

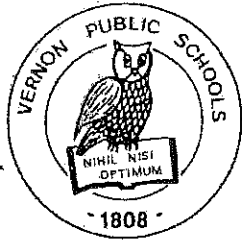
# VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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October 2, 2012

Mary P. Conway, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  
(860) 870-6000 ext. 124

Deborah Murasso  
Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
(860) 870-6000 ext. 143

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Attending school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in prekindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and in life.

Under new state legislation, the State Board of Education has defined "excused" and "unexcused" absence from school (see reverse side of this letter). In addition, ten or more absences from school (excused or unexcused) must be documented beyond a note from a parent.

The Vernon Public Schools, believing that every day in school counts, has developed a systemic response to school absence to assist and support families so that their students are in school on time every day:

- Three (3) absences (excused or unexcused) – A letter will be sent home expressing concern.
- Six (6) absences (excused or unexcused) – A letter will be sent home and a phone call placed to the family by student support personnel.
- Nine (9) absences (excused or unexcused) – A letter will be sent home and the family will be asked to meet with school personnel.

The definition of truancy (four (4) unexcused absences in a month or ten (10) unexcused absences in a year) has not changed. Parents/Guardians will also be notified when students have reached two (2) unexcused absences in a month or five (5) in a year prior to the legal referrals that must be made when a child is truant.

Please let us know how we can best support you and your children so that they can show up for school on time every day. We want your child to be successful in school! If you have any questions or need more information, please contact your child's school.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary P. Conway".

Mary P. Conway, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

MPC/tb

**Connecticut State Board of Education**  
**Definitions of Excused and Unexcused Absences**  
**Adopted June 27, 2012**

The following definitions are for use by Connecticut school districts and schools for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of section 10-198a of the Connecticut General Statutes (Policies and procedures concerning truants), and for the purpose of reporting truancy, pursuant to subsection (c) of Section 10-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The use of these definitions for state purposes does not preclude districts from using separate definitions of excused and unexcused absences for their internal uses (including decisions on promotion/retention, grading and disciplinary action).

**Excused Absences**

A student's absence<sup>1</sup> from school shall be considered excused if written documentation<sup>2</sup> of the reason for the absence has been submitted within ten school days of the student's return to school or in accordance with Section 10-210 of the Connecticut General Statutes and meets the following criteria:

- A. For absences one through nine, a student's absences from school are considered excused when the student's parent/guardian approves such absence and submits appropriate documentation; and
- B. For the tenth absence and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:
  - 1. student illness (Note: all student illness absences must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused, regardless of the length of absence);
  - 2. student's observance of a religious holiday;
  - 3. death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family;
  - 4. mandated court appearances (additional documentation required);
  - 5. the lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (no parental documentation is required for this reason); or
  - 6. extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators and in accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.

**Unexcused Absences**

A student's absence from school shall be considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

- A. the absence meets the definition for an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
- B. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

**Disciplinary Absences**

Absences that are the result of school or district disciplinary action are excluded from these definitions.

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<sup>1</sup> The Connecticut State Board of Education policy states that "A student is considered to be 'in attendance' if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day. A student who is serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion should always be considered absent." A student not meeting the definition of 'in attendance' is considered absent.

<sup>2</sup> Such documentation should include a signed note from the student's parent/guardian, a signed note from a school official that spoke in person with the parent/guardian regarding the absence, or a note confirming the absence by the school nurse or by a licensed medical professional, as appropriate. Documentation should explain the nature of and the reason for the absence as well as the length of the absence. Separate documentation must be submitted for each incidence of absenteeism. For example, if a student is out sick two consecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation covering both sick days. If a student is out sick two nonconsecutive days, that student must submit the appropriate documentation following each absence. Schools should take steps to allow non-English speaking parents/guardians to submit documentation in their native language.