



**THOMAS J. KENNY
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

ATTENDANCE POLICY
EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 5, 2019

**REVISIONS TO
SUPERINTENDENT
CIRCULAR
REF NUMBER:
CAO-1**

*Approved by the School Site
Council Governing Board on
5/22/2019*

Massachusetts State Law requires that all students attend school daily and educational institutions are required to report attendance data in a standard manner. Chronic student absences reduce even the best teacher's ability to provide effective and sufficient instruction, and have long term effects on students' academic outcomes.

Additional information about school attendance:

- Absenteeism in the first month of school can predict poor attendance throughout the school year.
- Half of students who miss 2-4 days in September go on to miss nearly a month of school.
- Poor attendance influences whether children read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade and by 6th grade, chronic absences become a leading indicator of whether a student drops out in high school.
- Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school, or 18 total days, negatively affects a student's academic performance. *That's just two days a month and that's known as chronic absence.*
- The academic impact of missing school is the same whether absences are excused or unexcused.
- When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.

Students are expected to be in school all day, every school day. Students must bring in a note that is signed by a parent or guardian within 7 school days of the absence. The note must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, a phone number where a parent or guardian can be reached, and the parent or guardian's signature. Students will be provided with the opportunity to make up work for excused absences. A student must attend school for at least 4 hours (half-day at ELT school) to be marked "present" for the day.

I. EXCUSED ABSENCES INCLUDE:

- An illness or injury that prevents the student from attending school. If the illness or hospitalization results in absence of five or more consecutive days, a note from a health care provider documenting the health problem or hospitalization should be attached to the parents' note. Parents are not expected to have a note from a health care provider for an illness of fewer than five days.
- A death in the immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) or other significant personal or family crisis.
- Court appearances: Parents/guardians should present evidence of the requirement of the court appearance.
- Medical or psychological tests during the school day: The parent must show evidence (such as a note from the health center) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
- Religious holy days: In order to accommodate the religious beliefs of students, such absences will be marked "constructively present" upon submitting a valid note signed by a parent or guardian. Please see Superintendent's Circular LGL-6 for more guidance.
- Visits to special education schools for students with disabilities.
- Other situations: From time to time, situations over which the school, parent, and student have little or no control may cause absences (for example, transportation that does not operate during inclement weather). These absences are excusable.
- School nurse verified illness/injury that prevents the student from attending school.

II. EXCESSIVE ABSENCES / NO CREDIT:

Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school, or 18 total days, negatively affects a student's academic performance. *That's just two days a month and that's known as chronic absence.* The academic impact of missing school is the same whether absences are excused or unexcused. When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.

[II.1] More than 3 unexcused absences in a single marking term is considered "excessive" absences. Any student who receives more than 3 unexcused absences will receive a grade of "NC" (no credit) for the term. "NCs" are converted to the grades the student would have otherwise received at the end of the school year.

[II.2] If a student receives no credit "NC" due to absences:

- Parent/guardian excuse notes **will no longer be accepted** unless:
 - ❑ A note from a medical professional is provided for consecutive days (2+)
 - ❑ The illness or injury is verified by the school nurse
 - ❑ The school has been contacted by an outside provider who is addressing and supporting the cause of absences (medical, mental health, social worker, etc.).

III. ROLE OF DEPT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES AND/OR SUPERVISOR OF ATTENDANCE:

[III.1] **(x4) unexcused absences** in a single term will result in the creation of an "Attendance Intervention Plan"

- An Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP) may include:
 - A letter sent to a parent/guardian detailing the attendance policy and expectations.
 - Parent/student meeting(s) with the principal or designee.
 - Student-focused interventions including counseling, mentorship or incentive / consequence systems.
 - A 51-A filed with the Department of Children and Families to provide additional support if appropriate.

[III. 2] **(x8) unexcused absences** in a single term will result in the following (**mandated by BPS policy**):

- 51-A filed with the Department of Children and Families for Educational Neglect is mandated.
- Adult Failure to Cause petition is filed with Supervisor of Attendance who may recommend court involvement. Student and/or parent supports will be developed by the school and/or courts as needed.