

**HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE / LOSS OF CREDIT**

**Policy Statement**

The Trumbull Board of Education believes that regular school attendance is essential for an effective and productive learning experience. The sequential presentation of school learning requires a continuity of instruction. The maximum benefits for each individual child can be achieved only from participation and interaction in daily activity.

Regular school attendance is both encouraged and mandated. The primary responsibility for adherence to regular attendance rests with the student's parents/guardians and the individual student. The District will comply with Connecticut State Statutes related to compulsory school attendance.

The Connecticut General Statutes requires students over five and under eighteen years of age to attend school on a regular basis, unless (1) they graduate from high school or (2) their parents/guardians consent to the youngster leaving school at age seventeen. The student's parent/guardian must appear at the high school to sign a form for withdrawing the student from school. The District will provide the parent/guardian with information about educational options available in the school system and in the community.

Trumbull Public Schools recognizes that students may occasionally miss school or class for legitimate reasons. These reasons, when documented by a parent/guardian/school administration/physician, will be reviewed and may be taken into consideration when a student's absences become excessive.

Excessive absences will warrant appropriate follow-up action by the school and may lead to loss of credit.

The Board of Education strongly believes that family vacations should not take place when school is in session.

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Revised: 7/18/1989, 11/22/1994,  
10/8/1998, 7/16/2002, 9/7/2004,  
7/14/2009, 6/6/2012, 9/4/2012,  
8/6/2013, 2/13/2018, 8/28/2018

**References**

- Connecticut Public Act 17-14, "An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Department of Education"
- Connecticut General Statutes §10-184, 10-186, 10-198a, 10-198b, 10-198c, 10-198d, 10-210, 27-103, 46b-149

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- Connecticut State Department of Education, “Guidelines for Implementation of the Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences and Best Practices for Absence Prevention and Intervention”
- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 5131: Student Standard of Conduct
- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 6115.1: Protected Prayer
- Trumbull Board of Education Policy Code 6173: Homebound and Hospitalized Instruction

**Regulations**

The high school attendance policy follows the Response to Intervention (RTI) formula to offer a tiered approach to attendance monitoring and behavior correction. Each time a student reaches the next attendance threshold, more faculty members become involved in informing the student and the parent of the upcoming consequences and changing the student's behavior. The formal notification process will be supplemented with daily calls through an automated calling system to the homes of absent students. In addition, a pattern of absenteeism may trigger a referral to Superior Court as outlined in Connecticut State Statutes 10-198a and 46b-149.

Annually at the beginning of the school year, and upon any enrollment during the school year, parents/guardians will be notified of their obligations pursuant to student attendance. (Please see Student Handbook, [www.trumbullps.org](http://www.trumbullps.org), under "Trumbull High School.")

I. Regulations for THS Attendance toward Course Credit

A. General Principles

- Communication is essential for success in teaching and learning.
- Student seat time is important to learning.
- Intentionally missing class will incur penalties and affect grades.
- Attendance issues need to be resolved as soon as possible, but no later than 48 hours from the student's return to school.
- Attendance will be taken by teachers in each period of the day; however, attendance calls to students' homes will be based upon attendance in the designated official attendance period.

Classroom (period) attendance will be recorded electronically by the teacher. It is the student's responsibility to notify his/her teacher when he/she will be absent from class and arrange to make up missed work if the absence has been verified by a parent/guardian to the appropriate House Office within 48 hours of the student's return.

B. Parent/Guardian Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to monitor his/her child's attendance via the District parent portal at [www.trumbullps.org](http://www.trumbullps.org), student report card, and/or contacting the student's House Office.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report his/her child's absence to the school each day by calling the student's House Office between 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. and speaking with school staff directly or leaving a message on voicemail. A note must also be brought to the House Office by the student upon his/her return. Notes must be both written and signed by a parent/guardian and submitted to the student's House Office within 48 hours of the absence. Notes must include the student's name, date(s) of absence, and reason for the absence along with a daytime phone number where a parent/guardian can be reached for verification.

