



LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Lincoln, Massachusetts

DRAFT

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Massachusetts General Laws require that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. Students are expected to attend school except for reasons of illness, quarantine, and other extenuating circumstances, or other pre-approved family circumstances.

Massachusetts General Law, 15E: Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Students states that "students of active duty personnel shall have additional excused absences at the discretion of the District relative to leave or deployment."

Children may be excused temporarily from school for the following reasons: illness, medical procedures/appointments or quarantine; bereavement; court dates; observance of major religious holidays; and pre-approved family circumstances. Parents/guardians must notify the school in the event of an absence from school on the day of the absence. Parents/guardians need to call the phone number provided by the individual school to notify the school of a child's absence as early as possible. This notification will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible but does not constitute an excusal of the absence.

In instances of chronic or irregular absence due to illness, the school administration will request a physician's statement documenting the need for the absences after 5 consecutive days of absence in order to be excused.

With guidance from the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education accountability system defines chronically absent as "missing at least 10% of the days enrolled (e.g., 18 days absent if enrolled for 180 days) regardless of whether the absences are considered excused, unexcused and/or for disciplinary reasons."

A student under the age of 16 is considered to be "habitually truant" if they are absent eight (8) or more days within a 45 school-day period.

Family vacation days are considered unexcused absence days. Make-up work will not be provided in advance of a trip, and parents/guardians will need to support their child in making up the work missed upon their return. If a child will be absent from school, parents/guardians shall provide a note to the school principal notifying the district of the dates of the absence.

When a child is absent for two or more consecutive days, it is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to contact the general education teacher (K-5th grade) and arrange to pick up the missed work in the main office when ready. If the child is a middle school student (6-8th grade), parents shall contact the school secretary to coordinate a time to pick up the make-up work at the main office.

Unexcused absences or tardies include:

- family vacations
- tardiness and early release without documentation of a physician or other medical provider
- chronic absenteeism (10% of the child's annual membership)
- habitual truancy or willful refusal to attend school (8 days of absence within 45 school days)
- family events not considered to be an emergency

Excused absences or tardies include:

- up to five (5) consecutive days of illness as reported by the parent/guardian (after five (5) consecutive days, documentation is required by the physician or medical provider)
- medical appointments and/or procedures
- extended absences as approved by a physician note
- religious holiday observations
- bereavement
- court dates
- children of active duty military personnel who are absent due to leave restrictions and/or reunification due to deployment
- approved absences due to exceptional reasons as determined by the principal

Early dismissals should only be excused for reasons as outlined above.

TERMS:

- Absence: student is not in attendance at school for the day or for at least half of the school day
- Tardy: student arrives late to school and is required to go to the office before going to the classroom
- Early dismissal: student is dismissed from school with a note or a phone call from the parent/guardian
- Excused absence: discussed and approved by the school principal or designee, as described in school district policy (JH, Student Absences and Excuses) or with documentation from a medical provider

Student Absence Notification Program

Each Principal or designee will notify a students' parent/guardian on the day of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each Principal or designee will notify parents/guardians in a letter and shall offer a meeting with the parents/guardians if a student has been absent a total of 5 or more days (10 half days) within a 45 school day period. The meeting shall be used to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal, the student's parent/guardian, and when appropriate the student.

Massachusetts Regulations and Obligations:

Please note, Massachusetts regulations below are considered to be a **last resort** to support students with significant truancy issues and/or unexcused school attendance issues:

- When a student has accumulated **eight (8) or more unexcused absences within a quarter of school (45 school days)**, the principal or other administrator may file a "Child Requiring Assistance" with the court. This is a regulation under Chapter 119 of the Acts of 2012; school districts are required to address unexcused attendance for a child who is habitually truant or fails to obey reasonable procedures provided by the school.
- A 51A is a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that is filed with the Department of Children and Families. Under Chapter 119, section 51A of MGL, a report of educational neglect can be filed on behalf of a child under the age of 16 years, if the child is not attending school on a regular basis.

