

*Northwest Local School
District
Attendance Policy Handbook
2021-2022*

The attendance policy of the district should encourage school attendance and provide administrators with the tools to enforce such attendance as required by Ohio law.

Summary of Procedures

Regular attendance by all students is very important. The Superintendent shall develop procedures governing student absences and excuses as part of the attendance handbook. The Board will adopt the attendance handbook on an annual basis. The student absences and excuses procedures will be Board policy for the year of adoption.

Acceptance of notes from doctors and other documentation of absence

Legitimate verification of absence from a third party source (doctor's notes, etc.) will be accepted up to **5 work days after the absence**. In the case of absences of multiple days, notification must be received by the fifth work day after the student returns to school. When there is an extended period of absence, contact should be maintained between the home and school. More than one note from a medical professional may be necessary in this situation. If a student/parent does not provide third party documentation, he/she may be referred for truancy and/or failure of classes.

Changes due to House Bill 410

Regular school attendance is required by Ohio Law and is a key factor for student success in school. House Bill 410, of the Ohio Legislature, mandates that students attend school every day that school is in session. It is important to establish good attendance patterns early in a child's school experience. Custodial parents/guardians will be notified when a student incurs either of the following:

Excessive Absences

38 or more hours in any month (All Absences)

65 or more hours in a year (All Absences)

Habitual Truancy

30 or more consecutive hours (Unexcused ONLY)

42 or more hours in any month (Unexcused ONLY)

72 or more hours in a year (Unexcused ONLY)

Please keep in mind, only third-party and/or medically excused absence hours do not count toward unexcused absences (court notice, doctor note for example).

House Bill 410 Required Action Steps

1. Any student who has received this letter under the Excessive Absence guidelines, all further absences for the remainder of the school year must be verified by third party documentation to be counted as excused absences. **A parent note or phone call is not sufficient for an absence to be excused.** Your son/daughter must bring a statement from a third party, such as a medical professional, or the absence will be **unexcused**. The documentation must be received **within five working days of the absence**.
2. Any student who has received this letter that is under the Habitual Truancy guidelines or reach Habitually Truant criteria, will have an Absence Intervention Team convened within 14 days of this letter and the student will be referred to this group. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be invited to attend the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the causes for absenteeism, and work together with the team to develop interventions that can be implemented at school and home to help address the absences and improve attendance in school.
3. The school and parent(s)/guardian(s) will work to develop a positive working relationship with open lines of communication to address the truancy, and will continue to actively monitor attendance from the date the plan is put into effect for the student.
4. If at any time since the implementation of this plan the student again incurs any of the triggering events described above for Habitual Truancy, the school will then file a complaint with the Hamilton County Juvenile Court and bring charges against the parent and/or student for truancy. If however, after 60 days of attempting this Absence Intervention Plan, the student does not incur any of the triggering events, but shows little progress in improving his/her attendance, the school can then also file a complaint with the Hamilton County Juvenile Court and bring charges against the parent and/or student for truancy.

Absence Intervention Plan Team

When required, the absence intervention team must consist of, at minimum, two representatives from the school or district (at least one must know the child) chosen by the superintendent or chief administrator of the school, and the child's parent or legal custodian, unless the parent or legal custodian refuses to cooperate.

The team must be assigned to the habitually truant student within ten (10) school days after the triggering absence. The team is required to develop an intervention plan tailored to the student within fourteen (14) school days after the team is assigned. The school district must make reasonable efforts to provide a written copy of the plan to the student's parent or legal custodian within seven (7) school days after the plan is developed. The intervention plan must explain that the attendance officer is required to file a complaint with the juvenile court no later than 61 days after the implementation of the plan if the student fails to comply with the plan. If the plan is not being successful, truancy charges may be filed earlier.

College Visits

Two college visits in the junior year and two college visits in the senior year will be marked as excused with proper documentation from the respective college institution.

