

MANCHESTER ESSEX REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Manchester Memorial Elementary
43 Lincoln Street
Manchester, MA 01944
978.526.1908
John Willis, Principal



Essex Elementary
12 Story Street
Essex, MA 01929
978.768.7324
Kim Provost, Principal

MEMORANDUM

To: Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent

From: John Willis, Manchester Memorial Principal
Kim Provost, Essex Elementary Principal

Date: May 24, 2024

Re: MERSD Elementary Handbook Change Requests (2024-25 School Year)

The following revision to the 2024-25 MERSD Elementary School Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook is being requested. In addition to the information provided below, a detailed summary of the requested change is attached. Note that the requested addition is in yellow, and the requested deletion is in red.

Revision to Attendance Language: Revision to the handbook attendance policy is being requested in order to align school handbook language across the district with current DESE guidance. In addition to this alignment of language, the purpose of adopting and aligning this language is to better communicate attendance law and specific school expectations with students and families.

Thank you for taking the time to review this request. We look forward to discussing them in more detail at the June 4, 2024 School Committee meeting.

CONTACTS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

MERSD Central Office	(978) 526-4919
Food Service Director	(978) 526-2049
Essex Elementary School	(978) 768-7324
EES Absence Line	(978) 768-7324
EES Fax	(978) 768-2502
Memorial Elementary School	(978) 526-1908
MMES Absence Line	(978) 526-1909
MMES Fax	(978) 526-2060

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please note that the behavioral expectations outlined in this handbook also apply while riding the school bus and on field trips.

SCHOOL HOURS

The school day runs from 8:25 AM to 2:55 PM. Students may arrive to school no earlier than 8:05 AM.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Excellent attendance and school success go hand in hand. Although we recognize that illness and emergency may cause a student to be absent periodically, we hope these situations are limited. The more often a student is absent—even if the absence is unavoidable—the more difficult it is for the student to stay engaged and academically successful. It is important to understand that all missed instructional time negatively impacts student outcomes. Families play an essential role in ensuring that their child attends school consistently and on time every day. If families face specific attendance challenges, our staff is available to partner with families to find appropriate support. It is vital to work as partners to support our students' success.

What does MA State law say about attendance?

Massachusetts' compulsory school attendance law (G.L. c. 76, § 1) requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school every day. General Laws chapter 76 sets out many aspects of compulsory attendance, including the responsibilities of parents/guardians and school committees.

Parents/guardians responsibilities:

- ensure that a child in their care attends school. G.L. c. 76, §2.
- call the school at a designated number at a designated time as established by the school committee to report a child's absence and reason for it. G.L. c. 76, §§1A, 1B.

Schools keep parents informed of their child's attendance through:

- Phone calls
- Holding a parent/guardian or student meeting
- Attendance letters

Following state guidelines, attendance will be taken daily for each student. Student attendance is a factor in school and district accountability. This means that all schools and families need to work together to minimize chronic absenteeism.

CHRONIC ABSENCES

Students who miss 10% of days enrolled regardless of whether such absences are documented or undocumented (e.g., 18 days absent when enrolled for 180 school days) are considered chronically absent. National research shows that chronic absenteeism erodes the academic and social skills students need to succeed in school.

Additionally, The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has determined that a student absent from school *for any reason* for 10% or more of the school year is classified as "chronically absent" in the DESE Accountability System. This classification can have a negative impact on schools' accountability rating and should be avoided if possible. To help students avoid this benchmark, families will be contacted when students have 5 absences, 10 absences, and 15 absences (cumulative). A meeting with the Principal may be requested and, in some cases, required.

DOCUMENTED ABSENCES

The state's compulsory school attendance law (G.L. c. 76, § 1) applies to all absences from school, even if they are considered "documented" at the school level. Certain absences can be considered "documented" at the school level if they are due to:

- Medical
- Bereavement
- Religious
- College Visit

In order for an absence to be marked "documented," students/guardians must provide documentation to the main office for each day they are absent from school. This documentation must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, and the parent/guardian's signature. If the absence is anticipated, (for example, in the case of a college visit), parents/guardians should notify the school in advance of the absence. Teachers are not required to provide schoolwork in advance of planned absences.

ABSENCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Students and families should communicate regularly with teachers and plan to make-up for missed time and school work. In the case of an unanticipated absence, students are expected to confer with teachers and establish a mutually acceptable timeframe for the completion of missed assignments, class work and tests.

Working together we can help our students have strong attendance. Your voice is critical in reaffirming to your student your expectation that they go to school every day and how important that habit is to ensuring they graduate high school on time. Here are some resources created by Attendance Works that you can use to help support your student:

[For Elementary School Families \(English\)](#)

[Other Languages Linked \(Elementary & Secondary\)](#)

ATTENDANCE

In accordance with Chapter 76, Section 2 of the General Laws of Massachusetts, absences greater than eight (8) days in a marking period are considered excessive. If a child is repeatedly absent or tardy, the principal may take necessary action. This may include a meeting with administration, or in some cases filing appropriate documentation with the Juvenile Court.

