

SOUTH BRUNSWICK TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

Punctuality and attendance are important habits for students to develop and maintain. In accordance with the laws of the *State*, the South Brunswick School District requires students to attend school regularly to ensure continuity of instruction and classroom participation.

NJ State Law requires that we document all days when a student is absent from school. As such, the school will monitor your child's attendance and timely arrival throughout the year. Part of this monitoring includes attendance letters to alert parents of these absences. Parents of middle and high school students are also encouraged to monitor their child's attendance through the Genesis Parent Portal. **NOTE: Students who have missed 18 or more days of school, excused or unexcused, will be labeled as "chronically absent" by the State of New Jersey.**

Excused Absence: In keeping with the *NJ State Education Code*, we expect students to be on time and present, except in the case of illness (particularly contagious illness, vomiting, or fever), State-recognized religious observances, emergencies such as family illness (ex. **critical or life threatening condition**) or death, special educational opportunities (e.g. a required college visit limited to a maximum of **three days per year** for students in grades **eleven and twelve**). We recognize more time for college visits may be needed and will be recorded as **unexcused** or as per an individualized education, health or accommodation plan, your child should be in school and arrive on time. To be considered "excused" for these reasons, there **must** be parental/guardian notice to the school with the reason for absence/lateness.

Note: Even if absences have been "excused," letters will be sent home regarding any areas of concern, if there are instances where parents/guardians are permitting excessive absenteeism or late arrivals, or when the number of cumulative absences is high. A total of 18 absences per year are considered to be excessive whether excused or unexcused. This will result in the labeling of your child as **chronically absent** as defined by the state. Excessive absences may result in an **incomplete or not applicable grade** on a student's report card. Missing instructional time limits the teacher's ability to issue a complete grade.

Unexcused Absence: On a day when an absence/lateness is for reasons other than those noted above as "excused," the day of absence/lateness is recorded as "unexcused" and will go into your child's permanent record marked as such. Please note that family vacations and other non-educational activities are not included in the list of "excused" absences above. They are considered "unexcused" absences, and should be planned so they do not interfere with school attendance. Parents/guardians must assume full responsibility for all missed academic assignments. Teachers will not provide work in advance of such absences but may provide work upon a student's return. Any unexcused absences, including those explained still count towards truancy per District policy.

Disenrollment Cumulative Absences: Students who will be on extended trips of ten or more consecutive school days, will be dis-enrolled from school. The parent will assume educational responsibility through parental instruction or enrollment of the student in school at their destination. Students who return to District will be required to complete the registration process again.

In addition, in accordance with *NJ Statutes Annotated (NJS) 18:A* and *NJ Administrative Code (NJAC) 6A*, the following guidelines will be followed when absences are "unexcused."

- For up to 4 cumulative unexcused absences, the school will conduct an investigation including contact with the student's parents to determine cause of absences, will develop an action plan as necessary, and will contact law enforcement and other authorities or agencies as appropriate;
- For between 5 and 9 cumulative unexcused absences, the school will conduct a follow-up investigation including contact with the parents, will evaluate and revise the action plan above to include referrals, consultations or assessments, and will cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies;
- For cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more, the student is considered truant. For students between the compulsory school ages, the school district will make mandatory referral to the court program as required by the *NJ Administrative Office of the Courts*. The school will consult with the parents, cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, and will proceed in accordance with *NJS 18A, Compelling Attendance at School*, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required.

A reasonable attempt to notify the parent of an “unexcused” absence will be made. The school will proceed in accordance with the law’s provision if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected.

Unexplained Absence: Parents/guardians must provide the school with a reason for a child’s absence. If the child is not in school and the school office has not received parental/guardian notification as to reason, this absence will be considered “unexplained” and will be marked as “unexcused” in the child’s permanent record and the guidelines above will be applied. In the event of “unnotified” absence, the school will make a reasonable attempt to contact the child’s parents to determine the reason for the absence prior to the start of the following day.

Middle and High School Student Consequences: Because attendance and punctuality to both school and class give each student the maximum opportunity to learn, there are specific consequences for a student who is truant (that is, absent without excuse), cuts class, is late to class or leaves class or the school without permission. Please refer to the Logical Consequences list in the Code of Student Conduct for further detail.

Absences during Testing Periods: If a student has an absence during the District or State standardized testing periods as advertised on the District calendar, he/she will only be able to make-up the test during the scheduled retake period that follows the testing period. This includes end-of-year final exams and math tests at all levels including those that determine placement and acceleration.

Absence and After School/Evening Events: Please note that except under previously-approved and special circumstances, a student who is absent from school during the day may NOT participate in any after school or evening events. (Note: A student who is absent due to illness may NOT participate.)

Reporting Absence: It is a parent’s/guardian’s responsibility to report when a student is going to be absent through the [Genesis Parent Portal](#) or by calling the school’s main office. Our voicemail system is operative 24 hours a day. When calling the school to report an absence, please listen to the prompts for the attendance line and give the student’s full name, reason for absence and the date(s) of absence.

Reporting Lateness: If a student must report to school late, he or she must sign in late at the attendance office located on the first floor upon arrival to school. Documentation for lateness can be handed in to the attendance secretary.

Reporting an Early Sign-out: Early sign-out from school is discouraged; however, we realize there are times when this will occur. Please call the grade-level office or send a note in advance to alert us of the need to sign your student out early from school. Once confirmed, students will be given an early release pass that will allow them to exit our building.

Readmission after Absence: A physician’s statement explaining a non-communicable absence of *more than five days* is required. The school nurse must receive a written physician explanation if the student has been absent with a communicable disease for *any length* of time. This will serve as evidence of the student being free of the communicable disease.

Retention or Credit Loss: Prolonged or repeated absences or lateness, excused or unexcused, from school or class may result in retention or the loss of credit toward graduation.

Religious Holidays: A list of the State of New Jersey Approved Religious Holidays is included in the South Brunswick School District Calendar. It can also be found at the [NJ Department of Education website](#).

We ask you to respect the importance of the school day by ensuring your student’s daily attendance and timely arrival. Should you need to refer to this information in the future, the attendance policy can also be found in the Student Handbook on our website at www.sbschools.org. If you have any questions over the school year, please contact your school’s Attendance Secretary or your child’s school administrator.

Sincerely,

Scott Feder
Superintendent of Schools