Reporting Requirements

The school district must report to the Department of Education, as soon as practicable, when:

- An excessive absence letter is sent
- A student becomes habitually truant
- A habitually truant student violates a court order; and
- A habitually truant student is provided an absence intervention plan.

Further, the school district must make three good-faith attempts to entice meaningful parental or custodial involvement in the intervention team and, if the parent or custodian fails to become involved, the school district must investigate whether failure to respond triggers mandatory reporting to the child protective services.

Leave and return

When students have an early dismissal but return to school the same day they should not be coded as absent. However, the leaving and returning time should be recorded by office personnel.

Lice

The policy on lice will be 3 days of excused absence per occurrence. Additional absences for the same occurrence are unexcused. Health assistants and school nurses will work with building administrators regarding exceptions to this policy.

Parent phone calls and notes

Either parent phone calls to the attendance line, hand written or emailed notes from parents will be coded as "Absent, Parent Notification." Parents are encouraged to call the attendance line or the school office the day of the absence. If parents do not call in and no contact can be made with the home, the students are marked as unexcused. If a student brings a note from parents the following day(s), the absences can be changed to "Absent, Parent Notification" Absent hours coded as "Absent, Parent Notification" do count towards both excessive absence criteria and possibly habitually truant criteria. Please refer to HB 410 information to see Ohio criteria required for action steps.

Perfect attendance

There are different procedures being used to determine perfect attendance awards for students. This is a school-based decision.

Tardiness

Tardiness will be standardized to be 90 minutes or less from the start of the student day. Any absence beyond the 90 minutes is marked ½ day absent. Regardless of coding, the actual hours missed are tabulated.

Two-hour delay

On a two-hour delay schedule, morning preschool and kindergarten students should not be marked absent. The standard 90 minute tardy/early dismissal guideline applies.

Questions about Implementation of the Procedures

In order to decrease the number of missing children, the Superintendent shall develop procedures governing the identification and notification of missing and absent children as part of the attendance handbook. The Board will adopt the attendance handbook on an annual basis. The missing and absent student identification and notification procedures will be Board policy for the year of adoption.

What do I do when a parent calls in an absence?

Check the list of acceptable reasons for an absence from school (see page 10). If the reason given is on the list code the student's attendance correctly in Progress Book as Absence, Parent Notification (APN). Please refer to HB 410 information to see criteria marks for action steps.

Truancy – Procedures Governing Truancy

The Board endeavors to reduce truancy through cooperation with parents, diligence in investigating the causes of absence, and use of strict guidelines in regard to tardiness and unexcused absence.

When is a student in danger of failing a class?

A student's absences count toward class failures. Absence for suspension, home/hospital placements, weather, attendance at school functions/activities, and ones in which appropriate third party documentation has been received will not apply.

Full Year Courses: Students who accumulate more than eighteen days or eighteen class periods of absences during an entire year, whether consecutive or not, will receive an automatic failure in each course unless a building administrator grants the student a waiver.

Semester Courses: Students who accumulate more than nine days or nine class periods of absences during a semester, whether consecutive or not, will receive an automatic failure in each course unless a building administrator grants the student a waiver.

9-Week Courses: Students who accumulate more than four days or four class periods of absences during a nine-week course, whether consecutive or not, will receive an automatic failure unless a building administrator grants the student a waiver.

How are students referred for truancy to unofficial or official court?

Students may be referred to Colerain Township Diversionary Court or official court downtown with an attendance referral form that must be provided to the attendance officer. The referral must be signed by an administrator.

Student Attendance Accounting

The primary responsibility for supervision of a student resides with his/her parent(s). The staff provides as much assistance as is reasonable to parents with this responsibility.

Parents must notify the school on the day a student is absent unless previous notification has been given in accordance with school procedure for excused absences. The parents will be notified by our Automated Attendance Telephone notification system when the student is absent from school. Parents or other responsible persons shall provide the school with their current home and/or work telephone numbers, home addresses and any emergency telephone numbers. Absences that include parental notification (call-in or note) will be coded as APN (Absent Parent Notification). These

days do count towards excessive absence and possibly habitually truant criteria. Please refer to HB 410 information to see Ohio criteria required for action steps.

