

## **\*ATTENDANCE RULES, PRACTICES, AND PROCEDURES**

The administration and faculty of RMHS believe that the learning experiences that take place through the classroom environment constitute the heart of the educational process. Time lost from class is time lost from learning, time that is irretrievable, particularly in terms of the opportunity for teacher instruction and the exchange of ideas. Research has shown a direct correlation between attendance and grades, indicating high attendance contributes to high achievement. Excessive absences (including tardiness and dismissals that result in class absences) often results in incomplete and unsatisfactory work, ultimately affecting course grades. Consequently, the RMHS policy is meant to foster good attendance so that each student may have the opportunity to receive the necessary knowledge, experience, and skills for future success.

### **\*LAWS GOVERNING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

Chapters 76 and 77 of the General Laws Relating to Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts specifically state the responsibility of parents, pupils, and the school regarding attendance.

- School attendance prior to age 16 is compulsory.
- No student 16 through 18 years old will be permitted to withdraw without approval from his/her parent or guardian.
- When students turn 18 years old, they reach the "age of majority," at which time they may assume all responsibility for their academic affairs and earn the privilege of writing their own excuse notes. First, They must fill out a form in their assistant principal's office, which will then be mailed home to inform their parents. they must receive the written permission of their parents and approval from their assistant principal. Students who abuse this privilege may have it revoked following a parent conference with the assistant principal. Students who receive this permission are responsible for the notes written. Students who have reached age of majority still will not be dismissed without an appropriate reason and are subject to all the same rules and procedures.
- Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 76, § 18, any student (16 years or older) who is withdrawing from school prior to graduation must obtain a withdrawal form from their house office. No student shall be considered to have permanently left the school district unless an administrator from the school or school district has sent notice within a period of ten (10) days from the student's fifteenth (15) consecutive absence to the parent or guardian of such student in both the primary language of such parent or guardian and English, stating that such student and his parent or guardian may meet with the school committee or its designated representatives prior to the student permanently leaving school, within ten days after the sending of the notice. The time for meeting may be extended at the request of the parent or guardian and with consent of the school committee or its designated representatives, provided no extension shall be for longer than fourteen days. Such meeting shall be for the purpose of discussing the reasons for the student permanently leaving school and alternative educational or other placements. M.G.L. c. 76, § 18.

### **\*PARENT/GUARDIAN & SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ATTENDANCE**

- The Reading Public Schools, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 76, § 1B, has a policy of notifying the parent or guardian of a student who has at least 5 days in which the student has missed 2 or more periods unexcused in a school year or who has missed 5 or more school days unexcused in a school year. This policy requires that the school principal, or a designee, make a reasonable effort to meet with the parent or guardian of a student who has 5 or more unexcused absences to develop action steps for student attendance. The action steps shall be developed jointly and agreed upon by the school principal, or a designee, the student and the student's parent or

guardian and with input from other relevant school personnel and officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing and nonprofit agencies.

- Under M.G.L. c. 119, § 21, , a child may be eligible for "Child Requiring Assistance" services through the juvenile court system if the child: repeatedly runs away from the home of a parent or legal guardian; repeatedly fails to obey the lawful and reasonable commands of a parent or legal guardian, thereby interfering with the parent's or legal guardian's ability to adequately care for and protect the child; repeatedly fails to obey lawful and reasonable school regulations; or is "habitually truant." A school aged child is "habitually truant" when not otherwise excused from attendance in accordance with lawful and reasonable school regulations, willfully fails to attend school for more than 8 school days in a quarter. The school can assist parents with pursuing "CRA" services and supports.
- Under Chapter 119, section 51A of the Massachusetts General Laws, a report can be filed on behalf of a child under the age of eighteen for educational neglect if a child is not attending school on a regular basis. This report of suspected Child Abuse or Neglect, commonly referred to as a 51A, is filed with the Department of Children and Family Services. By law, school personnel are mandated reporters.
- Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that a child under their control attends school daily. If a child fails to attend school for seven (7) day sessions or fourteen (14) half day sessions within any six (6) month period, the school district may address the situation. If a child reaches seven (7) excused absences (as allowed by law) or exceeds three (3) unexcused absences within a six month period, the school will notify the parent/guardian of the student's attendance record. More than 18 absences per semester will be considered excessive. Upon any further absences, the school may schedule a parent conference to discuss and/or investigate the issue further.

***\*EXCUSED ABSENCES: The following reasons are considered excused absences from school/class:***

1. Illness supported by a doctor's note
2. Medical appointment (a doctor or dentist certificate should be provided for appointments scheduled during the school day)
3. Death in the student's family
4. Observance of a religious holiday
5. Court appointments
6. College visits
7. School sanctioned absences: representing the school, field trips
8. Extreme personal circumstances as determined by administration

Please consult with your student's assistant principal with questions about legitimate absence from school.