Additionally, The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has determined that a student absent from school for any reason for 10% or more of the school year (18 days in a typical year/situation) is classified as "chronically absent" in the DESE Accountability system. This classification can have a negative impact on schools' accountability rating and should be avoided if at all possible. To avoid students hitting this DESE benchmark, letters will be mailed home when students have 5 unexcused absences, 10 cumulative (excused and unexcused) absences, and 15 cumulative (excused and unexcused) absences. At the

10- and 15-day mark, a meeting with the Principal will be requested and, in some cases, required.

Parents are asked to report their child's absence to school before 8:30 AM. At 9:30 AM, the office will perform "safe-to-school calls" to families with absent children who have not called the school. In this way, we ensure that all children are accounted for on a daily basis.

In order for a student to be marked present they must be in attendance for more than 50% of the school day. Students must attend school (at least half of the day) in order to be eligible to participate in after-school activities that are school sponsored.

TARDINESS

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time. Students are tardy if they arrive after the 8:25 AM bell, which signals the beginning of instructional time. Upon arrival, tardy students must report to the office to sign in and to pick up a tardy slip. The tardy slip will admit them to class. Starting the day out of synch with the routines of peers can be a challenge for young children. Please seek out support from the school should challenges at home result in habitual tardiness.

VISITORS

All parents or visitors must report to the office upon entering the building. A daily log is provided for parents and visitors to sign in/out. All visitors must be asked to wear a visitor badge.

EARLY RELEASE DAYS

Early release dates and times are scheduled throughout the year for professional development activities and parent conferences. A school calendar is sent home at the beginning of the school year listing the dates.

DISMISSALS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Parents should notify the classroom teacher or main office (in writing) in the morning if a child is to be dismissed early. Parents must report to the office to sign out their child when they arrive at the dismissal time. Students will be called to the office once the parent has arrived to pick up their child.

VACATIONS

The school discourages vacations during times other than the regular school scheduled vacation periods. However, the schools recognize that special situations may arise. If students will be out of school for an extended period of time, parents need to notify the principal and classroom teacher(s) in writing and explain the reason for the absence. Teachers will not provide work in advance. Students will be expected to make up missed work at home once they return to school.

MEMORANDUM

To: Pamela Beaudoin, Superintendent

From: Joanne Maino, Principal

Date: May 22, 2024

Re: Middle School Handbook Change Requests (2024-25 School Year)

The following revisions to the 2023-24 Manchester-Essex Regional Middle School Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook are being requested. In addition to the information provided below, a detailed summary of requested changes is attached. Note that requested additions are in yellow, and requested deletions are in red.

1. Revisions to Attendance Language: Revisions to the handbook attendance policy is being requested in order to align school handbook language across the district with current DESE guidance. In addition to this alignment of language, the purpose of adopting and aligning this language is to better communicate attendance law and specific school expectations with students and families. Please note that existing handbook language that is addressed in the state guidance will be deleted (as shown in red).

Thank you for taking the time to review these requests. I look forward to discussing them in more detail and answering any questions you may have during the June 4, 2024 School Committee meeting.

Manchester-Essex Regional Middle School
Requested 2024-25 Handbook Policy Language Change

DRAFT

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Excellent attendance and school success go hand in hand. Although we recognize that illness and emergency may cause a student to be absent periodically, we hope these situations are limited. The more often a student is absent—even if the absence is unavoidable—the more difficult it is for the student to stay engaged and academically successful. It is important to understand that all missed instructional time negatively impacts student outcomes. Families play an essential role in ensuring that their child attends school consistently and on time every day. If families face specific attendance challenges, our staff is available to partner with families to find appropriate support. It is vital to work as partners to support our students' success.

What does MA State Law say About Attendance?

Massachusetts' compulsory school attendance law (G.L. c. 76, § 1) requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 attend school every day. General Laws chapter 76 sets out many aspects of compulsory attendance, including the responsibilities of parents/guardians and school committees.

Parents/guardians responsibilities:

- ensure that a child in their care attends school. G.L. c. 76, §2.
- call the school at a designated number at a designated time as established by the school committee to report a child's absence and reason for it. G.L. c. 76, §§1A, 1B.

Schools keep parents informed of their child's attendance through:

- Phone calls
- Holding a parent/guardian or student meeting
- Attendance letters

Following state guidelines, attendance will be taken daily for each student. Student attendance is a factor in school and district accountability. This means that all schools and families need to work together to minimize chronic absenteeism.

Chronic Absences

Students who miss 10% of days enrolled regardless of whether such absences are documented or undocumented (e.g., 18 days absent when enrolled for 180 school days) are considered chronically absent. National research shows that chronic absenteeism erodes the academic and social skills students need to succeed in school.