The Board shall designate the Superintendent to develop informational programs for students, parents and community members relative to the subject of missing children.

Attendance Policy for Military Connected Students

The Northwest Local School District believes that with the many challenges for military families, there is a need for flexibility related to school attendance policies. Therefore, Northwest Local Schools will grant up to five days of excused absences for military connected students whose parents are experiencing a deployment. The conditions under which the Northwest Local Schools may approve excused absences are:

1. The absence is pre approved; {written notice of deployment sent to the school by parent and school fax a copy to Enrollment Office}
2. The student is in good standing; GPA of 2.0 or greater
3. The student has a prior record of good attendance; {not involved in an open truancy case}
4. Missed assignments are completed and turned in within the school's allotted time period; {if student uses 1-5 days of excused absences, student should be allowed the same number of days to make up assignments}
5. The absence is not during standardized testing dates

No Shows

After the first two weeks of the school year, students who cannot be accounted for must be referred to the Colerain Township attendance officer. If the attendance officer can obtain a new address for a student, a call is made to the school where the student is residing to confirm enrollment in the school. Contact the Enrollment Supervisor in charge of attendance for more information on how to handle "no shows".

State Audits of Student Attendance

Periodically the Ohio Department of Education or the State Auditor will conduct audits of student attendance records. It is important that records be kept of all information. These records must be kept for five years. This information would include:

- Parents notes
- A written record of telephone messages
- A written record of voice mail messages
- A written record of phone calls to parents
- Third party documents
- Daily attendance reports

Student Absences and Excuses

Regular attendance by all students is very important. In many cases, irregular attendance is the major reason for poor school work; therefore, all students are urged to make appointments, do personal errands, etc., outside of school hours.

It is important to note that excused absences are included in the excessive absence criteria but do not count towards the habitually truant criteria per the Ohio Department of Education. Reasons for which students may be excused when third-party documentation is provided include, but are not limited to:

1. personal illness of the student;
2. illness in the student's family;
3. needed at home to perform necessary work directly and exclusively for parents or legal guardians (applies to students over 14 years of age only);
4. death in the family;

5. quarantine for contagious disease;
6. religious reasons;
7. traveling out of state to attend a Board-approved enrichment activity or extracurricular activity (applies to absences of up to four days); or
8. or as determined by the Superintendent.

Each student who is absent must immediately, upon return to school, make arrangements with his/her teacher(s) to make up work missed. Students who are absent from school for reasons not permitted by State law may, or may not, be permitted to make up work. Each case is considered on its merits by the principal and the respective teacher(s). Students are requested to bring a note to school after each absence explaining the reason for the absence or tardiness.

The Board does not believe that students should be excused from school for vacations or other non-emergency trips out of the District. The responsibility for such absences resides with the parent(s), and they must not expect any work missed by their child to be retaught by the teacher. If the school is notified in advance of such a trip, reasonable efforts are made to prepare a general list of assignments for the student to do while he/she is absent.

The Board authorizes the Superintendent to establish a hearing and notification procedure for the purpose of denying a student's driving privileges if that student of compulsory school age has been absent without legitimate excuse for more than 10 consecutive days or a total of at least 15 days during a semester or term.

Acceptable Third Party Documentation

The following items will be accepted as third party documentation. All third party documentation must be provided within 5 school days of the student absence. In the case of absence of multiple days, notification must be received by the fifth school day after the student returns to school. In the case of prolonged absence, contact should be maintained between the home and school. More than one note from a medical professional may be necessary in this case.