C. Absence Bank

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Students will have an absence bank, consisting of both excused/verified and unexcused/unverified absences, which is a set number of absences before credit is lost in a given course. Students will lose credit upon reaching 20 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 11 absences in a half-credit course, or 8 absences in a quarter-credit course. Full-year physical education courses will follow the half-credit threshold of 11 absences, as those classes do not meet every day. School-approved trips/activities (field trips, school sports, in-school events) and suspensions/expulsions do not count towards the absence bank limit.

A student with profound medical issues will be exempt from this policy if it is so noted on the student's IEP, Section 504, or Individualized Health Care Plans. (A student qualifies for Section 504 protection if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities and exhibits such. An Individualized Health Care Plan is a temporary accommodation to assist a student during that period of time the student needs support.)

In addition, absences for students who have severe illnesses, whereby a physician requires them to be absent for five (5) or more consecutive days, will have those absences exempted from the absence bank. Those illnesses must be documented by a note from the treating physician verifying that the absence was medically necessary. These notes must also be submitted to the House Office and school nurse within 48 hours of the student's return to school.

Students who enroll in school after the beginning of the school year will have absences prorated to the time of enrollment.

### 1. Excused/Verified Absences from School/Class

Absences will be considered excused/verified provided that official documentation is presented to the House Office within the previously mentioned 48-hour timeframe.

Absences counted toward a student's absence bank include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Appointments with health professionals that cannot be made outside regular school hours
- Emergency family situations
- Student-initiated visit to Counseling Office
- Personal illness

Absences exempt from a student's absence bank include the following:

- Bus failure (confirmed by the transportation provider)
- College visitations, 2 per year, for 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>-graders (documentation from the college)
- Court appearances (documentation from the court clerk or attorney)
- Death in family (documentation verifying relationship)
- Excused/verified visit to school nurse
- Expulsions
- Field trips/athletic events/school-sponsored events
- Illness requiring hospitalization (documentation from treating physician)

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- Religious observation (documentation from parent for recognized religious holiday)
- Special testing/meetings (AP, PPT/Section 504, etc.)
- Suspensions
- Counselor-initiated Counseling Office visits

Students with excused/verified absences from school or class will be given appropriate opportunity to make up class work they have missed in order to complete curriculum requirements. Failure on the part of the student to complete his/her responsibility in making up missed work will impact his/her grade.

### 2. Unexcused/Unverified Absences from School/Class

Unexcused/unverified absences are those which are not reconciled within 48 hours of the absence. An absence which is not reported by a parent/guardian either by phone or note will be considered unexcused/unverified. Class cuts will also count as unexcused/unverified absences. A class cut is defined as any time a student has reported to school but does not report to his/her designated class, and does not have staff permission to be in any other location. Class cuts may not be excused/verified by a parent/guardian phone call or note. All unexcused/unverified absences will be counted towards a student's absence bank.

As a result of a class cut or an unexcused/unverified absence, a student will not earn credit for class work/assessments missed and will not be provided makeup privileges. Excessive unexcused/unverified absences and/or class cuts may lead to loss of credit/academic failure in one or more of the student's courses. If class cuts (any unexcused/unverified absences) amount to more than 50% of a student's total absences, he/she will automatically be disqualified from credit recovery. Class cuts are subject to disciplinary action as set forth in Board of Education Policy 5131, "Student Standard of Conduct."

A student who loses credit for a particular course, due to excessive absences, will not be eligible to retake said course in summer school.

### D. Absences And Participation In Extra-Curricular Activities

Any student who has not reported to school or is not present for at least half of the scheduled school day is considered absent from school. Students who are considered absent from school will not be permitted to participate in any extra-curricular activity (i.e., athletic practice, game, rehearsal, performance, etc.). Coaches and advisors will monitor attendance to ensure compliance with this regulation. Exceptions to this policy will be considered by the Principal or his/her designee only upon receipt of a written request from the parent/guardian and will be handled on an individual basis.

