

## Attendance Policy

The Malden Public Schools seeks to promote excellent school attendance. The Massachusetts General Laws state that parents/caregivers are responsible for their student's attendance (M.G.L. C 76§2, C 76§4), and that absences may not exceed 7 full-day session or 14 half-day sessions in any 6 month period (M.G.L. C 76§1). The school system employs an attendance officer to support parents/caregivers and encourage regular compliance with the state statute. parents/caregivers and other authorized concerned individuals may contact their school Principal, who will contact the attendance officer regarding school attendance issues.

### Supervisor of Attendance

The Malden Public Schools Supervisor of Attendance coordinates with school-based staff to investigate attendance problems primarily outside the school environment. They work in the community, visit homes, and counsel students and their parents/caregivers. When necessary, the Supervisors of Attendance file and represent chronic cases in the City of Malden Juvenile Court.

Supervisor of attendance has regular meetings with attendance school teams to support students and caregivers to ensure that students are attending school.

### Truancy

Under Massachusetts General Laws Per G.L. c. 119, § 21, a Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) is a student aged 6-18 who is, in part, habitually truant; meaning the student is 'willfully' failing to attend school for more than eight (8) school days in a quarter without a lawful and reasonable excuse from attendance. Students must attend school. Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from school. Administrators will notify parents/caregivers and/or initiate court involvement for students habitually late or absent.

### CRA

A student Requiring Assistance case is where parents/caregivers, or school officials ask the court to help supervise a student. Supervisor of Attendance (SOA), working with school staff, makes decisions on future action based on investigative findings, prior attendance patterns, and correspondence with parents/caregivers and the school. One option is court referral. The decision to file a CRA is made by the SOA based on the finding and results only after exhausting all other possible courses of action. The CRA will only be filed if the student has accumulated 8 or more unexcused absences in a single quarter and the school has documented intervention steps in ASPEN.

### Absences & Excused Absences

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. We recognize that parents/caregivers of students attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their students attend school regularly, in accordance with state law. Students who have 10 or more consecutive absences may be unenrolled from the Malden Public School. In these instances the school will contact the caregiver to support attendance concerns prior to discharging the students from the district.

All students must be in school at least 3.5 hours in order for them to be counted as present.

*Therefore, students may receive excused absences from school attendance only for the following reasons:*

- Illness, injury or quarantine that prevents the student from attending school upon receipt of doctor's note.

- Bereavement or serious illness in the parents/caregivers.
- Inclement weather is to endanger the health of the student.
- Observance of major religious holidays.
- A significant personal or parents/caregivers crisis that prevents the student from attending school as approved by school admin.
- Court appearances: Students must present evidence of the required appearance.
- Medical or psychological tests during the school day that cannot be scheduled after school or on the weekend. Students must show evidence (such as a note from the health center) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
- Other extraordinary situations approved by the school administration.
- Disability-related absences.
- A student may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

### **How Parents/Caregivers Can Help:**

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of a character. parents/caregivers can help their students by not allowing them to miss school needlessly. *Here are some steps to take in the event of an absence:*

- Parents/caregivers are asked to provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a student. *This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.*
- To ensure continuity and maximum advantage of the school program, students must attend school each day and arrive on time. *parents/caregivers are expected to telephone the school office prior to 8:00AM to report that their student will be absent on any given day.*
- In addition, a written excuse from the parent/caregiver must be presented the day any pupil returns to school from an absence. Any situation resulting in an absence that may have serious extenuating circumstances must be brought to the attention of the Principal, by the parent/caregiver, as soon as those circumstances are apparent. Absent notes are given to the student's homeroom teacher, who then sends the note to the office. *The notes should include the following: The date(s) of the absence, the student's full name, the reason for the absence, and the student's homeroom number.* Notes are necessary even when a parent/caregiver has spoken to the Principal, assistant Principal, or the main office about the absence.
- *If a student is sick and cannot attend school, the caregiver must notify the school and consult with the Principal or school nurse to determine next steps.*

*Any student who is absent over three (3) consecutive days must report to the main office with their note and may be asked to see the school nurse.* In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

A call to the school nurses or school is not an automatic excuse for absence . Caregivers must send the student with a note to the principal. For PreK-12 all notes must go to the schools' administrative assistants. For Grades 9-12 caregivers can also email the notes to [attendanceMHS@maldenps.org](mailto:attendanceMHS@maldenps.org)

### **Excused Absences Policy**

Malden Public Schools is preparing students for Career and Life readiness. Therefore, students are expected to attend school everyday.