1. Personal illness – documentation from a licensed medical professional
2. Illness in family – documentation from a licensed medical professional
3. Quarantine of home – notification from the Board of Health
4. Death of a relative – obituary or memorial card from the funeral
5. Home duties due to absences of parents or guardians – verification of this excuse should be obtained from a building administrator or counselor. This should be used rarely by families and not for regular child care of family members.
6. Observance of a religious holiday–knowledge by administrator of the existence of a holiday on this date
7. College visits (maximum of 2 days, for seniors only)–documentation from college provided after return from visit
8. Court appearances – subpoena or receipt from court
9. Medical and dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school hours –verification of attendance at appointment from a medical professional
10. Driver's examination which cannot be scheduled outside school hours–verification of attendance by Bureau of Motor Vehicles employee
11. Educational/psychological testing – documentation of attendance by a licensed medical professional
12. Farm work (maximum of 3 days) – verification from a building administrator
13. Other reasons approved by a school administrator – the only district-wide approval in this area is ½ day excused absence for Reds Opening Day. If a student attends this he/she will need to provide a ticket stub as verification.

Attendance Coding

The importance of proper coding cannot be stressed enough. Each code translates into an EMIS (Education Management Information System) code that is electronically transferred to the Ohio Department of Education. EMIS attendance data is reported on the annual school and district report cards distributed by Ohio Department of Education.

Alternate school assignment	AL
Absence with Documentation– Documentation received from a legitimate third party	DO
Half day with Third Party Documentation	DH
Tardy with Third Party Documentation	DT
Leave and Return with Third Party Documentation	DOLR
Early Dismissal with Third Party Documentation	DOED
Medical Absence with Documentation - from doctor, dentist, hospital or other Third Party Medical Provider	MDO
Medical Half day with Third Party Medical Provider	MDH
Medical Tardy with Third Party Medical Provider	MDT
Medical Leave and Return with Third Party Medical Provider	MLR
Medical Early Dismissal with Third Party Medical Provider	MED
Emergency removal– with administrator’s approval only	ER
Absent, Parent Notification– Parent notification and the cause is from the list of acceptable reasons	APN
Half day With Parent Notification	PNH
Tardy With Parent Notification	PNT
Leave and Return With Parent Notification	PNLR
Early Dismissal With Parent Notification	PNED
Home/hospital– Educational programming such as home instruction or in a hospital or organization with educational program or in alternative program such as R.A.S./Blended Learning Option	HO
Student is receiving educational services, including access to specially designed instruction, in an alternate setting by a certified teacher	PAL
School function/activity– used by some schools for field trips or activities sponsored by the school.	SF
Suspension(out of school)	S
Suspension/Expulsion Overturned– change the days Student missed due to Suspension to DO	DO
Residency Exclusion - excluded from attending for lack of proof of an in district residence	ReEx
Unexcused– unacceptable reason or no parent notification	UN
Half day unexcused	UH
Tardy unexcused	UT
Leave and Return unexcused	UNLR
Early Dismissal unexcused	UNED
Weather Excused– use determined by Administrator	WE
Half day due to weather– use determined by Administrator	WH
Tardy due to weather– use determined by Administrator	WT

Notes:

- A **tardy** is defined as arriving 90 minutes or less after the start of the student day. (Students should not be counted tardy when the tardiness is due to the late arrival of school buses).
- **Early dismissal** – leaving school 90 minutes or less before the end of the student day.
- A **half day** is defined as missing more than 90 minutes of the school day.
- **School Functions** may also include: Take Your Child to Work Day, job shadowing, college visits, visits to other schools, testing for college entrance, PSAT, SAT. The school function activities (other than field trips) require documentation from employers, colleges, schools or other appropriate agencies to be coded as school functions.
- There is no code for **expulsion**. Regular education students who are expelled should be withdrawn from school. Those students will be re-entered into the system upon their return from expulsion. Special education students who are expelled from school should be placed on home instruction (HO). For students attending RAS (suspension school) in lieu of expulsion, the code is entered from the Student Services office.

APPENDIX

A-- Sample Attendance Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Regular school attendance is critical for your student to experience their full potential of academic growth and achievement. Our own district research clearly shows that when students miss a concerning amount of time from the classroom, there are drastic drops in their growth rate on academic diagnostic tests including the state of Ohio required testing.

