



# VOORHEES HIGH SCHOOL

*A 2015 National Blue Ribbon School*

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are writing to inform you of important updates to Voorhees High School's attendance policy, effective for the upcoming school year. These changes will be implemented to reinforce the critical link between consistent attendance and student success. Our goal is to ensure all students have the greatest opportunity to meet state learning standards and thrive academically.

Please take a moment to review the following important aspects of our updated attendance policy:

- **Definition of Attendance**
  - A student is recorded as present if they participate in instruction or instruction-related activities for at least half a school day, whether on school grounds or at an approved off-grounds location.
- **State-Excused Absences**
  - Religious observance (as defined by law)
  - College visits (up to 3 days per school year for grades 11 and 12)
  - "Take Our Children to Work Day"
  - Participation in observance of Veterans Day or district board of election membership activities
  - Closure of a busing district preventing transportation
  - Attendance at a civic event (one-time per school year for grades 6-12, with five days prior written notice and documentation)
- **Locally-Excused Absences:** For purposes of promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, and making up missed assignments, the district may excuse absences for reasons such as:
  - Where consistent with IEPs, IDEA, accommodation plans, and individualized health care plans
  - Student suspension from school
  - Family critical illness or death (with written parent note upon return)
  - Examination for a driver's license
  - Any other absence considered excused by the Commissioner of Education and/or NJDOE rule.
  - *Important Note:* An absence designated as locally excused *will still be considered an absence* in the submission to the State for chronic absenteeism reporting purposes.
- **Chronic Absenteeism**
  - A student is considered *chronically absent* if they are not present for 10% or more of the days they are enrolled. This calculation excludes State-excused absences. For example, if there are 180 school days in a year, a student would be considered chronically absent if they miss 18 or more days for unexcused or locally-excused reasons.
- **Attendance and Instruction Requirements**
  - A student is considered absent from class for tardiness exceeding one-half of the total class period.

- A student is considered absent from school for participating in less than four instructional hours during the school day.
- To successfully complete the instructional program requirements of a grade/course, a student must be in attendance for *150 or more* school days. Waivers for this requirement may be granted for good cause by the principal upon recommendation of a review committee.
- **Parental Responsibility**
  - Parents are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a student will be absent and for informing the school *in writing* of the reason. Documentation of absences, such as doctor's notes or other official records, is crucial, as unexcused absences may lead to truancy and loss of credit.
- **Procedures for Unexcused Absences**
  - The district will implement specific procedures to address unexcused absences, including parental notification and intervention strategies, starting with the first unexcused absence and escalating if patterns persist. This may involve referrals to our response to intervention team, assessments, or coordination with community resources.
- **Truancy**
  - For *10 or more cumulative unexcused absences*, a student between the ages of six and sixteen is considered truant. This will result in further interventions, potentially including court referral.

Consequences for not meeting attendance standards may include, denial of participation in extracurricular activities and athletic competitions and loss of course credit.

We understand that circumstances arise that may necessitate a student's absence. We encourage open communication between families and the school to address any attendance concerns proactively. We are committed to working together to ensure every Voorhees High School student has the opportunity to succeed.

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

Sincerely,

*Ron Peterson*  
Principal