



# Cumberland School Department Policy Manual

STUDENTS

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ATTENDANCE

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## PURPOSE

Students must be in school every day of the school year in accordance with the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island §16-19-1 and/or §16-19-6. Students must attend scheduled classes unless students are excused for the reasons recognized by the Cumberland School Department.

School districts are required by law and regulations to monitor student daily attendance. Detailed student attendance reports are provided to the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) and are used for individual student review, as well as district and state comparisons across organizations and jurisdictions.

## DEFINITIONS

**Absence:** A student who has attended school for less than half of a day is considered absent.

**Excused Absences:** Excused absences include a student's participation in an approved school-sponsored activity, suspension days, religious holidays, a death in the family, a doctor-excused illness or injury (doctor's written excuse must be submitted upon return to school), court appearance, military deployment event, school visit or approved dismissal from school by school principal or designee, including, but not limited to, the School Nurse. Excused absences do not count toward attendance policy limits.

**Unexcused Absences:** Unexcused absences include all absences not listed as Excused Absences. Unexcused absences count toward attendance policy limits.

**Truancy:** A student is considered truant when he/she purposely stays away from school with or without parent/guardian permission.

**Tardy:** Students are considered tardy when they arrive after the start of school. If a student has not attended school for at least half of the school day, this is considered an absence. The School Department is required, per the Rhode Island Department of Education, to track student tardiness and report this information on a daily basis.

**Excused Tardy:** Excused tardies include a student's participation in an approved school-sponsored activity, suspension days, religious holidays, a death in the family, a doctor-excused illness or injury (doctor's written excuse must be submitted upon return to school), court appearance, military deployment event, school visit or approved dismissal from school by school principal or designee, including, but not limited to, the School Nurse. Excused tardies do not count toward attendance policy limits.

**Unexcused Tardy:** Unexcused tardies include all tardies not listed as an Excused Tardy. Unexcused tardies count toward attendance policy limits. Three (3) unexcused tardies are calculated to equal one (1) unexcused absence.



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**Early Dismissal:** Early dismissal occurs when a student leaves before the end of the school day. The Department is required, per the Rhode Island Department of Education, to track student early dismissals and report this information on a daily basis. Three (3) unexcused early dismissals are calculated to equal one (1) unexcused absence.

Any combination of unexcused absences, tardies and dismissals count towards the attendance policy limits and can result in an attendance review process or attendance social suspension (at the middle and high school levels).

## **SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITY**

It shall be the responsibility of the Cumberland School Department to establish rules governing tardiness, early dismissals from school, excused absences, unexcused absences and truancy including but not limited to:

1. Reporting procedures.
2. Recording, tracking and investigating attendance and attendance issues.
3. Reporting of student attendance information to state and federal authorities in accordance with state and federal law, mandates and school department regulations.
4. Establishing a system of criteria, consequences and referral for investigating and addressing excessive absences, truancy, tardiness and dismissals and the failure to notify the school of the reason for the absence/tardiness/dismissal.
5. Establishing guidelines (by school) that provide reasonable opportunity for the student to make up work.

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND THE STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

The responsibility to follow the law and regulations governing student attendance lies with the parents/guardians and students. Parents/guardians and students are ultimately responsible for regular and punctual school attendance.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to:

1. Abide by the law and mandates governing attendance.
2. Stress the importance of regular and punctual school attendance with their child.



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3. Provide the school with accurate and current daytime telephone numbers where they can be reached.
4. Call the school on the day of their child's absence to inform the school office of their child's absence.
5. Make every effort to schedule personal appointments for their child outside of school hours.
6. Plan family vacations for when school is not in session.
7. Arrange for make-up work in a timely manner.
8. In cases of long-term illness, notify the school (school nurse and principal) as soon as possible so that provisions may be made for appropriate instruction.

## PROCEDURES TO REPORT ABSENCES

### Phone Call

Parents/Guardians of all Cumberland schools should call the school on the day of their child's absence to inform office personnel of the absence.

*Please Note: E-Mail is not an acceptable method of reporting a child's absence.*

For an absence to be considered excused, the following examples can be provided as documentation of the excused absence:

1. Doctor's note
2. Court appearance summons or other dated court document
3. Name of deceased and relation
4. Confirmation in writing from college/university regarding college visit

## ATTENDANCE REVIEW PROCESS

Following **five** (5) unexcused absences, or the combination of unexcused absences, tardies and early dismissals which equal five (5) unexcused absences, the school will contact the parent/guardian to notify them of the attendance concerns and provide a link to the attendance policy for their review. Parents may request a hard copy of the policy at any time.



