

2019-2020

## Attendance Pilot Policy

*"Every Student, Present and Punctual, Every Day"*

Attendance at school, and in every class, is critical to student success. Attendance is required by Massachusetts Law as well as Peabody Public School Policy. The following pages in this Student & Parent/Legal Guardian Handbook will explain the new Student Attendance Pilot Policy. This page is designed as a quick reference for your use.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) defines three categories of absence. Those definitions are described in detail in the following pages; they are Excused, Documented Excused, and Unexcused Absence.

Absences and tardiness can and will affect student grades and course credits. In any instance where you have a question or concern regarding make-up work, course credit, or questions regarding extended absences, please contact your student's Dean or Program Director. PVMHS staff will work with you to assist in the success of your student.

### **CALL IN:**

PVMHS policy and procedure requires that parents/legal guardians contact the school when a student is going to be absent or late – the school day begins at 7:20 a.m. Contact your student's respective House or Program to notify PVMHS staff. The following numbers should be used:

A House 978-536-4551  
B House 978-536-4556  
C House 978-536-4561  
Peabody Learning Academy 978-536-5575  
Community School 978-536-4554

### **WRITTEN NOTE:**

When arriving to school late, or returning to school after an absence, a note from the parent/guardian must be submitted **THAT DAY**, and the note must include the name of the student, reason for arriving late to school or being absent, date of the absence/tardy arrival, signature of the parent/guardian and phone number. This note must be turned in to the House or Program office.

### **EARLY DISMISSAL:**

A written note is also required for Early Dismissals. This note should be presented to the House or Program office at or before 7:20 a.m. at the start of the school day.

# **Attendance Pilot Policy**

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## **Attendance Policy**

**Policy JH, LEGAL REFS: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:16; 76:20, Individual School Handbook, from the Peabody Public Schools Policy Manual**

### **School Attendance**

*Chapter 76, Sec. 1 of the Massachusetts General Law (MGL) states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. A school district may excuse up to seven day sessions or fourteen half day sessions in any period of six months. In addition to this law, each school may have its own attendance policy with which parents/guardians and guardians should be familiar.*

Research indicates that poor school attendance is directly linked to decline in academic achievement. Student attendance is critical to student success at all grade levels. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of a school year, which is 18 or more absences per school year (that is only 4-5 days per quarter/1-2 days per month). The U.S. Department of Education cites absenteeism as a cause of low academic achievement, links chronic absenteeism to an increased likelihood of dropping out of school, and has shown that it may impact students' long-term outcomes. Missing 10% of the school year can cause students to fall behind in math and reading skills. Being late to school can lead to poor attendance. Regular attendance helps students feel better about school and about themselves.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) defines an excused absence as the following:

1. Hospitalization,
2. Bereavement or
3. Observance of religious holidays as defined by DESE.

A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of a school administrator. A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his character. Parents will help their students by refusing to allow them to miss school needlessly. Accordingly, parents/guardians will provide a written explanation for the absence and tardiness of a student. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school

administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justifiable.

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. Students benefit not only from teacher instruction but also through interaction with peers. Attendance is one of the few factors that is within a student's and parent's or legal guardian's control. Students must be in school punctually and regularly in order for successful learning to take place. Parents/guardians and legal guardians are partners with the school in ensuring that students have excellent attendance and attend school in accordance with state law and Department of Education regulations.

## **ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

### **Parental Notification**

To alleviate the concern for a student being lost because of truancy, etc., parents/guardians are requested to call their student's house: A House 978-536-4551; B House 978-536-4556; C House 978-536-4561; Peabody Learning Academy 978-536-5575; Community School 978-536-4554 if a student is going to be absent or late for any reason.

### **Absences From School**

Peabody Veterans Memorial High School defines absences as belonging in one of three (3) categories: excused, documented unexcused and unexcused absences. When returning to school, the student must take responsibility to make up missed work.

### **Maximum Allowed Absences**

Credit for all courses is based on Class Attendance as well as Academic Achievement. Students are allowed no more than four (4) absences each course (unexcused) per quarter. No more than eight (8) absences each course (unexcused) per semester (2 Quarters). No more than sixteen (16) absences each course (unexcused) for the year.

### **Categories of Absence:**

**Excused per DESE** – make-up allowed, excused absence recorded. This includes the following (does not count toward maximum allowance):

- Hospitalization (HOS\*) as documented by a note from the doctor/hospital on official letterhead.
- Bereavement (DO\*) as documented by parent/guardian to the respective Dean.
- Observance of religious holidays as defined by DESE (RH\*) – documented by note from parent/guardian, will be absent from school due to religious observance.

