

NORTH HUNTERDON HIGH SCHOOL

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Principal

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

At North Hunterdon High School, we believe that regular attendance is one of the most important keys to your child's success. When students are consistently in class, they learn more, build stronger connections with their teachers and peers, and are better prepared for their future. This year, we are especially focused on reducing our chronic absenteeism rate, which is a state-level measure of how many students are missing too much school. Your partnership in this effort is crucial!

For the upcoming school year, we've updated our attendance policy. This letter will explain the key changes, focusing on what you need to know as a parent.

What Counts as Being Present?

For attendance purposes, a student is considered "present" if they participate in instruction or school-related activities for at least half of the school day (four instructional hours).

Understanding Absences: State-Excused vs. Locally-Excused

It's important to understand that not all excused absences are treated the same way when it comes to state reporting on chronic absenteeism and loss of credit for classes.

- **State-Excused Absences (Do NOT Count Against Chronic Absenteeism):** These are specific reasons for absence that are recognized by the State of New Jersey and do not count against your child's attendance record for state reporting. These include:
 - Religious observance
 - College visits (up to 3 days per school year for 11th and 12th graders)
 - "Take Our Children to Work Day"
 - Participation in Veterans Day observance or district board of election activities
 - School busing district closure preventing transportation
 - One civic event per school year (with prior notice and documentation)
- **Locally-Excused Absences (DO Count Towards Chronic Absenteeism for State Reporting):** Our school recognizes that there are other valid reasons for a student to miss school. We will excuse these absences for local purposes, meaning your child can still make up missed assignments and tests without immediate penalty.

Examples of locally-excused absences include:

- Family critical illness or death
- Examination for a driver's license

- Absences consistent with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 accommodation plan
- Student suspension from school

What is an Unexcused Absence?

Any absence that is not listed as a state-excused or locally-excused reason is considered unexcused. Examples include student illness, family travel, or leaving school without permission.

Think of these like "sick days" you might have at work. If your child is sick, we understand they need to stay home. However, it is crucial to understand that **these absences still contribute to your child's overall attendance record for state reporting on chronic absenteeism and locally for loss of credit.** The good news is that your student is allowed eight (8) unexcused absences in a semester course and sixteen (16) unexcused absences in a year-long course before they lose credit. We want your child in school as much as possible, but this new policy does allow for these allotted "sick days" (unexcused absences) for illness and doctor visits.

How Many Absences Are Allowed?

- **Chronic Absenteeism:** A student is considered "chronically absent" if they miss **10% or more of their enrolled school days** for *any* reason other than a state-excused absence (this includes locally-excused and unexcused absences). This is a key measure used by the state to identify students who may need extra support, and it's an area we are actively working to improve as a school.
- **Loss of Course Credit:** While we understand that student illness is often unavoidable, accumulating too many absences can impact course credit. A student may be denied course credit if they have been absent from:
 - More than eight (8) unexcused absences in a semester course
 - More than sixteen (16) unexcused absences in a year-long course
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Not meeting attendance standards may also result in your child being denied participation in extracurricular activities and athletic competitions.

What To Do When Your Child Is Absent

1. **Notify the School Promptly:** Please call (908-713-4120) or email (northattendance@nhvweb.net) the attendance office early on the day your child will be absent to inform us of the reason.
2. **Provide Documentation:** It is essential to provide official documentation, such as a doctor's note or other relevant records, for all absences. Even though these documented absences are still recorded as unexcused absences, recording the reason for the absence can be crucial if there are questions about truancy or loss of credit.

We understand that sometimes absences are unavoidable. We encourage open communication between families and the school so we can work together proactively to address any attendance concerns. Our goal is to ensure every North Hunterdon High School student has the best opportunity to succeed.

If you have any questions regarding these changes, please do not hesitate to contact the school administration or the attendance office.

Sincerely,



Greg Cottrell, Ed.D.
Principal