

**CRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CRANFORD, NEW JERSEY**

POLICY: ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND EXCUSES

The Board of Education believes that the regular attendance of students in each class and in school in general is critical to its educational mission. The district shall endeavor to achieve the ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). Continuity of instruction is an essential element in student performance and allows students the greatest opportunity to succeed at meeting the learning standards set forth in the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The Superintendent of Schools shall oversee the development of effective strategies that maximize student attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities and strive to:

- A. Encourage good attendance;
- B. Discourage unexcused absences;
- C. Identify patterns of absence, tardiness and early departures from school; and
- D. Intervene to prevent and correct problems with attendance.

Attendance

A day in session for purposes of attendance shall be a day on which the school is open and students are under the guidance and direction of a teacher or teachers engaged in the teaching process. Days on which school is closed for such reasons as holidays, teachers' institutes and inclement weather shall not be considered as days in session.

A school day shall consist of not less than four hours of actual instruction. One continuous session of 2 1/2 hours may be considered as a full day in kindergarten.

A day of attendance shall be one in which a student is present for the full day under the guidance and direction of a teacher while school is in session. Where there are two sessions in a day due to overcrowding, either session of four hours or more, exclusive of lunch or recess, shall be the equivalent of a full day's attendance.

A student shall be recorded as absent in the school register when not in attendance at a session, except students excused due to religious holidays who shall be recorded as excused. An excused absence for any reason other than due to religious holidays shall not be counted as a day of attendance in the school register.

The mere presence of a student at roll call shall not be regarded as sufficient attendance for compliance with law (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3). In a school which is in session during both the morning and the afternoon a student shall be present at least one hour during both the morning and the afternoon to be recorded as present for the full day. In a school that is in session during either the morning or the afternoon, a student shall be present at least two hours in the session in order to be recorded as present for the full day.

A student not present in school because of his or her participation in an approved school activity, such as a field trip, meeting, cooperative education assignment, or athletic competition will be considered to be in attendance.

Excused and Unexcused Absence

- A. An absence shall be considered an “excused absence” for the purpose of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance, for the following reasons:
1. The student’s illness;
 2. Requirements of a student’s individual health care plan;
 3. A death or critical illness in the student’s immediate family, or of others with permission of principal;
 4. Quarantine;
 5. Observance of the student’s religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education;
 6. The student’s suspension from school;
 7. Requirements of the student’s individualized education program (IEP);
 8. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
 9. The student’s required attendance in court;
 10. Interviews with an admissions officer of an educational institution;
 11. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day;
 12. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal.

Attendance need not always be within the school facilities. A student will be considered to be in attendance if he/she is present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board. The Board shall consider each student assigned to a program of independent study, with parent/guardian permission, to be in regular attendance for that program, provided that he/she is under the guidance of a staff member so assigned, reports daily or weekly, as prescribed, to such staff member the place in which he/she is conducting his/her study, and regularly demonstrates progress toward the objectives of his/her course of study.

B. Personal Pursuits Leave-Cranford High School

Students with lifelong, serious pursuits in athletics, music, the arts, and other areas deemed appropriate by the district may request a leave of absence from school during which they would not attend regular classes at CHS but instead pursue a personalized program of instruction approved and under the oversight of CHS while day-to-day instruction for the period of leave be provided by tutors provided by the parent or guardian or the program for passion pursuit in which the student participates during this period.

Such leaves would be limited to 1 marking period only. Parents could request an extension for an additional marking period that the district may at its sole discretion grant.

Because certain CHS courses may not be eligible for pursuit outside of CHS (such as, for illustration purposes only: Advanced Placement courses, electives requiring materials to which the student must have access to achieve curricular goals, such as a photography dark room, a pottery wheel, a kiln, or an auto shop, etc.), a student seeking a Personal Pursuits Leave would have to anticipate the leave at the time course selections are made but no later than April of the current school year for the following school year (i.e., the year that will include the leave)

If the leave cannot be reasonably anticipated; and an academic schedule finalized by CHS based on the student’s choices of courses results in courses not eligible for pursuit outside of CHS as noted in the immediately preceding paragraph, then the student would have to withdraw from enrollment, take his/her leave, and then re-enroll in CHS upon the conclusion of the leave.

Before a Personal Pursuits Leave would be considered, two threshold questions must be answered satisfactorily:

1. Is the pursuit a “passion”? That is, has it been pursued by the student on a lifelong basis? Has the student achieved a level of mastery in the pursuit that now permits him or her to consider more demanding challenges? If so, what are those challenges?
2. Does the tutoring or other instructional program to be pursued meet the rigors of the CHS academic program with the sole exception of attending classes for the period of the leave?

Note: Parents are required to submit in a timely manner appropriate documentation of both “passion” and “instruction” for evaluation and determination by the CHS administration, with the parent or guardian being able to appeal to the Superintendent of Schools.