**Documented Unexcused** – make-up allowed, unexcused absence recorded. This includes, but is not limited to the following (does not count toward maximum allowance):

- Illness covered by a doctor's note (MD\*) documented by a note from a doctor on official letterhead.
- Court appointment (CA\*) as documented by an official court note - mandated court appearance.
- Serious illness in family (DO\*) as documented by parent/guardian to the respective Dean.
- Medical appointment (MD\*) as documented by a note from a doctor on official letterhead. Non-illness related visits to a doctor's/dentist's office for such things as physicals, braces, or check-ups.
- Some dismissals by the Nurse (discretion of the Nurse to determine whether documented), when illness or injury occurs during the school day.
- Authorized field trip (FT\*) - School-sponsored field trip.
- College visits (CV\*) - Three days annually may be granted for college visitor/permanent career placement visits (must be authorized by the student's guidance counselor and provide written documentation from the college on letterhead verifying visit).
- Accepted College Day (CD\*).
- In-School and Out-of-School suspension (ISS\* or OSS\*).

*\*ASPEN Absence Codes used in the Parent Portal*

**Unexcused** – make-up allowed, unexcused absence recorded (counts toward maximum allowance).

- Any absence not documented in the categories previously listed will be considered unexcused.
- Routine absence due to brief illness as approved by parent/guardian.
- Dismissals from school by parent/guardian or person designated on the emergency card because student doesn't feel well enough to remain in school.

When returning from an absence, the student is required to present to their House Office, a note of explanation from the parent/guardian and the reason for the absence. This note must contain: date of absence, reason for absence, signature and phone number of parent/guardian. If absences or tardies are unresolved, students should contact their Dean.

**Extended Unexcused Absence** – This is for students who have a documented medical (physical, mental, or social/emotional) issue that impacts a student's attendance. These

students do not go through an appeals process. Instead, the student provides medical documentation to his/her team (i.e., Guidance Counselor, Nurse, Administrator). After a follow up conversation with the student's family and support personnel, the documentation is on file for the student. Extended Unexcused Absence can be granted for one or more quarters.

In all instances where a student is on an IEP or a 504 plan and which are not covered by the preceding Extended Unexcused Absence provision, before consequences are imposed under this policy for absences, the school shall first determine whether the absences are caused by or have a direct and substantial relationship to the disability or are a direct result of the district's failure to implement the plan. If the determination is that either of these conditions account for the absences, the school shall grant an Extended Unexcused Absence until appropriate accommodation can be made in the plan. Otherwise the absences shall count and the provisions of this policy shall apply.

#### **No Credit (N) - N grade due to poor attendance**

- If a student accumulates more than four (4) absences (unexcused) per term in any course, they will receive a grade of "N" on their report card, indicating No Credit due to poor attendance.
- If a student receives an "N" for one term, they can still receive a passing grade for the semester or year if they maintain a passing grade average and are not absent more than four (4) (unexcused) times in the other terms.
- Two "N" in a semester course, they will receive No Credit for the course.
- Four "N" in a full year course, they will receive No Credit for the course.
- It is important to remember that when a student receives an "N", it is a notice that both student and parent/guardians need to monitor school attendance more closely and set a goal to improve attendance.
- It does not represent that a student is failing the course from a lack of achievement.
- If a student receives one or more "N" grades, they will be ineligible for Honor Roll.
- If a student receives No Credit for a course, it is recommended that they set up a meeting with their Dean and guidance counselor to make arrangements to repeat the course or its equivalent.

#### **N Grade Implications**

- If a student is failing the course, the report card would reflect the failing grade, not an "N."

- Goal of this policy is to help students gain the maximum benefit from the high school curriculum and the dialogue that occurs between students, teachers and peers.