*Schools are only allowed to excuse absences that are a result of personal illness, significant life stressors (e.g., death of a family member), attending a medical appointment that cannot be made outside of school hours, participating in a legal proceeding, serving a suspension, attending educational opportunities that have been pre-approved by the school.*

## Unexcused Absences Policy

*All other absences (e.g., repetitive absences due to illness that are not documented by medical professionals, family vacations, non-emergency family situations) are required to be marked as unexcused.*

Three (3) unexcused absences per quarter will be allowed if students present a valid parent/caregiver or medical letter explaining the absence. *Four (4) or more unexcused absences in a quarter will require the teacher to give the student a 59 for that quarter. A lower grade will be given if the student's actual average is lower than 59.*

Students can use the "Attendance Appeals Process"

## Vacations

Attending school every day is vital to students' academic success. Parents/caregivers and students should make every possible effort to plan vacations during the regular scheduled school vacations listed in the annual academic calendar. State policy requires Malden Public Schools to mark skipped days as unexcused absences. *Vacations other than regularly scheduled school vacations are unexcused absences.*

*"Skipping School" is considered truancy as well as an unexcused absence. Missing school days directly before and after school breaks due to extended vacations is not permitted.*

School based staff cannot excuse any vacation time from students' records and teachers are not permitted to give out make-up work for such instances.

## Student Absence Notification Program

Families will be notified through an automatic email notification when their child is absent or tardy, as well as when their child is approaching a threshold of excessive absences. These calls will be made mid-morning each day.

Each Principal will notify a student's parent/caregiver by telephone within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/caregiver has not informed the school of the absence. Each Principal or designee shall notify and meet with any student, and the parent/caregiver who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The purpose of this meeting is to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/caregiver. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

## Home & Hospital Tutoring

When a physician determines that a student is physically unable to attend school for more than 14 consecutive days, or who can be anticipated to accumulate more than 14 absences in a school year, the student should be offered tutoring at home or in the hospital. The referral should be made to the Home & Hospital Instruction program when a Physician Statement is received by the school nurse. The attendance for students participating in the Home & Hospital Instruction Program should be

marked “constructively present” (CP). The school must document in writing all offers of home tutoring and acceptances or rejections by the parent or caregiver. If a parent/caregiver rejects home tutoring or other appropriate academic services for a student who will be absent for an extended period, a record of that rejection must be retained in the student’s file and a 51A should be filed with the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

When it is deemed by the student’s attending physician or pediatrician that he or she will be confined to a home or hospital setting for more than 60 days, the student will then be evaluated by the Special Education Department under state regulation 603 CMR 28.04(4).

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## **Vandalism Policy**

The School Committee recognizes that acts of vandalism committed against public and private property are costly and require positive action through educational programs. Consequently, the Committee will support various programs aimed at reducing the amount of vandalism.

The School Committee expects that all individuals who use and enter Malden Public Schools buildings and premises will respect, appreciate and value the work that staff do every single day to keep buildings/premises safe and welcoming for the students, staff, and the community.

Every citizen of the city, staff members, students, and members of the police department are urged by the School Committee to cooperate in reporting any incidents of vandalism to property under control of the school department, and the name(s) of the person or persons believed to be responsible. Each employee will report to the Principal of the school every incident of vandalism known to them and, if known, the names of those responsible.

The Superintendent is authorized to sign a criminal complaint and to press the charges against perpetrators of vandalism against school property, and is further authorized to delegate, as they see fit, authority to sign such complaints and to press charges. Parents/guardians and students will be made aware of the legal implications involved. Reimbursement will be sought for all or part of any damages.

### **Definition:**

Vandalism is defined as the willful or malicious destruction or damaging of private or public property in a manner that defaces, mars, or otherwise adds a physical blemish that diminishes the property's value. Vandalism includes graffiti, and defacing and/or destroying school equipment, buildings, or property in any way (classrooms, offices, shared areas, playgrounds, etc). Graffiti that includes hate speech or hate symbols can be considered a hate crime.

Vandalism includes willful damage to district technology including electronic hardware and software. Vandalism includes unauthorized modifications, installing or removing programs, tampering with restricted files, changing settings on any computer or technology resource that should only be changed by an administrator.

The Malden Public Schools assigns a laptop to each student in grades 1-12. Each laptop must be returned to the school at the end of the school year in good working condition within the usual usage period. If a laptop or any other electronic devices assigned to the student is vandalized or intentionally damaged, parents/caregivers will incur a financial penalty to cover the full cost of replacement. The district does not have insurance or the means to replace or cover the technology damage.