

FAQ: Northfield Community School Attendance Policy 5113 Revised 10/23/17

Q1. WHY IS MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE CALCULATED AND TRACKED AT NCS?

- A. Northfield Community School calculates and tracks a student's daily attendance and period attendance for the purposes 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. The student attendance policy is adopted pursuant to the authority and responsibility delegated to the Northfield Community School Board of Education by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 and 26 and N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3.

Q2. WHAT IS DAILY ATTENDANCE?

- A. Daily attendance is the frequency of days that a student attended school. Students are recorded as absent, present or excused for purposes of daily attendance to satisfy State reporting requirements.

Q3. WHAT COUNTS AS AN "EXCUSED ABSENCE" FROM NCS?

- A. There are only five (5) **State recognized** reasons an absence will be considered excused: (1) Religious observance, (2) A college visit (only for students in grades 11 and 12), (3) "Take Our Children to Work Day", (4) Participation in observance of Veterans Day (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-13.2) or district board of election membership activities (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-33) and (5) Closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school. All other absences, which are not Excused Absences according to the above, shall be considered "Unexcused Absences" regardless of the reason or documentation.

Q4. WHAT COUNTS AS AN "UNEXCUSED ABSENCE" FROM NCS?

- A. All absences, other than the five (5) **State recognized** excused absences listed above, are considered unexcused absences for state attendance purposes. Unexcused absences are recorded in two (2) ways 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. Unexcused absences are recorded as either (1) "**verified-unexcused**" or (2) "**unverified-unexcused**."

Q5. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A "VERIFIED-UNEXCUSED" AND AN "UNVERIFIED-UNEXCUSED" ABSENCE?

- A. "**Verified-unexcused**" absences require documentation submitted to the school's main office explaining why your child was absent within ten (10) school days from the date of the absence. These absences **do not** count towards truancy, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit and violations of the school Code of Conduct for attendance. Unexcused absences will be recorded as "verified" insofar that the documentation submitted to the school's main office within ten (10) school days indicates the following:
- Student illness (Doctor note is required for all illness absences of three (3) or more consecutive days);
 - A death or critical illness in the student's immediate family, or of others with permission of the Principal;

- c. Quarantine;
- d. Court appearance;
- e. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day;
- f. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan;
- g. Student suspension from school;
- h. Requirements of a student's individualized education plan;
- i. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
- j. Such good cause as may be acceptable to Administration.

The district reserves the right, under certain circumstances, to consider an absence unverified-unexcused even though documentation has been provided within ten (10) school days.

- B. "Unverified-unexcused" absences** do not meet the requirements outlined for "excused" or "verified-unexcused." These absences **do** count towards 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. Examples of unexcused absences that will be recorded as "unverified" include, but are not limited to:
- a. Student illness - parent/guardian provided no documentation or the documentation was not submitted within ten (10) school days;
 - b. Family travel;
 - c. Performance of household or babysitting duties;
 - d. Other daytime activities unrelated to the school program;
 - e. Leaving school without permission while school is still in session;
 - f. Other absences deemed unverified-unexcused by the Administration.

Q6. WHEN SHOULD A PARENT/GUARDIAN REPORT AND VERIFY THEIR CHILD'S ABSENCE?

- A. Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school prior to 9:00 A.M. when a child will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence. Every absence (excused or unexcused) must be documented in the school's main office no later than ten (10) school days following the student's return to school. Any excused absence or verified-unexcused absence that is not documented within the ten (10) school days will be considered an unverified-unexcused absence.

Q7. WHAT IS THE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT FOR MY CHILD?

- A. The state of New Jersey considers any student who is absent for 10% or more of the total number of school days for any reason, excluding the five (5) State recognized excused absences, as being "Chronically Absent" (e.g. 18 absences over 180 school days equals Chronically Absent). A student must be in attendance for 162 or more school days in order to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements to which he/she is assigned.

Q8. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS PERSISTENTLY ABSENT?

Persistently absent students have accumulated between five (5) and nine (9) unexcused absences (verified and unverified). For students that have accumulated nine (9) absences (verified and unverified), 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 previous patterns of unexcused absences;
- 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 (I&RS) team;
 - 2. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
 - 3. Consider an alternate educational placement;
 - 4. Make a referral to or coordinate with a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
 - 5. Refer to the court or 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);
 - 6. Follow all procedures according to law and Board policy 5142 Student Safety 5141.4 Child Abuse and Neglect if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected;
 - 7. Engage the student's family.
- E. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Q9. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD IS TRUANT?

Pursuant to State law, truant students are students between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) who have cumulative unexcused absences of ten (10) or more (verified and/or unverified). The District shall:

- A. Make a determination regarding the need for a court referral for the truancy;
- B. Continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
- C. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
- D. 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, including a court referral.

Q10. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD HAS EXCESSIVE DAILY ABSENCES?

Any student who misses ten (10) full school days consecutively (includes verified-unexcused and/or unverified-unexcused absences) and does not appear on homebound instruction, and/or is not medically verified incapacitated shall be considered truant and will be issued a written notification to report back to school within five (5) school days. Failure to do so will result in the following:

- 1. Parents/guardians of students under the compulsory school age (below 16 years of age) may be presented with a formal written notice to cause the child to attend school (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-29). Failure to comply with the provision of the law may cause the parent to be deemed a disorderly person and the parent be subject to a fine (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-29).