

## **SECTION 2 ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is one of the most important elements of school and career success. Students with good attendance reach their academic and career goals at a greater rate and stay connected with members of the school community ensuring that support is readily available to address needs and support their success.

All CTECS attendance policies and procedures adhere to the Connecticut State Department of Education guidance and the Connecticut General Statutes regarding compulsory attendance, truancy and chronic absenteeism. In addition, CTECS considers attendance to be a course requirement and an excessive number of unexcused absences may result in a loss of credit.

## **ATTENDANCE FOR A SCHOOL DAY**

A student is considered to be “in attendance” if present at his/her assigned school or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. Early dismissal of a school prior to half of the scheduled day due to an emergency is not considered an absence on the part of the students.

## **MAKE-UP WORK**

Students who have been absent from school should complete work missed as soon as possible. Students are allowed to make up work missed as a result of any absences from class.

Students will be given two (2) days to make up work for each day that the student is absent. In the case of pre-announced tests or major assignments, it is the teacher’s prerogative to determine the reasonable amount of time in which the student should make up the test or assignment.

## **TARDINESS**

A student is tardy when he/she arrives late to school or class. Tardiness is regarded as a disciplinary problem subject to either classroom or administrative penalties. Habitual tardiness is a correctable behavior problem requiring counseling and parental conferences. Tardiness cannot be accumulated and utilized as the basis for denial of credit, nor can it be utilized for the reduction of course grade.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL**

Students have daily assignments and commitments that are an essential part of the school’s total educational program. Study periods, including those that occur at the end of the school day, are to be used to support the student’s educational program.

Parents, guardians and students age 18 or older are expected to schedule medical, dental, and other appointments after school hours. When it is absolutely necessary for a student to be excused, the parent or guardian must send a note to explain the reason for dismissal. Early dismissal for medical or dental appointments should be accompanied with an appointment card.

Requests for early dismissal must be presented to the assistant principal or his/her designee. Early dismissal requests may be denied if not in the educational interest of the student, even if the student has reached the age of 18 years.

## **TYPES OF ABSENCES**

### **1. EXCUSED ABSENCES**

A student's absence from school shall be considered excused if written documentation of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten (10) school days of the student's return to school and meets the following criteria:

For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits written documentation. Acceptable forms of documentation for an excused absence includes 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 a licensed medical professional. Documentation should provide the reason for and length of the absence.

For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:

- Student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
- Student mental health wellness day (only two days per year, may not be taken consecutively)
- Student's observance of a religious holiday;
- Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
- Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
- The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation is required for this reason); or
- Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance;
- Parents on active duty: A student whose parent or legal guardian is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted ten days of excused absences in any school year and, at the discretion of CTECS school administration, additional excused absences to visit the student's parent or legal guardian relative to such leave or deployment of the parent or legal guardian. In the case of excused absences pursuant to this subsection, the student and parent or legal guardian shall be responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's teacher prior to any period of excused absence, and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by the student prior to his or her return to school from such period of excused absence.

## **2. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

- The absence meets the definition for an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
- The absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

## **3. DISCIPLINARY ABSENCES**

Absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action are excluded from these definitions. In other words, absences due to out-of-school suspension and expulsion are neither excused nor unexcused absences, but are designated as disciplinary absences and will be reflected as such on a student's attendance history.

## **NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF A STUDENT'S ABSENCE OR TARDY**

CTECS uses an electronic notification system to notify parents/guardians when a student is absent or tardy. This system uses both phone and email notifications. Parents/guardians provide their phone number and email address where these notifications are sent on the PowerSchool parent portal. In addition, parents/guardians may also receive information about their child's attendance through direct communication from school personnel.

## **TRUANCY**

A student is considered truant if there are four (4) unexcused absences in one month, or ten (10) unexcused absences in a school year. The school will meet with parents and guardians of students who are identified as being truant no later than ten (10) days after the qualifying absence in order to evaluate the cause of the frequent absences and coordinate interventions. A school referral to the appropriate state or local agency may be made, if the school determines that such a referral is warranted.

## **ATTENDANCE AS A REQUIREMENT TOWARDS EARNING COURSE CREDIT**

Regular attendance by students is a critical aspect of the educational process. Without daily classroom attendance, a student does not receive the benefits of personal interaction with his/her teacher and other students. Ideas are often exchanged which enrich the learning experiences, and research indicates that the mere makeup of assignments and time cannot substitute for actual physical presence and involvement in the classroom.