***\*ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES - REPORTING A STUDENT ABSENCE***

- Absences are considered unexcused unless it meets the excused criteria above. Whenever a child is going to be absent or late to school, parents/guardians are required to call their child's assistant principal's office (Mr. McSweeney— 10 & 12; Ms. Theriault— 9 & 11) to

report the absence or tardiness. This is an important way to assure school personnel that parents are aware of their child's absence or tardiness. If we do not hear from a parent, an automatic phone call will be sent home via Connect-Ed.

- All If an absence does meet the excused criteria above, a student must bring verification from the doctor's office, or college, court, or home (if it is a death in the family or a religious holiday) to their assistant principal's office on the day of his/her return for the absence to be considered excused.
- If verification is not received from home, the office will refer to the list of names supplied by the parent on the Pupil Information Card to call for verification.
- Absentee notes are required within five (5) days of the absence from parent, doctor, college admissions department, dentist, court, etc. These notes will provide an assurance that parents are aware of their child's absenteeism and present documentation in the event of a loss of credit appeal determination.

#### **\*ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES**

- A student is considered absent if he/she reports to school after 11:00 a.m. or is dismissed prior to 11:00 a.m. A student who has been absent from school is not eligible to take part in any practice session, game, or co-curricular activity which is scheduled for the same day.
- If a student misses more than one-half of a period due to tardiness or dismissal, the missed period will be logged as a day of absence for that class.
- All work missed because of absence, except that work missed due to truancy, will be made up typically following the guideline of one makeup day per absent day upon return to class. However, the student should contact each teacher directly involved as different arrangements may be made at the teacher's discretion.
- Students are strongly encouraged to seek out extra help before or after school, or at some other mutually agreeable time if they need assistance from a teacher.
- Days missed because of suspension will not be counted as absences. The student is responsible for making up all work missed.

#### **\*LOSS OF CREDIT POLICY**

A student who is enrolled in a class is expected to be present each time class is in session. No student should be absent more than the maximum limits.

- **More than 8 unexcused absences per semester will result in a loss of credit**

-Any student transferring from another school after the start of the marking period will be held accountable for 90% of the remaining class meetings of the semester.

-Any student changing classes during the marking period will have their total accumulation of absences in the former class carried over to the new class.

-Unexcused tardiness to class will count as  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an absence, however, if more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the class is missed, it is a full absence.

-The penalty for exceeding these maximum limits is the **loss of two (2) credits per semester in that class**. Grades earned in the course are not affected by this policy except where poor performance or missed work is the direct result of excessive absences

-Parents will be notified of excessive absenteeism midway through the marking period via the mid-term report. Parents will also be notified at the end of each semester by a letter from the Assistant Principal of a loss of credit when a student exceeds the maximum absence limit. Teachers will also be informed of a student's loss of credit via receipt of a copy of the Loss of Credit form after the appeal period.

### **\*TARDINESS POLICY**

- Arrival to school and classes should be **ON TIME**. On time in the morning means in class by the 7:30 bell.
- **Only legitimate medical or court-ordered reasons supported by official documentation will be considered excused.** It is incumbent upon the student to obtain and deliver this official documentation for being tardy within 24 hours, or the tardiness will be considered unexcused.
- A student who is tardy on the day of a quiz/test may be expected to make-up this assessment on the same day.
- All tardies are considered **unexcused** unless an administrator indicates otherwise.
- A student not in class by 7:30 a.m. is considered tardy and must sign in with their assistant principal's secretary. The tardy count is cumulative over the course of the semester.
  - **One unexcused tardy equals  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an absence**
  - **8.5 or more unexcused absences equals loss of 2 credits in that class**
  - *Frequent tardiness to school may also lead to disciplinary measures including administrative detention, , or loss of privileges, including loss of electronic device privilege. Parents will also be informed of recurring tardiness issues*

### **\*DUE PROCESS HEARING FOR ATTENDANCE REVIEW & CREDIT RECOVERY**

The attendance policy described above holds students, parents/guardians, and the school accountable for student attendance. It is not the intent of the attendance policy to be unreasonably punitive towards students with unusual or extenuating circumstances. Therefore, a due process hearing by an Attendance Review Board has been developed to consider situations, which resulted in excessive absences.

