

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The committee does recognize that parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities. One is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused **temporarily** from school attendance for the following reasons:

- Illness or quarantine.
- For a school sanctioned activity.
- Bereavement or serious illness in family.
- Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child.
- For observance of major religious holidays.
- For all Legal Issues (documentation from the court required)

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the school administrator or designee.

It is the policy of the Fairhaven Public Schools and a law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that every child between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school.

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day school work is an important factor in the shaping of his/her character. Parents can help their children by refusing to allow them to miss school needlessly.

Accordingly, parents will provide an explanation either in writing, by phone, or in person for the absence, tardiness or an early dismissal of a child. Failure to comply with this regulation could result in disciplinary action.

In instances of chronic or irregular absences reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement, certifying such absences to be justifiable.

Student Absence Notification Program (Chapter 76, Section 1B)

Each principal or designee will notify the parent or guardian within three (3) days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

Each principal or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, 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 meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the principal and/or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. Those involved may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies.

Dropout Prevention (Chapter 76, Section 18)

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of the unexcused absences. The

notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least two (2) dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the superintendent or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate that the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed fourteen (14) days. The Superintendent or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent or designee has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian.

The Superintendent or designee shall convene a team of school staff to participate in the exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

Make-up Opportunities:

All children enrolled in the Fairhaven Public School system shall be given the opportunity to make-up work missed.

SOURCE: MASC

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:1A, 76:1B, 76:18, 76:2; 76:16

Adopted: February 27, 2008

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