To meet “the rigors of the CHS academic program,” the tutoring or instructional program must meet the following, subject to appropriate documentation:

- a) The student must meet with an instructor for an established amount of time to achieve mastery of each course’s subject matter for the period of the leave.
- b) An appropriate number and variety of assessments administered by the tutor or instructional program, consistent with the general description of CHS’s assessment format and content, including types of assessments administered, their frequency, grading expectations and rubrics, etc., leading to a marking period grade for the student.
- c) Classes proposed to be taken in a virtual or long-distance learning format must be appropriate to the courses in the student’s current academic program and meet CHS’s expectations for that course. Certain courses, such as (for illustration purposes only) electives requiring materials to which the student must have access to achieve curricular goals, such as a photography dark room, a pottery wheel, a kiln, or an auto shop may not be appropriate for virtual or long-distance learning. Consistent with the note at #2 in this section, CHS administrative/academic officials are the sole arbiters of the occasions where virtual learning shall and shall not be accepted as an appropriate program during a student’s leave.

CHS shall provide to the tutor or instructional program:

- a) Curriculum, texts, and other appropriate materials (e.g., workbooks, etc.)
- b) Specific topics to be covered and a good sense of pacing of topics coverage
- c) A general description of CHS’s assessment format and content, including types of assessments administered, their frequency, grading expectations and rubrics, etc.
- d) If the student pursuing a passion is a special education student:
 - i. Information about necessary modifications and accommodations, as needed
 - ii. Examples of modified exams based on that student’s disability

The tutor or instructional program shall provide to CHS:

- a) A signed statement using a form provided by CHS that documents the minutes of instruction in each core and elective subject per week of instruction. Receipt of this signed statement shall be credited as “attendance” by the student for purposes of CHS’s attendance policy.
- b) Copies of each graded assessment administered to the student during the period of instruction
- c) A marking period grade for the student (if the period of passion pursuit equaled a marking period) or a summary grade for the student (if the period is less than a marking period), along with copies of each graded assessment as provided for in b) immediately above.
- d) A final written summary of proficiencies achieved and areas of improvement based on the period of instruction
- e) Regular e-mail or other communication with each student’s teacher and that subject area supervisor during the period of instruction. “Regular” shall mean at least once every 2 weeks during the leave.

- C. An "unexcused absence" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed in "Excused Absences" above. An unexcused absence may be counted toward retention, truancy, loss of course credit, ineligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance. Absence is expressly not excused for any of the following purposes (this list is intended to be illustrative and is not inclusive):
1. Family travel;
 2. Performance of household or babysitting duties; and
 3. Other daytime activities unrelated to the school program.
 4. Leaving school without permission when school is still in session;
 5. Leaving class because of illness and not reporting to the school nurse as directed; or
 6. Being present in school but absent from class without approval. Such absence from class is a "class cut."

Tardiness

The orderly conduct of class activity depends upon the prompt and precise beginning of the program. Tardiness hinders the proper conduct of school activity. Students are expected to arrive to school and class on time. A student who is tardy to any class will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in Board policy 5131 (Conduct and Discipline) and the student code of conduct. Consequences for accumulated occurrences of tardiness may include detention, an unexcused school day absence, and loss of credit.

Attendance Requirements and Instruction

In order for the Board of Education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each student, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and students is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of students from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and may limit the ability of students to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully. The following rules shall apply for student absences:

- A. A student shall be considered absent from class for tardiness in excess of one half of the total class period.
- B. A student shall be considered absent from school for participation in less than 4 instructional hours during the school day.

A student must be in attendance for 166 or more school days to be considered as having successfully completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which he/she is assigned.

A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon recommendation of a Review Committee, appointed by him/her, and consisting of representative staff, including student service personnel and classroom teachers.

In recommending the granting of a waiver of this attendance requirement, the Review Committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess of the 14 days in full year course and 7 days in a semester course. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian. The absence of documented parent/guardian notes, doctor's notes, and other records that verify that an absence was excused according to board policy, shall be considered unexcused. Unexcused absences shall count toward truancy and may be subject to loss of grade or course credit toward promotion or graduation and disciplinary actions according to the code of student conduct. Notes from parents/guardians shall be considered but the district may require additional documentation such as doctor's notes or other official records to verify the note.

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a student will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence.

Procedures for Unexcused Absences

When a student fails to report to class or school accumulating up to four unexcused absences, the district shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, through contact with the student's parents;
- C. Identify in consultation with the student's parents needed action designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any, and to have the student return to school and maintain regular attendance;
- D. Follow all procedures according to law and Board policy 5142 (Safety) and 5141.4 (Student Abuse and Neglect) if a potential missing or abused student situation is detected;
- E. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

If contact through these means is unsuccessful the district may follow up with another attempt to contact the parents/guardians or send a letter reporting the unexcused absence and requesting the parent/guardian to contact the school.