### E. Tardiness to Class

Students who are tardy (both excused/verified and unexcused/unverified) and miss more than 20% (time) of a class will be marked as absent for the class. This absence will count towards the absence bank, and the excused/verified, unexcused/unverified designation will apply towards determining eligibility for making up work missed. Student tardies that are less than

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20 percent (time) of a class will not count towards the absence bank, but may be considered by the Appeals Board if an appeal for reinstatement of lost credit is made. When students leave school and return to school for any reason, the House Office will note the time on the student's pass back to class so it can be recorded properly in accordance with the 20 percent tardy designation. Please see Student Handbook, [www.trumbullps.org](http://www.trumbullps.org), under "Trumbull High School" for procedures.

### **F. Late Arrival/Early Release (grades 11 and 12 only)**

Students with assigned study halls either Time Slot 1, 7 or 8 will be excused from school with parental permission and completion of necessary documentation. This privilege may be revoked as a result of disciplinary action or academic need/failure.

### **G. Early Dismissal**

If an early dismissal request is for an excused/verified absence from an instructional period or periods, the student must submit the written request from a parent/guardian to the House Office on or before the day of the request. If the note is not received, the absence will be considered a class cut or an unexcused/unverified absence.

### **H. Loss of Credit/Appeals**

The parent/guardian will receive contact in writing from school staff upon a student's crossing of each attendance threshold. The first contact will be made upon 12 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 5 absences in a half-credit course, or 4 absences in a quarter-credit course. The second contact will be made upon 16 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 8 absences in a half-credit course, or 6 absences in a quarter-credit course. The third contact will be made when a student reaches the limit of 20 absences in a full-year (1-credit) course, 11 absences in a half-credit course, or 8 absences in a quarter-credit course, which will result in a loss of credit for the course. Please note that, for purposes of this policy, physical education courses will be viewed as half-credit courses.

Once a student loses credit in a course, he/she will have the opportunity to provide evidence demonstrating that his/her excessive absences were medically or socially (documented religious holidays, death in family, legal, etc.) necessary. Whatever is submitted at this time should be supplemental to any documents that were required as per the current policy of reporting absences within a 48-hour time period after the student has returned from his/her absence. The completed appeals packet must be received no later than the last class day of the semester in which credit has been lost, unless otherwise notified.

There will be one non-House-specific Appeals Board for the school. The Appeals Board will have five members made up of two general education teachers, one special education teacher, a school counselor, and an administrator. This Appeals Board will review submitted documents, make a decision, and rule on cases. If class cuts (unexcused/unverified) amount to more than 50% of a student's total absences, he/she will automatically be disqualified for credit recovery. The Appeals Board will make its decision based on the data provided at the time the absences occurred and any pertinent supplemental documents. The Appeals Board will review pertinent student academic and attendance records maintained by the District before making a decision. It is the responsibility of the student/parent/guardian to provide, in

writing, a convincing level of evidence to prove there was an overwhelming reason for the great majority of the student's absences.

If at least three of the five Appeals Board members vote in favor of credit recovery, the student and parent/guardian will receive a phone call and a letter mailed to the home informing them of the Appeals Board's affirmative decision. If at least three of the five Appeals Board members vote against credit recovery, the student and parent/guardian will receive a phone call and a letter mailed to the home informing them of the Appeals Board's negative decision.

In rare cases of extenuating circumstances, an affirmative decision to grant credit recovery may be made by the student's House Principal after discussion with the THS Principal. The House Principal will document his/her decision in writing in a letter mailed to the home.

I. Forms to support the implementation of this policy will be developed and reviewed periodically by the Assistant Superintendent or his/her designee.

## II. Regulations for Determining Truancy

Solely for determining truancy, in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes, "absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence, or disciplinary absence, as those terms are defined by the Connecticut State Board of Education. For purposes of this definition, a student is considered to be "in attendance" if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., a field trip), for at least half of the school day.

