



## Attendance Policy

Attendance is one of the primary indicators of a child's level of success in school. In acknowledgement of this, New Hampshire State Law (RSA 193:1) requires "that every child between six and sixteen years of age [shall] attend the public school at the time the public schools are in session." The law (RSA 193:2) further states that "every person having custody of a child shall cause the child to attend such a school during all the time the public schools are in session."

We are a learning environment built on collaboration and group work. Frequent unexcused absences, frequent tardiness and frequent early dismissals are very disruptive to the individual student and their classmates. Student absences can also impact school funding. As a result, excessive unexcused absences could result in the retraction of your child's enrollment privilege as defined by RFCS policy and supported in New Hampshire law.

**Absences:** in accordance with Ed 306.18 C (6) A school half-day shall consist of at least 3 hours of class time, and 2 school half-days can be counted as a regular school day. Ten half-days of truancy constitutes habitual truancy according to NH RSA 189:35-a

**Unexcused Absences:** Absences not defined as excused, are considered unexcused. Excessive unexcused absences shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Examples of unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- Absences as a result of incomplete immunization records;
- Family vacations outside of established school calendar;
- Non-medical appointments unauthorized by Administration;
- Lack of transportation;
- Leaving school grounds without permission during normal school hours, and;
- Absences not determined to be excused according to the guidelines below.

**Excused Absences:** Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below which may require documentation. Excessive excused absences shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Examples of excused absences include but are not limited to:

- School-sponsored activities with administrative approval;
- Classes missed due to Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan;
- Extreme weather conditions as determined by the Administration;
- Illness of student or illness of an immediate family member;
- Death in the family;
- Religious holidays of the student's own faith;
- Required court appearance or subpoena;
- Scheduled medical/dental appointments if such cannot be scheduled outside of normal school hours;
- Chronic illness registered with the Head of School and verified by a physician's note;
- Students suspended externally; these students are entitled to make-up work

We strongly encourage families to plan their vacations during the scheduled school vacation weeks. However, if your child is going to miss school for a family vacation, please notify the classroom teacher as soon as possible to make arrangements for learning opportunities that can take place while away. You will also need to fill out an Extended Leave form. The prior arrangement of learning opportunities while on vacation and evidence of completion of the work will be used by the Head of School to determine if an absence is marked as excused or unexcused.

### **Tardiness**

**Unexcused Tardiness:** Tardiness is defined as a student not being in the classroom when the class is scheduled to begin.

Excessive tardiness shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance.

Tardiness to class without documentation shall be considered unexcused. Every third unexcused tardy shall constitute one half-day unexcused absence.

Head of School shall have the discretion to excuse tardiness for extenuating circumstances.

### **Dismissals**

Dismissal is defined as removal from school prior to the conclusion of the school day.

Excessive dismissal shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance.

Dismissal from class without documentation shall be considered unexcused. Every third unexcused dismissal from class shall constitute a one half-day unexcused absence from that class.

Head of School shall have the discretion to excuse dismissals for extenuating circumstances.

## **Attendance Plan**

Attendance Plans provide proactive interventions designed to improve a student's attendance rate. The Attendance Plan shall include proactive interventions to benefit the student as well as the consequences if the interventions fail to improve attendance issues. Such consequences may include, but not be limited to referral to the Attendance Officer, the Department of Health and Human Services and or loss of enrollment privilege.

Meetings to develop Attendance Plans shall be convened by the Head of School with the parent, student and teacher immediately following a student's third (3rd) full-day unexcused absence from school.

## **Attendance Policy Regulations**

The regulations described below shall be followed in the Robert Frost Charter School to implement the School's Attendance Policy and to enforce and comply with the New Hampshire laws relative to attendance and truancy. We recognize that at times the school community needs to work together to ensure that students are in school and learning and so are outlined the following responsibilities, policy and regulations.

### **Responsibilities**

#### **A. The Role of the Student**

- To attend school each day
- To be on time
- To cooperatively participate in all classes
- To provide documentation of the reason for an absence upon return to school
- To request make-up work for an absence and arrange to complete it upon return to school within <sup>[ ]</sup><sub>SEP</sub> a reasonable and agreed upon amount of time
- To request counseling and home instruction when needed

#### **B. The Role of the Teachers**

- Teachers shall keep accurate records of all absences and tardiness. Names of students not present are submitted to the office daily
- Teachers shall emphasize the importance of punctuality by beginning class promptly with meaningful instruction
- Teachers shall discuss attendance issues with students as they arise, contact parents/guardians according to the Attendance Plan, and inform the Head of School if attendance does not improve or if contact with parent/guardian yields a lack of results at improving attendance
- Teachers shall encourage and model exemplary behavior and attendance