Procedures for Persistent Absences

If the pattern of unexcused absences continues and five to nine unexcused absences are accumulated the district shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parents to address patterns of unexcused absences previously;
- C. Evaluate the appropriateness of action taken as identified in consultation with the student's parents;
- D. Develop an action plan to establish outcomes based upon the student's patterns of unexcused absences and to specify the interventions for supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance, which may include any or all of the following:
 1. Refer or consult with the building's Intervention and referral services team;
 2. Consult testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
 3. Consider an alternate educational placement;
 4. Make a referral or coordinate with a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
 5. Refer student and/or parent/guardian to a court program as follows:
 - a. When the unexcused absences are determined to be violations of the compulsory education law and Board policy;
 - b. When there is evidence of a juvenile-family crisis the student may be referred to Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part. "Juvenile-family crisis" pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-22(g) means behavior, conduct or a condition of a juvenile, parent or guardian or other

- family member which presents or results in a threat to well being and safety of the juvenile, serious conflict regarding the juvenile's conduct, unauthorized absence from home, pattern of unauthorized absence from school, or human trafficking;
- 6. The implementation of all required procedures for potential abuse, neglect or missing student including cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
- 7. Engage the student's family

Discipline

All discipline regarding the attendance of students shall be consistent with the Board Policy 5131, (Conduct and Discipline), and the Code of Student Conduct. Consequences for absences may include:

- A. Students may be denied participation in co-curricular activities if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
- B. Students may be denied participation in athletic competition, athletic practices, performing arts rehearsals and performing arts events if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
- C. Loss of partial or total course credit;
- D. Detention or suspension.

No student who is absent from school for observance of a religious holiday or other excused absence shall be disciplined and/or deprived of any award or of eligibility for or opportunity to compete for any award because of the absence.

Students, parents and guardians shall be notified of disciplinary actions for attendance including loss of credit and may appeal this determination through the procedure as set forth in Board policy 5145.6 (Student Grievance Procedure).

Truancy

For cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more, the student between the ages of six and 16 is truant, pursuant to law. The district shall:

- A. Make a determination regarding the need for a court referral for the truancy.
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of the mandatory referral;
- C. Continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
- D. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
- E. Follow all procedures required by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School and other applicable state and federal statutes as follows:
 - 1. An attendance officer who finds a truant student, shall take the student and deliver him/her to the parent/guardian or other person having charge and control of the student, or to the teacher of the school which such student is lawfully required to attend;
 - 2. The attendance officer shall examine into all violations and shall warn the student, the parent/guardian or other person having charge and control of the student of the consequences of the violation if persisted in;
 - 3. The attendance officer shall notify the parent/guardian or other person having charge and control of the student in writing, to cause the student to attend school within five days from the date on which notice is served, and regularly thereafter;

4. The attendance officer shall have full police power to enforce the provisions of this article and may arrest without warrant any vagrant student or habitual truant or any student who is habitually incorrigible or who is vicious or immoral in conduct or illegally absent from school;
5. The sheriff and his officers and all police officers and constables shall assist the attendance officer in the performance of their duties;
6. A parent, guardian or other person having charge and control of a student between the ages of 6 and 16 years, who shall fail to comply with any of the provisions of this article relating to his duties, shall be deemed to be a disorderly person and shall be subject to a fine of not more than \$ 25.00 for a first offense and not more than \$ 100.00 for each subsequent offense, in the discretion of the court. In any such proceeding, the summons issuing therein, or in special circumstances a warrant, shall be directed to the alleged disorderly person and the student.

Unexcused Absences for Students in Special Education

The attendance guidelines, discipline and remedial measures set forth in this policy shall apply to classified students where appropriate and in accordance with the student's:

- A. Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- B. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- C. Procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14;
- D. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities as required by law;
- E. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan and individualized emergency healthcare plan.

District Sending and Receiving Relationships

The receiving school shall report attendance problems to the sending district responsible for the student. Following five or more cumulative unexcused absences school officials shall proceed in accordance with the sending district's Board attendance policy and procedure.

Regular Release of Students Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations that may justify release of certain students from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the student's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the student.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The Board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a student be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day.

As agent responsible for the education of the student of this district, the Board shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the student's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours
- B. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan and individualized emergency health care plan
- C. Requirements of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- D. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities
- E. Medical disability
- F. Motor vehicle driver's test
- G. Interview for college entrance or employment
- H. Family emergency
- I. Court appearance
- J. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration

No student in grades kindergarten through eight shall be permitted to leave the school before the close of the school day unless he/she is met in the school office by his/her parent/guardian or a person authorized by the parent/guardian to act in his/her behalf.

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed shall be cumulative and may affect course credit.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each student. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the Board of any change in the student's legal custodian. The principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the student is released only to the proper legal custodian.