SOURCE: MASC October 2014, DESE; *Safe and Supportive Schools, Student Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism*

REF. Lincoln IMBD

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); [76:1B](#); [76:16](#); [76:20](#); [119:21](#); [119:51](#)

Adopted at School Committee Meeting of March 6, 1981

Revised at School Committee Meeting of September 23, 1985

Revised and Renamed at School Committee Meeting of _____
(formerly titled "Policy on Student Absences")



LINCOLN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Lincoln, Massachusetts

POLICY ON STUDENT ABSENCES

Attendance at and participation in classes and other school activities is expected of all enrolled students during the entire school day every day that school is in session except for reasons of illness or death in the family. Regular attendance and participation are necessary if the individual is to obtain maximum benefit from the school program and if the other students are to benefit from the potential contributions of their classmates.

Students who are less than 16 or are 6 or more years of age are required to attend school. Chapter 76, Section 2 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires that "every person in control of a child. . .shall cause him or her to attend school". No student shall leave the school premises during school hours without the permission of the Principal granted under written request of the parent or guardian, or for reasons known to the Principal. Telephone requests for excuse of students from school shall be referred to the Principal.

Absences from school for reasons of illness or death in the family require:

1. The parent of a child who is absent should call the school by 9:00 a.m. to give notice of his/her absence.
2. If a child is on the absence list and there has been no contact with the school by 9:00 a.m., the school will attempt to contact the parent by telephone.
3. The parent must leave an alternate number at which he/she can be reached if there is no one at home.
4. If the school is unable to contact the parent, the school will send the parent a written note on the day of the absence, informing them of the absence of their child and the inability of the school to ascertain his/her whereabouts.

Absences from school for reasons other than illness or death in the family may be authorized upon the written request of the parent or guardian for some special activities which could not be scheduled at other times. However, in accordance with Chapter 76, Section 2, parents should make every effort to schedule trips, recreational activities and appointments during school vacations. Absences from school hinder a student's progress.

Make-up work for absences due to illness will be provided under Chapter 666, Section 2, when appropriate, and under the Administrative Guidelines (JED-R) which accompany this policy. Absences due to death in the family will be provided under the Administrative Guidelines. In the case of absence for reasons other than illness or a death in the family, a teacher may or may not provide make-up work. If make-up work is to be provided in this latter case, the same Administrative Guidelines will be followed.

Legal Reference: Ch. 76, Ch. 666, Sec. 2

Adopted at School Committee Meeting of March 6, 1981
Revised at School Committee Meeting of September 23, 1985

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Lincoln Public Schools Attendance Procedures

School attendance and, more importantly, readiness to learn are critical to the success of each child's learning. The instructional day will begin promptly at 8:00 am and end at 2:50 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday with early release on Wednesday at 12:35 pm.

Massachusetts General Laws require that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. Students are expected to attend school except for reasons of illness, quarantine, and other extenuating pre-approved circumstances.

Massachusetts General Law, 15E: Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Students states that "students of active duty personnel shall have additional excused absences at the discretion of the District relative to leave or deployment."

Unexcused absences or tardies include:

- Family vacations
- Tardiness and early release without documentation of a physician or other medical provider
- Chronic absenteeism (10% of the child's annual membership)
- Habitual truancy or willful refusal to attend school (8 days of absence within 45 school days)
- Family events not considered to be an emergency

Excused absences or tardies include:

- Up to 5 consecutive days of illness as reported by the parent/guardian (after 5 consecutive days documentation is required by the physician or medical provider)
- Medical appointments and/or procedures
- Extended absences as approved by a physician note
- Religious holiday observations
- Bereavement
- Court dates
- Children of active duty military personnel who are absent due to leave restrictions and/or reunification due to deployment
- Approved absences due to exceptional reasons as determined by the principal

Early dismissals should only be excused for reasons as outlined above.