Additionally, The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has determined that a student absent from school *for any reason* for 10% or more of the school year is classified as “chronically absent” in the DESE Accountability System. This classification can have a negative impact on schools’ accountability rating and should be avoided if possible. To help students avoid this benchmark, families will be contacted when students have 5 absences, 10 absences, and 15 absences (cumulative). A meeting with the Principal may be requested and, in some cases, required.

Documented Absences

The state’s compulsory school attendance law (G.L. c. 76, § 1) applies to all absences from school, even if they are considered “documented” at the school level. Certain absences can be considered “documented” at the school level if they are due to:

- Medical
- Bereavement
- Religious
- College Visit (HS only)

In order for an absence to be marked “documented,” students/guardians must provide documentation to the main office for each day they are absent from school. This documentation must include the date absent, the reason for the absence, and the parent/guardian’s signature. If the absence is anticipated, (for example, in the case of a college visit), parents/guardians should notify the school in advance of the absence. Teachers are not required to provide schoolwork in advance of planned absences.

Absence Responsibilities

Students and families should communicate regularly with teachers and plan to make-up for missed time and school work. In the case of an unanticipated absence, students are expected to confer with teachers and establish a mutually acceptable timeframe for the completion of missed assignments, class work and tests.

Working together we can help our students have strong attendance. Your voice is critical in reaffirming to your student your expectation that they go to school every day and how important that habit is to ensuring they graduate high school on time. Here are some resources created by Attendance Works that you can use to help support your student:

Click the following link for more information on school attendance: [For Middle & High School Families \(English\)](#)

Tardy Policy:

Being late or “tardy” to school deprives the student of valuable class time and disrupts others when the student joins the class late. A student is considered tardy if they are not in class at the beginning of the first block of the day, at 7:45 a.m. A student who is late to school must first report to the Main Office and will be issued a “tardy slip,” allowing the student to proceed to class. A student who is late and who proceeds directly to class without a “tardy slip” may be disciplined. Parents must notify the main office no later than 7:30 a.m. to report their student’s late arrival and will be required to produce formal documentation in order to receive an administrative waiver.

Students who arrive to school **after 8:30 a.m.** will:

- be ineligible for athletics, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities on that school day unless they receive an administrative waiver for special circumstances that justify the lateness.

Students who have excessive tardies (**arriving to school after 7:45 a.m.**) will meet with the Dean of Students. Tardiness after this meeting may result in an after-school detention or other consequence.

- be assigned detention (from 2:15 - 3:00 p.m.) for each tardy beyond five days unless they receive an administrative waiver for special, documented circumstances (i.e., physical illness, mental illness, religious reasons, or bereavement) that justify the lateness

Documented Absences:

According to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71B, Section 3, student absence may occur only for physical illness, mental illness, or religious reasons. Any student who is absent for three or more consecutive days is requested to provide a note from a medical or religious personnel to the Main Office.

Undocumented Absences:

Students may not miss school except for excusable reasons outlined above. Even if the absence is approved by a parent/guardian, the school will make the final determination as to whether an absence may be documented. Vacations while school is in session are not permitted. Absence from school for a family vacation is not recognized as a legal absence under state statutes, and teachers will not be expected to provide work ahead of time for students who are absent for a vacation. Upon return from a vacation, it is the student's responsibility to seek work from teachers and make up any work missed that is still permitted to be completed.



Manchester Essex Regional High School

36 Lincoln St.
Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA 01944

Julie Sgroi, Principal

sgroj@mersd.org
978-526-4412 ext. 1132

Elisabeth Drinkwater, Dean of Students

drinkwatere@mersd.org
978-526-4412 ext. 1129

TO: Superintendent Pamela Beaudoin

FROM: Julie Sgroi, MERHS Principal

DATE: May 23, 3034

RE: Handbook Approval

The High School would like to request School Committee approval for the 2024-2025 Student Handbook. Following is a summary of the changes and updates made to the Program:

Revisions to Attendance Language

Revisions to the handbook attendance policy is being requested in order to align school handbook language across the district with current DESE guidance. This will allow for better communication and collaboration with families. Deleting language under truancy about students not being allowed to make up work when class is missed.

Updated Dates

Quarter dates have been updated to reflect the upcoming school year. NHS application dates have been updated as well.

Academic Integrity Definition

A definition of academic integrity, developed by School Council, has been added.

Progressive Discipline Chart

Language edits. For example, deleting "Use of Blue-Print" as it is redundant. Aligning consequences to attendance policy.

General Language Change

Removing "guidance" and replacing with "counseling." Changed "dining hall" to "cafeteria." Cafeteria language changed to reflect free lunch and a la carte for purchase.

Thank you for taking the time to review these requests. I look forward to discussing them in more detail at the June 4, 2024 School Committee meeting.