

THE AMHERST, PELHAM & AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Serving Amherst, Pelham and the Amherst-Pelham Region

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Amherst, Pelham and Amherst-Pelham Regional Schools are firmly committed to the safety, well-being and academic achievement of all students, district practices and guidelines are developed based on this commitment. We want to ensure that all parents and guardians are aware of the district attendance guidelines so we can work together as partners to best support our students.

There is a direct correlation between school attendance and academic success. Students who attend school every day, on time, learn more and are more successful than students who do not. When students are absent from school, they miss out on carefully planned units of instruction, active learning experiences and class participation. Students who are frequently absent are more likely to fall behind and more likely to drop out of school.

Massachusetts state law dictates that children between the ages of six and 16 attend school regularly and names parents and guardians as responsible to ensure such attendance. It is essential that families teach their children, in a developmentally appropriate way, the importance of school attendance. Since attendance patterns are formed early in a child's educational life, it is important to help children develop good attendance habits from the time they enter school. While it is the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time, it is the district's responsibility to determine what type of absences can be considered excused based on state law. Because of this responsibility, there are very few reasons for an absence to be excused in our district. "Excusable" absences include illness, religious observance, mandated court appearance, or serious family crisis such as an accident or death.

School staff will work diligently to ensure all families and students understand the attendance policies and guidelines in the district. With this in mind, families should be aware of the following:

- Parents/guardians must report absences to the school; however, it is up to the school to determine whether the absence can be excused.
- Parents/guardians are required to report absences on the same day they occur and prior to the start of the school day. If an absence is not reported as outlined, a parent note will be required upon the student's return to school.
- Students should arrive at school on time because tardiness cannot be excused. Three tardy arrivals equal one unexcused absence. All students arriving after the start of school must report to the main office before proceeding to their classroom.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted by the school for unreported absences, and the absence will be recorded as unexcused.
- If a student is absent for three days or more, a note explaining the reason for the absence is required upon the student's return.

- For reference, all attendance guidelines are outlined in the Student Handbook.
- Parents/guardians should feel free to ask for clarification about any of the attendance guidelines. Each school will identify the person who can field these inquiries, but if in doubt, inquire in the main office.

Our district is committed to academic achievement for all students, which is why we want every child to attend school on time, every day in order to take advantage of the educational experiences our teachers plan for all learners. We look forward to working with you to make this possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marta Guevara
Director of Student & Family Engagement