

Watertown School Committee

Policy Subcommittee Report

Meeting Date: March 4, 2015

Location: Philips School

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Guido Guidotti (chair) and Julie McMahon

School Officials in Attendance: Jean Fitzgerald, Shirley Lundberg

Other Attendees: High school students and parent

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:08 AM.

II. Watertown High School Attendance Policy

The Watertown High School attendance policy was reviewed and by a vote of 2-0 the attached changes were sent the full committee for a vote.

III. Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

The policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students (attached) was reviewed and by a vote of 2-0 the policy was sent to the full committee for a vote.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:12 AM.

Submitted by Guido Guidotti, Chair

Attendance Rules and Procedures

Attendance is the most important aspect of educating students. When students are not here, they do not have access to instruction. Understandably, there will be times when students will need to take time away from school for a variety of excused reasons. The following procedure is in place to ensure good attendance, support our families, and follow state and federal law.

Absence Limits

We expect regular and punctual attendance in all classes. Grades reflect attendance, effort, classroom participation, and academic progress. We recognize that occasional absences are unavoidable.

EXCUSED absences are those reported to the attendance office by phone, by letter, or in person by a parent or a guardian. Otherwise, a child is considered truant.

- Death of a student's family member
- Court appearances
- Religious observances and holidays
- College visits for juniors or seniors (Note: college visits during Mid-Year or Final Exams will **NOT** be excused.)
- Extended Illness (requires a doctor's note)
- School related activities, such as field trips and assemblies
- Illness of less than 3 days as reported by phone or in a note from the child's parent or guardian
- Up to one **Leadership**, Academic or Athletic College Showcase or Academic Invitational per year, with appropriate documentation and approval of the Principal.

Parent call-ins and/or notes from home are required for an excused absence. All notes to excuse an absence need to be turned in within two school days of a student's return to school. Any questions/concerns should be addressed to the Associate Headmaster or Dean of Students.

Students with more than three excused absences in a quarter may be asked to produce formal documentation to excuse further absences that quarter.

UNEXCUSED absences:

- Cutting class (not being where you are scheduled to be)*
- Family vacation
- Work
- College visits for freshmen or sophomores
- College visits during Mid-Year or Final exams
- Pre-event preparation, such as prom, dances, athletic events, etc.
- ~~You may NOT make up work missed due to an unexcused absence from school, class, or study hall.~~
- Please note: for seniors in the fourth term, no more than three unexcused (3) absences are allowed without penalty.

*Students who are found off campus will also be subject to search and suspension upon return to school.

Parent/Guardian Notification of Absence

Parents are directed to call in their child's absence from school to the attendance office before 8 a.m. of the day of the absence: 617-926-7730. Parents will be notified with an electronic telephone message of their child's absence if they have not yet called in the absence.

Dismissals

There are three acceptable ways to dismiss a student from school.

- 1) A student must submit a signed note from his/her parent or guardian to the associate headmaster's office by the start of the school day.
- 2) A parent or guardian can dismiss a student by coming to the associate headmaster's office or by phone.
- 3) The Nurse may dismiss a student due to illness or other medical reason.

A student who is dismissed will be marked absent from any missed class. The absence is unexcused until documentation is provided.

Penalties for Tardiness and Absence

Each two tardies to class count as one absence toward the allowed limit of five absences per term. More than half a class missed (30 minutes) counts as a full absence, **NOT** a tardy.

A student with more than five unexcused absences from a class in a particular term will receive an "N" for the term. The "N" equals no credit earned for that class for that term. (See Graduation Credit Requirements)

Students who are at risk of losing credit may attend three hours of Saturday school, at the time and date designated by the attendance office, in order to compensate for three unexcused absences in a single course. Students' ability to participate in Saturday school will be predicated upon their demonstrated commitment to improvements in attendance. Students will not be allowed to repeat Saturday school for the same course in a single semester. Students will be required to arrive punctually, attend the full three hours, and bring sufficient academic work.

Classroom Attendance Procedures

After the third unexcused absence, the teacher warns the student verbally or in writing and confirms that warning to the attendance office. After the fifth unexcused absence, the teacher will notify the parent or guardian that the student is in danger of losing credit for the class. Notification will be documented and made in writing, by telephone, e-mail, progress report or at a parent conference. Current attendance can be found through iParent.