Potentially Missing Students

- A. If daily attendance records indicate a student is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact parent/guardian;
- B. If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance officer shall investigate;
- C. If the attendance officer cannot locate the student, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the appropriate local authorities;
- D. If a student who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

Marking Missing Student's School Record

Whenever the Superintendent of Schools receives notice from the Missing Persons Unit that a student has been reported missing, he/she shall mark the student's records in such a way that whenever a copy of or information regarding the record is requested, district personnel will be aware that the record is that of a missing student. If a copy of a marked school record is requested, the Superintendent of Schools shall supply the record to the requestor without alerting him/her to the fact that the record has been marked, according to provisions in code and statute on accessing student records (see Policy 5125, "Student Records"). After the Superintendent of Schools has complied with the request for copies of records or information, he/she shall immediately report the inquiry or any knowledge as to the whereabouts of the missing student to the Missing Persons Unit.

Regulations

The Superintendent of Schools shall develop procedures for the attendance of students that include:

- A. The expectations and consequences regarding students' timely arrival of students to school and classes;
- B. The expectations and consequences regarding attendance at school and classes;
- C. A definition of unexcused absence that counts toward truancy that is consistent with the definition of a school day;
- D. School staff responses for unexcused absences for:
 - 1. Cumulative absences up to four;
 - 2. Cumulative absences of between five and nine;
 - 3. Cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more; and
 - 4. Referral to court.

Dissemination and Implementation

The Superintendent of Schools shall take all necessary steps to publicize this policy and may include these rules in district handbooks and/or on the district website. Parents/Guardians and students shall be notified annually of the attendance policy.

The Superintendent of Schools shall ensure that the rules for this policy are applied consistently and uniformly, and that all disciplinary sanctions are carried out with necessary due process.

The Board shall review the attendance policy on a regular basis.

<u>Legal References:</u>	<p>N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.9 N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14, -15, -16 N.J.S.A. 18A:36-19a N.J.S.A. 18A:36-24 through -26 N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 N.J.S.A. 18A:38-26 N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27 N.J.S.A. 18A:38-31 N.J.S.A. 18A:38-32 N.J.S.A. 18A:40-7 N.J.S.A. 18A:40-8</p> <p>N.J.S.A. 18A:40-9 N.J.S.A. 18A:40-10 N.J.S.A. 18A:40-11 N.J.S.A. 18A:40-12 N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20 N.J.S.A. 52:17B-9.8a through -9.8c N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1 <u>et seq.</u> See particularly: N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6 N.J.A.C. 6A:30-1.1 <u>et seq.</u> N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1 <u>et seq.</u> N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3 N.J.A.C. 8:61-2.1</p>	<p>General mandatory powers and duties Pupil promotion and remediation; policies and procedures Religious holidays; absence of pupils on; effect Newly enrolled students; records and identification</p> <p>Missing children; legislative findings and declarations Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions Days when attendance required; exceptions Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties District and county vocational school attendance officers Exclusion of pupils who are ill Exclusion of pupils whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness Failure of parent to remove cause for exclusion; penalty Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease Exclusion of pupils having communicable tuberculosis Closing schools during epidemic Powers of board (county vocational schools)</p> <p>Marking of missing child's school record Graduation requirements Programs to support student development</p> <p>Attendance Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts Student Attendance and Accounting Student attendance Attendance at school by students or adults with HIV infection</p>
--------------------------	---	--

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794 (Board may impose penalties for unjustifiable tardiness, improper absences from classes, truancy, and other unexcused absences)

Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851 (Board may adopt policy to deny students course credit after a student was late or absent a specified number of times.)

C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)(board acted unreasonably in applying its attendance policy to student with excessive absences due to chronic medical illness)

Student Attendance Policies and Procedures Compliance Checklist, New Jersey Department of Education
www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/behavior/attendance/checklist.pdf

2014-2015 List of Religious Holidays Permitting Pupil Absence From School
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/holidays1415.htm>

Jerkins v. Anderson, 191, N.J. (2007)

Possible

<u>Cross References:</u>	*5020	Role of parents/guardians
	*5111	Admission
	*5114	Suspension and expulsion
	*5124	Reporting to parents/guardians
	*5125	Pupil records
	*5141.2	Illness
	*5141.4	Child abuse and neglect
	*5142	Pupil safety
	*6146	Graduation requirements
	*6146.2	Promotion/retention
	*6147	Standards of proficiency
	*6147.1	Evaluation of individual student performance
	*6154	Homework/makeup work
	*6171.4	Special education
	*6173	Home instruction

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.

Adopted: May 15, 1989
Revised: October 18, 1993
Revised: March 23, 1998
Revised: October 22, 2007
Revised: March 30, 2009
Revised: November 8, 2010
Revised: August 24, 2015
Revised: July 24, 2017