Furthermore, in order to prepare students for the actual world of work, CTECS expects from its students' what employers will expect, and thus provides a smooth transition from school to work. CTECS attendance policy is designed to develop in students a sense of responsibility and cooperation.

In order to earn credit in a course for the year, a student may have no more than a total of ten (10) unexcused absences. Denial of course credit is not determined by individual teachers.

The educational objectives to be achieved by an attendance policy are as follows:

- Increase attendance;
- Increase punctuality;
- Improve scholastic performance;
- Develop an attitude of cooperation and responsibility in the student;
- Place the responsibility of attendance and punctuality on the students and parents;
- Develop work habits that are beneficial to future employment; and
- Develop an awareness of the importance of attendance on the part of both students and parents.

## **EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR COURSE CREDIT**

For the purposes of course credit, excused absences also include the following:

- Participation in school-approved activities with prior permission of the Principal;
- Medical reasons for student's immediate family which are verified by a licensed medical professional (physician, APRN/PA or school nurse);
- In school and out of school suspensions; and
- Failure of sending town or parent to provide transportation.

Documentation for excused absence(s) for course credit must be provided within thirty (30) calendar days.

## **NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS WHEN ATTENDANCE JEOPARDIZES COURSE CREDIT**

Although parents/guardians may access PowerSchool in order to gain up-to-date information regarding their child's attendance, CTECS engages in the following process in order to ensure that parents/guardians are provided with additional communication regarding absences that may impact denial of credit:

After 5 days of unexcused absences, a letter shall be sent to the parent/guardian by the attendance officer informing them of the status of the student.

At the 9th day of unexcused absence, a letter shall be sent to the parent/guardian informing him/her that denial of credit for the year will occur if there is one additional unexcused absence during the rest of the school year. A parent conference will be scheduled to create a plan of action.

If 10 days of unexcused absences are reached, a letter shall be sent to the parent indicating that credit denial for the year has occurred and that there is a procedure which can be followed if they wish to appeal the denial of credit. This notice shall be sent by mail with a return receipt requested, or in lieu of a return receipt, verification can be made via telephone contact.

## **REVIEW PROCESS FOR APPEAL OF CREDIT DENIAL DUE TO ABSENTEEISM**

1. A written request for review may be made by the student or a parent/guardian within ten (10) school days following the receipt of a notification of credit denial.
2. When a student requests a review of credit denial, the principal will identify three (3) or five (5) impartial faculty members to review the credit denial. They will be designated as the appeal board. Impartial is defined as no current instructional responsibility to the student.
3. A chairperson will be designated and a meeting date will be scheduled within ten (10) school days following the receipt of the request for appeal.
4. Student and parent/guardian (or if 18 or older, the student) must be present at the meeting in order for an appeal to be considered. The guidance counselor must also be present.
5. The appeal board shall recommend to the principal the action to be taken regarding the appeal.
6. The results of an appeal board meeting shall be made available to the person instituting an appeal within five (5) school days following the meeting; and
7. The principal shall review the recommendation of the appeals board, make a decision and take necessary action.

## **CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

Whether absences are deemed excused or unexcused, the loss of instructional time can have a negative cumulative effect on student and school performance. Therefore, each school reviews student attendance data to address chronic absenteeism of both individual students as well as the whole school. A student who is absent for any reason for ten percent of the total number of days in the school year (18 days) is considered to be “chronically absent.” A school referral to the appropriate state or local agency may be made, if the school determines that such a referral is warranted.

### **THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS APPLY TO CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM:**

*Absence:* Any excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence.

*Chronically absent child:* An enrolled student whose total number of absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

*School chronic absenteeism rate:* The total number of chronically absent children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled in such school for such school year.

If a CTECS school has a chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent or higher, an attendance review team is identified. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) will serve as the attendance review team and will be responsible for reviewing attendance issues on a periodic basis.

### **THE SAT TEAM WILL:**

- Identify absenteeism rates;
- Determine if the absentee rate exceeds 10%;
- Identify the appropriate interventions/community resources for student intervention;
- Determine the need for referral to Special Education for assessment;
- Continue to follow up on the progress of students who have been identified;
- Consider School Wide interventions to assure student attendance;
- Maintain records of recommendations; and
- Make and receive referrals.