

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Regular student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. School systems are required to monitor attendance and report students who are truant to an appropriate state agency. In order to assist the District with these requirements, with a minimum disruption to the educational programs in your child's school, we ask that you help us by doing the following:

- 1) If you ***know in advance*** that your child will be absent from school, please send a note or call the school and let us know.
- 2) On other days when your child will not be coming to school, please call the school office ***between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m.*** and advise us that your child will be absent that day. The following are telephone numbers for each of our schools:

Mansfield Middle School	860-429-5004 Ext. 175*
Goodwin Elementary School	860-429-6316
Southeast Elementary School	860-423-2793
Vinton Elementary School	860-465-8136

* Parents can call anytime before 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence.

Communication about attendance issues is valuable. An unreported absence imposes an additional burden on the office staff. If we do not hear that your child will be absent, ***we are required to try to locate you at home, at work or elsewhere*** to verify your child's absence. Accordingly, we ask that you make a conscientious effort to call or send a note each time there is an absence so we do not have to spend excessive time with follow-up telephone calls and you are not interrupted at work.

Thank you very much for your help!

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

Regular and punctual student attendance in school is essential to the educational process. Connecticut state law places responsibility for assuring that students attend school with the parent or other person having control of the child. This handbook provides basic information pertaining to student attendance and truancy, and to a parent's obligations under the state's attendance guidelines. A full copy of the Board's policy and regulation is available on the Board's website at: www.mansfieldct.gov/mboe.

The following definitions are used in by the district in administering the state law concerning attendance:

1. "Absence" - any day during which a student is not considered "in attendance" at his/her assigned school, or on a school sponsored activity (e.g. field trip), for at least one half of the school day.
2. "Disciplinary absence"- Any absence as a result of school or district disciplinary action. Any student serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should be considered absent. Such absence is not considered excused or unexcused.
3. "Educational evaluation" - an educational evaluation is an assessment of a student's educational development, which, based upon the student's presenting characteristics, would assess (as appropriate) the following areas: health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status and motor abilities.

4. "Excused absence" - a student is considered excused from school if the school has received written documentation describing the reason for the absence within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school, or if the child has been excluded from school in accordance with section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes (regarding communicable diseases), and the following criteria are met:
 - A. Any absence before the student's 10th absence, is considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate written documentation in accordance with this regulation.
 - B. For the student's 10th absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are, with appropriate documentation in accordance with this regulation, considered excused only for the following reasons:
 - a. student illness (verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional);
 - b. religious holidays;
 - c. mandated court appearances (documentation required);
 - d. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
 - e. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by the district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and the district regulations;
 - f. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends.
5. "In Attendance" - any day during which a student is not considered to be absent from his/her assigned school, or from an activity sponsored by the school (e.g. field trip), for at least one half of the school day.
6. "Student" - a student enrolled in the Mansfield Public Schools.
7. "Truant" - any student **five (5) to eighteen (18)** years of age, inclusive, who has **four (4)** unexcused absences from school in any one month or **ten (10)** unexcused absences from school in any school year.
8. "Unexcused absence" - any absence from a regularly scheduled school day for at least one half of the school day, which is not excused or considered a disciplinary absence. The determination of whether an absence is excused will be made by the building principal or his/her designee. Parents or other persons having control of the child may appeal that decision to the Superintendent or his/her designee, whose decision shall be final.

The following documentation requirements are applicable to the process for excusing student absences:

1. Written documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absence within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school. An incidence of absence is considered consecutive days of absence.
2. The first nine (9) days of absence will be excused upon receipt of a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate.
3. For the student's 10th absence, and all absences thereafter, documentation of the absence must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and must also include the reason for the absence and the following additional information:
 - a. student illness:
 - (1) signed note from a medical professional, who may be the school nurse, who has evaluated the student confirming the absence and giving an expected return date; or
 - (2) signed note from school nurse who has spoken with the student's medical professional and confirmed the absence, including the date and location of the consultation.
 - b. religious holidays: none.
 - c. mandated court appearances:
 - (1) a police summons;
 - (2) a subpoena;
 - (3) a notice to appear;

- (4) a signed note from a court official; or
 - (5) other official, written documentation of the legal requirement to appear in court.
 - d. funeral or death in the family, or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family: written document must explain the nature of the emergency.
 - e. extraordinary educational opportunity pre-approved by the district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and Board of Education policy and regulation, including written pre-approval from the administration.
 - f. lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends: none.
4. Neither e-mail nor text message shall serve to satisfy the requirement of written documentation. In rare and extraordinary circumstances, a building administrator may, in his/her own discretion, accept the delivery of written documentation through a scanned copy sent by e-mail.
 5. The Mansfield Public Schools reserves the right to randomly audit written documentation received, through telephone and other methods of communication, to determine its authenticity.
 6. Any absence that is not documented in accordance with this regulation within ten (10) school days after the incidence of absence will be recorded as unexcused. If documentation is provided within ten (10) school days, but is incomplete, the building principal may, at his/her own discretion, grant up to a five (5) school day extension for provision of the completed documentation.

School district officials follow state criteria to determine whether a student's absence can be considered an "extraordinary educational opportunity" under the State of Connecticut guidelines for attendance. If you wish to have your child's absence qualify as an excusal for an extraordinary educational opportunity, you may submit information to the building principal by completing the district's **Extraordinary Educational Experience Request Form**, located in each school office and at www.mansfieldct.gov/mboe-otherforms.

There are certain times when a student's long-term unexcused absences from school will not be considered truancy under state law and district policy, as described below.

1. A student **five (5) or six (6) years of age** shall not be considered truant if the parent or person having control over such student has appeared personally at the school district office and exercised the option of not sending the child to school at five (5) or six (6) years of age.
2. If a parent or guardian of an expelled student chooses not to enroll the student in an alternative program, the student shall not be considered to be "truant."

In accordance with state guidance, the school district applies certain criteria to determine whether a student is considered to be "in attendance", as set forth below:

1. A student serving an out of school suspension or expulsion shall be reported as absent unless he or she receives an alternative educational program for at least one half of the regular school day. In any event, the absence is considered a disciplinary absence, and will not be designated as excused or unexcused.
2. On early dismissal days and days shortened due to inclement weather, the regular school day for attendance purposes is considered to be the amount of instructional time offered to students on that day. For example, if school is open for four hours on a shortened day scheduled, a student must be present for a minimum of two hours in order to be considered "in attendance."
3. Students placed on homebound instruction due to illness or injury in accordance with applicable regulations and requirements are counted as being "in attendance" for every day that they receive instruction from an appropriately certified teacher for an amount of time deemed adequate by the administration so as to ensure that the student is able to successfully return to the regular classroom setting. Questions concerning state and district student attendance criteria may be directed to the building administrator.