Appeals

Decisions about loss of credit may be appealed to the associate headmaster's exemption committee by 8:00 a.m. on the last day of the term, prior to exams. Appeals should be

filed only in the event that the application of this procedure results in loss of credit for a class. The decision of the committee is final. **No appeals may be made in a term in which the student has cut a class or study.**

Suspension

Since suspension is a school mandated absence, work missed during the suspension may be made up for credit. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with his/her teachers before or during the suspension to make arrangements to complete the missed work. Any work missed during a suspension is due within two school days of student's return.

Makeup Requirements for Missing School Work Due to Absences

Any student with an ~~excused/exempt~~ absence from class must submit missing work within four school days upon his/her return to school. Any exceptions must be approved by the Principal.

Makeup Requirements for Mid-year Exams, Final Exams, and Term Tests

Mid-year and final exam periods have potential conflict and make-up times. This allows students who have an ~~excused/exempt~~ absence from class and are unable to take the exam at the regularly scheduled time to reschedule. If the exam cannot be rescheduled during the make-up time, the student should arrange another time with the teacher and get administrative approval from the Principal. For term tests when there is no formal make-up schedule, the student must take responsibility for rescheduling the exam. All incomplete grades must be completed two weeks from the close of the term.

Incomplete Marks

Due to excessive absences, a student may receive a grade of incomplete in a course. Upon return to school, students will have no more than two weeks to provide documentation for excused absences and to make up any missing work; otherwise, students risk failing or receiving no credit for the course. Any exception to this timetable will only be considered if requested, in writing, to the Principal.

Attendance and Student Activities

A student must be in compliance with attendance requirements in order to participate in athletic and other extra-curricular activities. (See Student Activities)

Religious Holidays

When major religious holidays fall on school days, attention will be paid to avoid scheduling major tests or events.

District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students

Purpose

This policy should be interpreted consistently with the goals of reducing the stigmatization of and improving the educational integration of transgender and gender nonconforming students, maintaining the privacy of all students and fostering cultural competence and professional development for school staff.

Definitions

These definitions are not provided for the purpose of labelling students but rather to assist in understanding this policy.

Gender Identity: An innate, largely flexible characteristic of each individual's personality that is generally established at a young age

Transgender: A person whose gender identity is different than that which is traditionally associated with an assigned sex at birth

Gender Nonconforming: People who identify outside traditional gender categories or identify as both genders

Scope

This policy pertains to the usage of electronic technology and electronic communication that occurs in the school as well as to the entire school community, including educators, school and district staff, students, parents and volunteers.

General Policy Statement

School administrators shall make every effort to keep transgender and gender nonconforming students at the original school site. Transferring students to another school is not the default solution to a conflict concerning bullying or harassment of transgender and gender nonconforming students. Information about a student's transgender status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth may constitute confidential medical information. Disclosing this information to other students, their parents, or other third parties may violate privacy laws, such as the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The fact that a student chooses to disclose his or her transgender status to staff or other students does not authorize school staff to disclose other medical information about the student. When contacting the parent or guardian of a transgender student, school staff should use the student's legal name and pronoun corresponding to the student's gender assigned at birth unless the student, parent, or guardian has specified otherwise. To the extent that the school is not legally required to use a student's legal name and gender on other school records and documents, the school shall use the name and gender preferred by the student. It is strongly recommended that teachers privately ask transgender or gender nonconforming students at the beginning of the school year how they want to be addressed in class.

Schools may maintain separate restrooms, locker room or changing facilities for male and female students, provided that they allow students to access them based on their gender identity. The school shall respond to student requests to change their preferred locker room at any time during the school year. Regarding student transitions, educators and faculty shall treat certain situations differently depending on the age of the student. If school staff believes that a gender identity or expression issue is presenting itself and creating difficulty for the child at school, approaching parents about the issue is appropriate at the elementary school level. Together, the family and school can then identify appropriate steps to support the student. In regards to students in middle and high school, notification of a student's parents about his or her gender identity is unnecessary. The parents or guardians may already be aware of the situation and notifying parents or guardians who are unaware of their child's situation may carry risks for the student, such as being kicked out of the home. To the extent that funding is available, the school district shall implement ongoing professional development to build the skills of all staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying, harassment, and discrimination.