You are receiving this letter because we are concerned about the number of days/classes your student has missed. This letter is a reflection of the culmination of missed school time which includes third-party or medically waived, called in-excused, or unexcused missed hours of school.

Each school year certainly has its own set of challenges and we understand that illness often has an impact on student attendance. We also understand that there are other factors that may have influence on your student's regular attendance at school. We wish to partner with you to help your student grow and achieve at their highest level. If you are facing challenges that prevent your student from attending school, please reach out to us as soon as possible so as to minimize the loss of academic growth.

Your Student's Current Attendance Totals:

_____ total hours (Excused and Unexcused) in _____ (Month)-- Includes any missed school time.

_____ total hours (Excused and Unexcused) (Year To Date)-- Includes any missed school time.

_____ unexcused hours this school year to date. If applicable, _____ hours in _____ (Month) consecutively.

Please keep in mind, only third-party and/or medically excused hours do not count toward unexcused absences (ie. doctor note).

There are some types of absences for which the state allows and does not count towards the progressive steps in the state attendance plan. It is critical that medical, court, or funeral excuse notices are turned in to the office if applicable within five days of the absence. If you believe any of the information above is inaccurate, please reach out to the school attendance office as soon as possible.

It is also important for you to know that NWLSD does maintain a force failure policy, which may be enforced by the principal/designee for the following: students who miss four class periods in a quarter course, nine class periods in a semester course, or 18 class periods in a full year course.

The state of Ohio has recently become even more specific about the expectations around student attendance and the steps schools must take to monitor and assist families with challenges to avoid missed school time. Attached are specific details regarding the steps Ohio schools must take to help improve student attendance under the requirements of House Bill 410. Please know that we are looking to partner with you so that your student may achieve at his/her highest level.

Sincerely,

A--Sample Attendance Letter (Pg. 2)
Ohio House Bill 410 Details and Requirements

Regular school attendance is required by Ohio Law and is a key factor for student success in school. House Bill 410, of the Ohio Legislature, mandates that students attend school every day that school is in session. It is important to establish good attendance patterns early in a child's school experience. Custodial parents/guardians will be notified when a student incurs either of the following:

Excessive Absences

38 or more hours in any month (Excused & Unexcused)

65 or more hours in a year (Excused & Unexcused)

Habitual Truancy

30 or more consecutive hours (Unexcused ONLY)

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Please keep in mind, only third-party and/or medically excused absence hours do not count toward unexcused absences (court notice, doctor note for example).

House Bill 410 Required Action Steps

1. Any student who has received this letter under the Excessive Absence guidelines, all further absences for the remainder of the school year must be verified by third party documentation to be counted as excused absences. A parent note or phone call is not sufficient for an absence to be excused. Your son/daughter must bring a statement from a third party, such as a medical professional, or the absence will be **unexcused**. The documentation must be received **within five working days of the absence**.
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3. The school and parent(s)/guardian(s) will work to develop a positive working relationship with open lines of communication to address the truancy, and will continue to actively monitor attendance from the date the plan is put into effect for the student.
4. If at any time since the implementation of this plan the student again incurs any of the triggering events described above for Habitual Truancy, the school will then file a complaint with the Hamilton County Juvenile Court and bring charges against the parent and/or student for truancy. If however, after 60 days of attempting this Absence Intervention Plan, the student does not incur any of the triggering events, but shows little progress in improving his/her attendance, the school can then also file a complaint with the Hamilton County Juvenile Court and bring charges against the parent and/or student for truancy.

Parents/Students are reminded that the district does maintain a force failure policy, which may be enforced by the principal/designee for the following: students who miss four class periods in a quarter course, nine class periods in a semester course or 18 class periods in a full year course.

Please review this information with your child. If you have any questions, please call the school attendance office (phone #). NWLSD would be happy to assist you in any way we can.