If a school 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 absents at the discretion of the District for visitations relative to a 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.
- Not a school day for the student, such as in Preschool - use other code = X
- The principal may determine that a student in these situations 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 and homework. Students will be expected to use the time out of school constructively. Suspensions will be recorded as other code OSS.

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.
 - Please note – after 15 consecutive days of an unexcused absence the district / school has the right to unenroll any student. Additionally, we highly encourage families to work with their local school and not schedule any extended vacations / time away as it negatively impacts academic consistency and performance.

Parent/Guardian Attendance Information and Impact

- If a student is unenrolled, the Guardian will have to re-register their child at the family registration center at the time of return. Return to the same school and class placement cannot be guaranteed at the time of registration.
- Babysitting
- Skipping school
- 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 the DESE when they have an unexcused absence. Students are not able to buy back absences that are marked Truant. Students may be marked Truant if they are found to be absent without parent or guardian permission.

What do I do if my child is absent?

A student must be in attendance at least half 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- tardy=AT:

- Elementary School: 11:30 AM (except Pulaski School)
- Pulaski School: 12:00 PM
- Middle School: 10:55 AM
- New Bedford High: 10:57 AM
- Whaling City Jr/Sr High/ Trinity Day Academy/ Parenting Teen Program: 10:30 AM

Similarly, if students are dismissed with more than half the school day remaining, they will be considered absent-dismissed=AD. If a student is absent, they must submit a note of explanation for absences. Written explanations must comply with existing school policies. The note must include dates of absences and the reason for the absences. Additionally, it should be written in ink and signed by the parent or guardian. The teacher or any staff who receives Dr. note or parent notes for an absent student must forward all parent and Dr. notes received via dojo, email, or in person etc. to the clerk for accurate recording in ASPEN and filing.

Parent/Guardian Attendance Information and Impact

Parents and guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is in school every day school is in session. It is a high priority for the NBPS District to monitor attendance and address the reasons why some students are chronically absent. In addition, it is the mission of the NBPS to work with families and community partners to ensure students arrive at school on time, every day and ready to learn. 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 excluded.

MA State Law Chapter 76 - Regarding Attendance

- Massachusetts State Law states that parents are required to ensure children between the ages of 6 to 16 attend school.
- Educational professionals are mandated to report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they suspect a child is suffering from educational neglect.
- If truancy persists, School Attendance Officers are mandated to file a Child Requiring Assistance application with Juvenile Court. If a student is in elementary school, a criminal complaint is filed for Failure to Cause School Attendance will be filed against the parent.
- Families that receive benefits under Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children are subject to specific attendance requirements. Clerks, please notify Attendance Officer which students submit the DTA Attendance Verification.
- Families in housing are subject to specific attendance requirements.

Parent/Guardian Attendance Information and Impact

School Contact Information



New Bedford Public Schools
455 County Street, NB, MA 02740
Phone: 508.997.4511

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Charles S. Ashley

Principal: Christine Pugliese
122 Rochambeau Street, NB, MA 02745
508.997.4511 Ext. 40500

Elizabeth Carter Brooks

Principal: Jennifer Medeiros
212 Nemasket Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 41550

Elwyn G. Campbell

Principal: Lisa Wheelden
145 Essex Street, NB, MA 02745
508.997.4511 Ext. 42550

Carney Academy

Principal: Maria Reidy
247 Elm Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 43550

James B. Congdon

Principal: TBA
50 Hemlock Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 44550

John B. DeValles

Principal: TBA
120 Katherine Street, NB, MA 02744
508.997.4511 Ext. 45550

Alfred J. Gomes

Principal: Ellyn Gallant
286 South Second Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 46550

Ellen R. Hathaway

Principal: Alexander Pella
256 Court Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 48550

Hayden-McFadden

Principal: Tammy Morgan
361 Cedar Grove Street, NB, MA 02746
508.997.4511 Ext. 49552

Irwin M. Jacobs

Principal: Timothy McLaughlin
47 Emery Street, NB, MA 02744
508.997.4511 Ext. 47550