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Following **ten** (10) unexcused absences, or the combination of unexcused absences, tardies and early dismissals which equal ten (10) unexcused absences, the school will contact the parent/guardian in writing requesting a meeting.

Following **fifteen** (15) unexcused absences, or the combination of unexcused absences, tardies and early dismissal which equal fifteen (15) unexcused absences, a referral may be made to the Attendance Officer.

Appointments with doctors, dentists, etc. should be made at times other than during the school day.

Students with any unexcused absence on the day of a school-related activity (i.e.: athletic event, dance, play) may not attend that activity.

Please see *Withdrawing Students for Non-Attendance* for additional information.

### **FAMILY TRAVEL AND VACATION**

Student absence from class for purposes of family travel or vacation is a loss of valuable classroom instructional time and is strongly discouraged. All work will be provided upon return to school; students are required to make-up all missed work. Absences due to family travel and vacation are considered unexcused absences.

### **EARLY DISMISSALS**

A written request for early dismissal signed by the student's parent/guardian must be presented to the Main Office or Student Management Office (Cumberland High School) on the day of the early dismissal. This request must contain the date, time, reason for dismissal, telephone number for verification, and parent/guardian signature. Parental/Guardian phone calls requesting an early student dismissal must be approved by the Principal/Designee. Parents/Guardians may also personally come to school to request early student dismissal. A photo identification card is required for all student early dismissals.

*Please Note: E-Mail is not an acceptable method of requesting early dismissal.*

### **ATTENDANCE SOCIAL SUSPENSION – MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL**

A student will receive a twenty-five (25) calendar day social suspension for accumulating ten (10) unexcused absences in any one trimester or semester of school. Any unexcused tardy or dismissal will also accumulate toward this total. Three (3) unexcused tardies and/or dismissals equal one (1) unexcused absence. Any subsequent unexcused absence, unexcused tardy and/or dismissal during that trimester or semester may result in additional days of social suspension.



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## WITHDRAWING STUDENTS FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

### Beginning of the New School Year

1. If a student is absent on the first day of school, and that absence is not determined to be an excused absence, a phone call will be placed to the student's home to inquire about the student's attendance for the new school year.
2. At **three** (3) consecutive days of absence from the first day of school that is not determined to be an excused absence or the school has not received contact from a parent/guardian, a letter will be sent home to the student's parent/guardian at the home address on file indicating that the student has been withdrawn from the Cumberland School Department due to non-attendance. Re-enrollment will require that the student and the parent/guardian register using the Cumberland School Department procedures outlined on the district website.

### During the School Year

When a student stops attending school without official withdrawal during the school year, the school must utilize all available interventions before taking any action against the student's enrollment status.

Interventions should include referral to the School Counselor/School Social Worker, referral to the Attendance Officer, phone calls home, and certified letters to the parent/guardian.

The following procedures must occur prior to withdrawing a student during the school year.

1. At **ten** (10) total consecutive absences from school that is not determined to be an excused absence, a letter will be sent home to the student's parent/guardian at the home address on file indicating that the student has been absent from school with no contact from the home and direct the parent/guardian to contact the school to set up a meeting with the building administrator by a specified date.
2. At **fifteen** (15) total consecutive days of absence that is not determined to be an excused absence, a second certified letter will be sent home to the student's parent/guardian at the home address on file indicating that the student has continued to be absent from school with no contact from the parent/guardian and direct the parent/guardian to contact the school to set up a meeting with the building administrator by a specified date.
3. At **twenty** (20) total consecutive days of absence that is not determined to be an excused absence, a final certified and regular USPS letter will be sent home to the student's parent/guardian at the home address on file indicating that the student has continued to be absent from school with no contact



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from the parent/guardian and advise the parent/guardian that the student will be withdrawn from the Cumberland School Department with an effective date.

It is only when the student cannot be located and all possible interventions have been unsuccessful, that the student may be withdrawn from the Cumberland School Department. Any re-enrollment will require a meeting with parent/guardian, student and the building administrator to discuss expectations related to student attendance.

*Amended & Approved by Cumberland SC Policy & Procedures Sub-Committee: 7/9/2013*

*Amended & Approved by Cumberland School Committee: 7/11/2013*

*Amended & Approved by Cumberland SC Policy & Procedures Sub-Committee: 09/08/2015*

*Amendments Approved by Cumberland School Committee: 9/10/2015*

*Amended & Approved by Cumberland SC Policy & Procedures Sub-Committee: 04/12/2016*

*Amendments Approved by Cumberland School Committee: 04/14/2016*

*Amended & Approved by Cumberland SC Policy & Procedures Sub-Committee: 02/21/2017*

*Amendments Approved by Cumberland School Committee: 02/23/2017*