The Trumbull Board of Education recognizes the importance of early intervention for students exhibiting truancy behavior, and for that purpose distinguishes between "excused absences" and unexcused absences" as follows:

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 or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes and meets the following criteria:

- For absences one (1) through nine (9) in a school year, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation;
- For the tenth (10th) absence and all absences thereafter in a school year, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons: student illness if verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional; 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 appearance if supported by appropriate additional documentation; the lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends; or extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by District administrators in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines.

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A student, age five to eighteen, inclusive, whose parent/guardian is an active duty member of the armed forces, as defined in Connecticut General Statutes § 27-103, 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. In the case of excused absences pursuant to this paragraph, such student and parent/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 such student prior to his/her return to school from such period of excused absence.

A student's absence from school shall be considered "unexcused" if it does not meet the criteria to be considered an "excused" absence and if it is not the result of school or District disciplinary action.

Based on the definitions above, a "truant" is a child age five to eighteen, inclusive, who has four (4) unexcused absences in one month, or ten (10) unexcused absences in one year.

Based on the definitions above, a "chronically absent" student is a child who has accumulated a total number of absences at any time during a school year that is equal to or greater than ten percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at the school during the school year.

1. The school principal and/or his/her designee will hold a meeting with the parent/guardian of a child who is a "truant" or a "chronically absent" student as defined above. Such meeting will be held no later than ten (10) school days after the student's designation as "truant" or "chronically absent" based upon the definitions articulated earlier in this policy.
2. Whenever a student enrolled in school fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no indication has been received by school personnel that the student's parent/guardian (or other person having control of the student) is aware of the child's absence, a reasonable effort to notify, by the automated calling system, the parent (or such other person) shall be made by the school personnel. Such notice shall include a warning that two (2) unexcused absences from school in a month or five (5) unexcused absences in a school year may result in a complaint filed with the Superior Court pursuant to section 46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs. Persons who, in good faith, give or fail to give notice shall be immune from any liability, civil or criminal, which might otherwise be incurred or imposed and shall have the same immunity with respect to any judicial proceeding which results from such notice or failure to give such notice.
3. An IEP Team meeting will be convened to determine the appropriateness of a special education evaluation of the truant or chronically absent student. In addition, there will be consideration of referral to the school's Early Intervention Team (EIT).
4. The school system will coordinate services with community agencies and referrals of truant and chronically absent students to agencies providing child and family services.



5. The Superintendent may file a written complaint with the Superior Court, Juvenile Matters for a Family with Service Needs when a student is truant or chronically absent. If a parent/guardian having control of a child who is truant or chronically absent fails to attend the meeting with the school principal and/or his/her designee, the school principal shall notify the Superintendent, who shall file, no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after such failure to attend such meeting, a written complaint with the Superior Court pursuant to section 46b-149 alleging the belief that the acts or omissions of the child are such that the child's family is a family with service needs.

### III. Chronic Absenteeism Prevention and Intervention

1. The Board, in compliance with State statute, requires the establishment of attendance review teams when chronic absenteeism rates in the District or at individual schools in the District meet the following circumstances:
  - a) A team for the District must be established when the District chronic absenteeism rate is 10 percent or higher.
  - b) A team for a school must be established when the school chronic absenteeism rate is 15 percent or higher.
  - c) A team for either the District or each school must be established when (i) more than one school in the District has a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher; or (b) the District has a District chronic absenteeism rate of 10 percent or higher and one or more schools in the District have a school chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or higher.
2. Each attendance review team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for such truants and chronically absent children, and making any additional recommendations for such truants and chronically absent children and their parents/guardians. Each established attendance review team shall meet at least monthly.
3. The District shall utilize the chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan developed by the State Department of Education.
4. The District shall annually report to the Connecticut State Department of Education data pertaining to truant and chronically absent children in schools under its jurisdiction.