TERMS:

- Absence: student is not in attendance at school for the day or for at least half of the school day
- Tardy: student arrives late to school and is required to go to the office before going to the classroom
- Early dismissal: student is dismissed from school with a note or a phone call from the parent/guardian
- Excused absence: discussed and approved by the school principal or designee, as described in school district policy (Student Absences and Excuses JH) or with documentation from a medical provider

The goal of these attendance procedures is to work with parents/guardians to ensure consistent attendance and access to learning. The district is legally obligated to monitor and address chronic absenteeism from school.

ABSENCE NOTIFICATION:

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school in the event of an absence from school on the day of the absence. Parents/guardians need to call the phone number provided by the individual school to notify the school of the child's absence as early as possible. This notification does not constitute an excusal of the absence.

PROCESS TO ADDRESS ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL:

1. When a parent/guardian has not informed the school on the day of the student's absence, an automated call will be made to the parent/guardian. If there is no response from the parent/guardian within an hour after the automated call, the principal or designee will call the parent/guardian to determine if they are aware of their child's absence or to determine the reason for the absence. If the parent/guardian is not aware their child is absent, the district will contact the school resource officer to conduct a safety and wellness check of their home or initiate steps to locate their child. The principal or designee will notify the Superintendent or designee in cases of unaccounted for students.
2. A letter will be sent to the parent/guardians when a student has been absent a total of **five days (10 half days) within 45 school days** unless these absences are excused by a medical provider note or when circumstances have been previously approved by the principal or designee. This letter will serve as a reminder that the child's attendance is of concern and serve as an invitation to meet with the principal to discuss ways to improve the child's attendance. When appropriate, the child will also be invited to this meeting.
3. When a pattern of non-attendance (**without excusal**) results in absences of **10 (20 half days) or more within a six-month period**, the Principal or designee will arrange a meeting with the parents/guardians and, when applicable, the child to develop an intervention plan to increase attendance. This meeting may include other staff or resources that may be helpful in the development of this plan or intervention. The following may be included: Principal, general educator, school social worker and/or school psychologist, the METCO Director, Student Services Coordinator, and the school resource officer. The school resource officer is a partner to the school and parents/guardians in matters of attendance.

PROCESS TO ADDRESS TARDINESS:

1. When a student is tardy (arriving after 8:00 am) they are required to go to the office to obtain a tardy slip to enter the classroom.
2. The school will document student tardiness and will notify the parents/guardians via a phone call when the child is tardy more than 6 times within 45 school days. During this phone call, the parent/guardian will be asked the reason for the child's tardiness.
3. When a child is tardy more than 6 times in 45 school days and the reasons for the tardiness is not considered excused, a meeting with the parent/guardian and, when applicable, the child will be scheduled. This meeting may include applicable faculty members and when necessary, the school resource officer.

FAMILY VACATIONS:

Family vacation days are considered unexcused absence days. Make-up work will not be provided in advance of a trip and parents/guardians will need to support their child in making up the work missed upon their return. If a child will be absent from school, parents/guardians shall provide a note to the school principal notifying the district of the dates of the absence.

PROVISION OF MAKE UP WORK:

When a child is absent for two or more consecutive days, it is the parents/guardians responsibility to contact the general education teacher (K-5th grade) and arrange to pick up the work in the main office when ready. If the child is a middle school student (6-8th grade), parents/guardians should contact the school secretary to coordinate a time to pick up the make up work at the main office.

MASSACHUSETTS REGULATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS:

Please note, the below Massachusetts regulations are considered to be a **last resort** to support students with significant truancy issues and/or unexcused school attendance issues:

- When a student has accumulated **8 or more unexcused absences, within a quarter of school (45 school days)**, the principal or other administrator may file a "Child Requiring Assistance" with the court. This is a regulation under Chapter 119, of the Acts of 2012, school districts are required to address unexcused attendance for a child who is habitually truant or fails to obey reasonable procedures provided by the school.
- A 51A is a report of suspected child abuse or neglect that is filed with the Department of Children and Families. Under Chapter 119, section 51A of MGL, a report of educational neglect can be filed on behalf of a child under the age of 16 years of age, if the child is not attending school on a regular basis.