### C. The Role of the Family

- To avoid interruptions of the academic year and plan medical appointments and vacations at times that will not require students to be out of school
- To show support regarding district policies and state law by expecting regular school attendance for their child(ren)'s success
- To ensure that their child(ren) attend school on time and daily
- To notify the school on the day of absence if their child(ren) will be absent
- To submit written documentation of their child(ren)'s absence on the day they return to school
- The role of the parent/guardian is further summarized by NH Compulsory School Attendance Law, RSA 193:1 (Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil)

Should attendance be identified as an issue, families shall participate in the development of the Attendance Plan and Interventions to assist their child in improving school attendance

### D. The Role of the Administration

- The Head of School shall enforce and uphold the NH Compulsory Education Law
- The Head of School shall notify students and families of school board policies and school rules regarding attendance through student handbooks
- The Head of School shall identify students with attendance issues and work cooperatively with families, students, and teachers to improve attendance by facilitating the development of an Attendance Plan.
- The Head of School shall maintain an earnest and persistent effort to improve student attendance through complete implementation of each student's Attendance Plan
- The Head of School shall encourage and model exemplary behavior and attendance

## **Attendance Plan**

The Robert Frost Charter School shall implement Attendance Plans that ensure communication between students, parents/guardians, representatives from social service agencies and the school staff. It is highly desirable to establish this communication prior to disciplinary measures or withdrawal/suspension actions by the school.

- Attendance Plans shall allow for proactive interventions that will benefit students.
- If a student develops a pattern of absences the Head of School shall place a phone call or write a letter to the parents/guardians and arrange conferences to address the absences and create an Attendance Plan for the student.
- The Head of School shall convene a meeting to develop the Attendance Plan with the parent, student and the appropriate youth serving agencies (e.g. Department of Health and Human Services) if necessary, immediately following the student's third (3rd) full-day unexcused absence from school.

## **Interventions**

The Attendance Plan shall include components which monitor, mentor and tutor the student. In order to facilitate a successful Attendance Plan for a student who is regularly absent, the pursuit of interventions is required. These interventions may be one of the following or any other intervention acceptable to the School and parties involved:

- An Alternative Education Plan
- Modification of student schedule
- Referral to outside agencies
- The filing of a truancy or educational neglect petition with the Court

## **Protocol for Excessive Dismissals**

Every 3rd dismissal from class shall constitute one half-day unexcused absence.

## **Protocol for Excessive Tardiness**

Every third tardy to class shall constitute one half-day unexcused absence.

## **Protocol for Excessive Absences**

3<sup>rd</sup> full-day unexcused absences:

1. The Head of School shall contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing regarding the unexcused absences.
2. This correspondence shall provide the parents with documentation outlining the unexcused absences and a copy of the Robert Frost Charter School Policy and Regulations regarding attendance.
3. The Head of School shall confirm parent/guardian receipt of the correspondence.
4. At this level the family may appeal the unexcused absences by providing necessary documentation. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

4th full-day unexcused absences:

1. The Head of School shall contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing regarding the continued unexcused absences.
2. This correspondence shall provide the parents with documentation outlining the unexcused absences and a copy of the Robert Frost Charter School Policy and Regulations regarding attendance and a date, time and location for a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s), student, school staff and applicable youth serving agencies to develop an Attendance Plan.
3. The Head of School shall confirm parent receipt of this correspondence.
4. A meeting shall be convened to develop the Attendance Plan. If parents are not able to attend the meeting the draft of the plan shall be sent to parents.
5. At this level the parent or student may appeal the unexcused absences by providing necessary documentation<sup>[L]<sub>SEP</sub></sup>

5 full-day unexcused absences:

1. The Head of School shall contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing regarding the continued unexcused absences.
2. This correspondence shall provide the parents with documentation outlining the unexcused absences and a copy of the Robert Frost Charter School Policy and Regulations regarding attendance. The written correspondence shall advise the parent that, should the absences continue one or more of the following shall take place:
  - A referral to the truant officer, court, diversion program, Office of Youth Services, Department of Health and Human Services.
  - Filing of a truancy or educational neglect petition with the Court.<sup>[L]<sub>SEP</sub></sup>
  - Designation of student as “not in good standing” signifying the loss of enrollment privilege for next year.
3. At this level the parent or student may appeal the unexcused absences by providing the necessary documentation

The process to determine your child's status is as follows:

1. Parents/Guardians will meet with the Head of School and provide any documentation for extenuating circumstances for repeated absences (doctor's note, etc.). Sporting events or other organized activities that are not school-sponsored will not be considered extenuating circumstances.
2. Head of School will review extended leave paperwork submitted and documentation of student work during the extended leave period.

Using this information, the Head of School will determine the status of the student. Determination as a student in good standing will be maintained according to these guidelines:

- Absences do not exceed 15 full days *and* documentation for extenuating circumstances is provided for 65% or more of absences.
- or
- No fewer than 75% of absences occurred during a single segment of consecutive days for which an extended leave form was submitted with at least 2 weeks prior notice and all assigned work was completed to the satisfaction of the student's teacher.