

**NEW SALEM/WENDELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES**

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The New Salem/Wendell School Committee is required to provide for and enforce the school attendance of all children attending Swift River School. Children must attend school regularly, in accordance with state law and for a number of days annually, as determined by the Board of Education of the Commonwealth.

When children do not attend school, the absence will be recorded as excused if it meets the legal criteria; all other absences will be considered unexcused. The Superintendent or his/her designee may only excuse absences for illness or religious observances. According to state law, school districts should report to the District Attorney's Office and to the Department of Social Services students who are absent for more than seven full days or fourteen half days within a six-month period if the student's absence is for reasons other than illness or religious purposes.

The New Salem/Wendell School Committee and School Administration understand that students may sometimes need to be absent for reasons other than illness or religious observation. These reasons may include the bereavement of a family member, inclement weather or, on rare occasion, a family vacation. However, these or similar absences are deemed unexcused absences and counted in the seven day limit under state law.

In accordance with state law, attendance is not required for children who have a physical or mental condition that renders attendance inexpedient or impractical.

The school administration may request a physician's statement certifying a child's illness for absences in excess of seven full days or fourteen half days within a four week time period.

The Principal or his/her designee shall serve as the officer to oversee school attendance. At the start of each school year, the Principal shall ensure that a notice is sent to all parents and guardians instructing them of a phone number to call to report a student absence and the appropriate process to follow for reporting said absence. These instructions shall include the time of day by which to contact the school regarding an absence or late arrival. If requested by the attendance administrator, parents/guardians are expected to provide a written explanation for the absence and/or tardiness of a child. Where advance notice is possible, written notice is required.

Parents/guardians of children whose absences risk exceeding the allowable number of absences will be given written notice by the attendance officer that truancy charges may be filed and will be given one (1) week to respond to that notice. This notice will be initiated by the designated officer within one week of the allowable limit being surpassed. Parents/guardians may appeal a decision to file truancy complaint to the Principal, the Superintendent, and the School Committee in that order.

Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children do not fall behind in their school work when they are absent from school. Teachers may make a reasonable

effort to provide missed assignments/instruction provided that this effort does not place an undue burden on the teacher. In instances where arrangements are not easily established, the teacher and the student's family shall seek guidance from the Principal.

First reading: 12-06-07

Second reading, first vote: 06-05-08

Final vote: 11/06/08