

HILLTOWN COOPERATIVE CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School expects students to attend school daily in order to receive the maximum benefits of our program. Massachusetts General Laws require children to attend school regularly. Parents and guardians are essential to good attendance and are responsible for ensuring that children attend school regularly and on time. Frequent absences affect not only the individual child but the entire class. Hilltown's project oriented program requires students to work in small collaborative groups and every member is vital to the success of the group. When several children miss school at different times and for different durations, it has a ripple effect on the pacing of the entire curriculum.

This policy details the necessary steps to be taken by parents when attendance is not possible, and the consequences of chronic absences. The school day begins at 8:15 AM. An arrival after 8:30 AM is 15 minutes late and is officially considered tardy unless there is a specific medical appointment. *Students who are absent for non-disability related reasons, whether excused or unexcused, may not participate in any after-school or other extra-curricular activity on the day they are absent.*

Excused Absences

- Illness or chronic health problem
- A death in the immediate family or other significant family crisis
- Court appearances
- Religious Holy Days
- Suspension from school
- Absence related to an ADA defined disability

(If you believe your child has a defined ADA disability, please contact the school's 504 Coordinator, Dan Klatz)

Family vacations are not considered excused absences.

In the case of illness/significant family crisis/disability:

1. Parents are expected to call in by 8:30 a.m. to inform school of illness or family emergency. If we have not heard from a parent/guardian we will call the home at 9:00 a.m. If we do not hear back from a parent/guardian the absence will be considered unexcused.
2. HCCPS will request from the parent documentation from a health care provider if the student is ill for more than five (5) consecutive days.
3. When a student has excessive illness related absences (non-consecutive but frequent) that begin to interfere with a student's education, the appropriate staff will contact the parents/guardians. We will work together to clarify the medical situation, request medical documentation and make reasonable accommodations to provide appropriate supports if consistent attendance is not possible. Parents/guardians will be expected to help with make-up work. Significant interference to a student's educational progress may result in grade retention. The school, in its sole discretion, may permit the student to attend summer school in lieu of grade retention. Students with disability-related absences shall be allowed the opportunity to make up missed work prior to grade retention or summer school.

Religious Holy Days:

Parents/guardians must inform the school in advance.

Failure to provide such notice will result in the absence being deemed as unexcused.

Unexcused Absences

Hilltown Cooperative Charter Public School strongly discourages unexcused absences. Family vacations resulting in student absence from school creates significant disruption to the educational process. Unexcused absences have consequences for the student, the class and the teacher and create additional responsibilities for parents/guardians. In the event of a planned, unexcused absence parents/guardians must understand and comply with the following:

1. Parents must inform teachers, in writing, two weeks in advance of a planned unexcused absence and schedule a meeting with the teacher prior to the planned unexcused absence. In the meeting the teachers shall discuss with the parents/guardians the educational impact of the unexcused absence on the student, and identify steps which may be taken to minimize such impact should the parents/guardians decide to go forward with the unexcused absence.
2. Teachers are not required to provide make up work for unexcused absences. Parents/guardians are responsible for overseeing the student's educational progress during the unexcused absence.
3. All parents/guardians are informed of their child's attendance record on each progress report.
4. Seven (7) unexcused absences in any six (6) month period of time will result in grade retention. The school, in its sole discretion, may permit the student to attend summer school in lieu of grade retention. The parents/guardians will be notified in writing that they are required to meet with appropriate staff to address steps necessary to meet the educational needs of the student. If following the meeting unexcused absences continue to be excessive further action will be taken by the school which may include, but is not limited to, exclusion of the student from any or all afterschool or extracurricular activities, and if appropriate, filing a Child in Need of Service (CHINS) petition for parental failure to ensure their child's attendance in school.
5. Five tardys (after 8:30 AM), not related to a disability, will constitute one unexcused absence.

In rare circumstances when a parent/guardian is required to be out of the immediate Pioneer Valley area for career related purposes, parents/guardians may formally request absence from school for up to 20 school days. HCCPS will consider, among other things, the following:

1. The impact on a student's academic progress.
2. Duration of the absence.
3. Frequency of previous absences, especially unexcused absences.

Requests in writing must be submitted to the Administrative and Education Coordinators at least one month in advance. The Coordinators, following consultation with teachers, will make decisions within ten (10) calendar days of the request. The Coordinators retain sole discretion to make the determination and their decision is not subject to further review.

If approved, the family will be responsible for developing a school work plan. The family will take responsibility for overseeing their child's educational progress.

If the request is not approved and the family removes the child from school, the absence will be considered unexcused.

Approved by the Board of Trustees 8/13/2014