The student and parent/guardian must write a letter to the assistant principal requesting that the student's attendance be reviewed and requesting the restoration of credit. This letter should be submitted within 10 (ten) calendar days from the date of notification of the loss of credit. Documentation from a parent or third party that verifies the reason for a student absence may be required. No appeal should be filed unless there are extenuating circumstances. These circumstances are normally limited to the following:

1. Chronic illness
2. Incapacity due to illness or injury
3. Extreme personal reason or emotional stress

A review will be conducted by the high school's Attendance Review Board. This board consists of assistant principals, the school nurse, the student's guidance counselor, and the department chair for special education.

Credit may also be restored if, for the term following the loss of credit, the student does not violate the attendance policy for any class and/or if the student completes administrator approved credit recovery.

The student or parent/guardian may appeal the board's action by submitting a written appeal to the principal within seven (7) school days of the date of the letter from the Attendance Review Board. The principal will review all materials submitted to the Attendance Review Board as well as the board's decision. A decision will be rendered by the principal within five (5) school days of the receipt of the student's appeal.

### **SENIOR LOSS OF CREDIT DUE TO ATTENDANCE**

Second semester seniors who have lost credit due to attendance may attempt to regain credit by continuing to attend school after seniors have been released until the end of their school year. If credit has not been recovered by the last day of senior exams, the student is not eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony.

### **\*DISMISSAL**

- If a parent wishes to have a student dismissed early from school for any reason, a note must be brought from home and given to the assistant principal's secretary prior to morning attendance on the day the dismissal is desired. Written notes will be verified by a phone call to the parent. Parents are strongly urged to make medical and dental appointments at times that do not conflict with the school schedule. Students should not be calling home to be dismissed during the day.
- Parents/ guardians must present a photo ID when picking up a student for dismissal.
- All medical dismissals MUST BE processed through the Nurse's Office.
- The student should report to their assistant principal's office to sign out at the dismissal time.
- Teachers will note students who have missed a test/quiz/lab as a result of dismissal after feeling ill at school. On the second occasion, the school nurse may contact the parent. Any further occurrence may be considered "**test avoidance**" and, upon investigation by a designated administrator and a meeting with student and parent, the designated administrator may determine that no makeup will be allowed. The school nurse or teacher will notify the administration who will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Unscheduled dismissals are also permitted under certain circumstances. These dismissals will require the following:
  - A personal appearance from the parent
  - Approval from the administration. (Phone dismissal must be followed by a note the next day.)
- Students who know they will be dismissed early should see their teacher(s) beforehand to receive assignments.

### **\*VACATION ABSENCE POLICY**

- Family vacations should be planned for those times when school is not in session. If vacation

interferes with the school year, the principal should be notified in writing in advance. All classes missed will be counted toward cumulative absences in each class. Vacations are unexcused absences.

- Teachers have no obligation to provide homework packets ahead of time.
- All work missed must be made up according to guidelines consistent with the **ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES**
- There are occasionally compelling reasons for a student to finish his or her school year prior to the official ending. The school **must receive a written request** for release from the parent or legal guardian at least 10 days in advance.
- All course requirements must be met to the satisfaction of teacher in order to receive credit.
- Families should not make vacation plans nor enroll students in summer programs until the school year is officially over. As the actual finish of the school year is a tentative date, referring to days reserved for makeup of snow and other emergencies should be considered. Please refer to the Reading Public School's calendar.

**\*TRUANCY POLICY**

A student will be considered truant when s/he is absent from school without permission of parent or guardian or school administration, or when a student is deliberately late to school.

- Truancy will result in an unexcused absence for each class period missed due to the truancy. These absences will be subject to the RMHS Loss Of Credit Policy.
- Students who are truant are subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension.
- Students will be considered absent for each class period missed due to truancy. These absences apply to the Loss of Credit policy.
- Students who are proven truant and are members of extra-curricular activities may be ineligible to participate in the activity for the duration of the truancy as well as during the resultant disciplinary consequences.
- Students truant two or more non-consecutive times may be ineligible to receive any class, athletic, or faculty honors for that year.

**Progressive Consequences**

The following procedure will occur when a student is truant from class:

<p>First Offense</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assistant principal will have a conference with the student to determine the reason for the truancy.</li> <li>• The assistant principal will assign an administrator detention</li> <li>• The school will notify parents by telephone and/or Email.</li> <li>• Students may not be eligible to make-up work missed because of the truancy or work that is due on the day of the truancy.</li> </ul>
<p>Second &amp; Subsequent Offenses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the second proven truancy in the same course, the teacher will notify the appropriate assistant principal who will issue an in-house suspension.</li> <li>• The assistant principal will notify the parent</li> <li>• Students will not be eligible to make-up work missed because of the truancy or work that is due on the day of the truancy.</li> </ul>