Abraham Lincoln

Principal: Lina DeJesus
445 Ashley Boulevard, NB, MA 02745
508.997.4511 Ext. 51550

Carlos Pacheco

Principal: Nicole Brine
261 Mt. Pleasant Street, NB, MA 02746
508.997.4511 Ext. 52550

John A. Parker

Principal: Amy Bousquet
705 County Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 53550

Casimir Pulaski

Principal: Melissa Rego
1097 Braley Road, NB, MA 02745
508.997.4511 Ext. 54550

Renaissance Community School for the Arts

Principal: Daniel Somes
286 South Second Street, NB, MA 02744
508.997.4511 Ext. 55550

Thomas R. Rodman

Principal: Kim Marshall
497 Mill Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 56550

Jireh Swift

Principal: Tonya Vitorino
2203 Acushnet Avenue, NB, MA 02745
508.997.4511 Ext. 57550

William H. Taylor

Principal: Rafaela DeFigueiredo Spence
71 Portland Street, NB, MA 02744
508.997.4511 Ext. 58550

Betsey B. Winslow

Principal: Carolyn Pontes
561 Allen Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 59550

MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Keith Middle School

Principal: David Mather
225 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 2286

Normandin Middle School

Principal: Sean McNiff
81 Felton Street, NB, MA 02745
508.997.4511 Ext. 2281

Roosevelt Middle School

Principal: Daniel Bossolt
119 Frederick Street, NB, MA 02744
508.997.4511 Ext. 2291

HIGH SCHOOLS

New Bedford High School

Headmaster: Bernadette Coelho
230 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 20500

New Bedford High School

Asst. Headmaster: Joyce Cardoza
230 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 20504

New Bedford High School – Grade 9

Asst. Principal: Marco DeBrito
230 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 20502

New Bedford High School – Grade 10

Asst. Principal: Jose Edwards
230 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 20505

New Bedford High School – Grade 11

Asst. Principal: Jeffrey Longo
230 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 20507

New Bedford High School – Grade 12

Asst. Principal: Kathryn Rezendes
230 Hathaway Boulevard, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 20506

Trinity Day Academy

Principal: Christopher Oliva
181 Hillman Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 23550

Whaling City Jr./Sr. High School

Principal: John Tweedie
455 County Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 38550

PROGRAMS

Parenting Teens Program

Director: Wendy Andrade
181 Hillman Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 34550

Adult & Continuing Education

Manager: Bernice Jensen
181 Hillman Street, NB, MA 02740
508.997.4511 Ext. 33550

Parent/Guardian Attendance Information and Impact

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)

Appendix A

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 school-based field trip, religious holiday, inclement weather, verified medical reasons, buy back or academic work completed, while absent, during a hospitalization or during a suspension, for example, as approved by the School Principal.

Truancy: When a student has an unexcused absence, and the parent or guardian are unaware of the absence.

Excused Absence: When a student is absent from school with valid documentation deemed appropriate by the school district, such as Dr. appointment, college visit, Court appearance and bereavement.

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

In-School Suspension (ISS): When 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 should not be marked absent.

Tardy: When a student is late to school, they must arrive at school before half the school day is finished.
Out of School Suspension (OSS): When a student is given a mandatory leave from school as a form of punishment. Students will be marked other code OSS, the student receives academic instruction to complete missed schoolwork.

Robocalls: Robocalls are daily 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 Administrators or designee and should be delivered in multiple languages. If a student is tardy, a robocall will still go out to the family daily.

CHIPS (Child in Need of Possible Services): Team comprised of Attendance Officer, parent/guardian, may include Court liaison and may include support personnel, such as school guidance counselor, school adjustment counselor and wraparound coordinator. Student must be in violation of the CRA law to be eligible for a CHIPS/TIP meeting. Absent at least 8 days in the current quarter, or 11 days in the current trimester depending on the marking periods of the identified school. Schools must document in ASPEN all interventions used to address absences. Please see Flow Chart for Guidance.

Appendix A

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 absence in the current quarter or trimester.

Buy Back: 3 hours of supervised time during Saturday School, afterschool or with academic programs such as Apex to buy back one day.