### **Attendance Review Panel**

- If a student receives an "N" for the term, semester or year and believe that circumstances merit a waiver of the attendance policy, they may submit a written appeal to the Attendance Review Panel.
- This panel meets at the end of each marking term. The Attendance Review Panel appeal forms can be obtained from the Main Office.
- Provide a written explanation of the reason for the appeal prior to meeting with the Attendance Review Panel.
- All appeals must be initiated no later than one week following the distribution of report cards.
- The Attendance Review Panel can only excuse specific dates.
- Students should specify these dates on the appeal form and provide official documentation of each absence being appealed, such as doctor/hospital notes, court documents, etc.
- Students should be prepared to provide evidence if there are any extenuating circumstances.
- Students are expected to appear in person before the Attendance Review Panel so that issues requiring clarification can be addressed. parents/guardians/guardians are encouraged to attend and will be notified of the Attendance Review Panel meeting.
- The student's Dean will confirm the Attendance Review Panel's meeting time and place with the student.
- Failure to attend the meeting when a student is present in school on the day it is scheduled will result in the loss of the right to appeal.
- Seniors may appeal the Attendance Review Panel's decision should it constitute loss of credit in a course needed to graduate. This request must be submitted to the Principal within five days of the date of the letter from the Attendance Review Panel.
- Attendance Review Panel will consist of the following members:
- Dean of the student submitting appeal
- Three teachers - one chosen by the student and two standing members

### **Planned Absences**

The Peabody Public Schools discourage such student absences. Peabody Veterans Memorial High School students who take vacations or family trips that do not coincide with previously scheduled school vacation days will miss valuable class experiences that cannot be duplicated in any other way. Such planned absences are discouraged.

We understand, however, that there may be times when such absences are unavoidable. Students and parents/guardians need to recognize that planned absences can imperil the student's academic status for courses that are missed. Although make-up is allowed, the absence counts toward the maximum allowance. Students may lose credit for the quarter if the number of absences 4 (four) (unexcused) per course. While teachers may let students make up missed assignments, tests, and quizzes, teachers are neither expected nor required to provide make-up work or special assignments prior to vacations. Teachers are not expected or required to provide special tutoring for those students whose parents/guardians take them on vacation during school time.

### **Tardiness to School**

The school day begins at 7:20am. Students who arrive after 7:20am must obtain a pass from their house office before going to class.

- Students are permitted a maximum of three (3) tardies per quarter.
- On the fourth (4) and every subsequent tardy, they will be assigned an office detention to be served from 2:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.
- **Students who are tardy to school after 7:30 a.m. without a documented excuse will be ineligible for extracurricular activities that day.**

### **Tardiness to Class**

- Students are expected to be on time for every class and if they are tardy they will serve a teacher detention that day. The teacher will inform the student about the teacher detention. The student who arrives to class halfway through the class, will be considered absent for attendance purposes.

### **Dismissals**

- All dismissal notes should be submitted to the Dean Office at 7:20 am.
- Dismissals must comply with the criteria for documented and excused absences
- Students dismissed, without a documented excuse, will be ineligible for extracurricular activities that day.
- Students who leave the building without following dismissal protocol may be subject to discipline.

## **INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Student Responsibilities**

- It is each student's responsibility to make responsible decisions about attending all classes on a regular basis.
- Monitor their own attendance and speak with their teachers if there are any questions about attendance records.
- When returning from an absence, the student presents a note of explanation from the parent/guardian and the reason for the absence to their House Office.
- The student must obtain and make-up class work missed due to absences. It is the student/parent/guardian's responsibility to see their teachers to obtain missed work.
- When a student misses a class due to tardiness or dismissal in which a test/quiz is given, the student will be expected to take the test/quiz the day of their return or at the convenience of the teacher. It is the student's responsibility to connect with the teacher and to make these arrangements.

### **Parent/Guardian Information and Responsibilities**

- The parent/guardian should monitor their child's attendance.
- Discuss the importance of good attendance with their children.
- When returning from an absence, send a note with your student to present to their House Office.
- The student must obtain and make-up class work missed due to absences. It is the student/parent/guardian's responsibility to see their teachers to obtain missed work.
- Special circumstances will be reviewed by the Dean.

### **Faculty, Staff, and Administration Responsibilities**

- Record each student's attendance in Aspen for each class on a daily basis.
- Submit daily attendance records each day.
- Reconcile all adjustments to a student's attendance the following day.
- Deans and School Attendance Officer will work with students and parents/guardians whose absences or tardies are excessive.

## **ELIGIBILITY TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL ACTIVITIES**

- Assigned detentions must be served before a student attends a club, organization, activity and/or sport. Students will not be allowed to tryout, sign-up, attend, nor participate in clubs, activities and sports if they have not served their detentions.

***Child Requiring Assistance (CRA)***

*Court process that an Attendance Officer can file in Salem Juvenile Court for any student between the ages of six (6) and no more than sixteen (16) years of age who misses more than eight (8) absences in an academic quarter.*

***Supervisor of Attendance***

*Chapter 76, Sec. 19 of the MGL states that each school committee must employ a supervisor of attendance. The Peabody Public Schools Supervisor of Attendance will be involved in investigations involving truancy.*