

ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

One of the major aims of Arlington High School is to teach students to be responsible. We try to achieve this aim through many phases of our programs. Requiring students to be regular in attendance and to be punctual in reporting to classes are ways of developing responsibility and good habits. Attendance is and should be the responsibility of the students and the parent/guardians. Too much costly teacher and administrative time is spent on attendance related matters -- time that could be better served to improve the educational experience for those who really want it.

Attendance in educational settings is an important component of learning for youth. Good attendance benefits youth academically as well as socially. Group learning situations assist students to communicate, to work together, to gain perspectives, and to accept responsibility -- all important components of adulthood. Also, good attendance at work is expected and rewarded in the adult world.

A firm, fair, reasonable, and well-understood attendance policy is a must. Every student and parent/guardian should know exactly what the philosophy of Arlington High School is as it relates to attendance and what is required for earning credit for a course of study. The learning experience that takes place in the classroom environment is considered to be a meaningful and essential part of the educational structure. Time lost from class in terms of opportunity for interaction and exchange of ideas between teacher and student is cause for concern. Classroom attendance is considered to be an integral part of the student's course of study, and hence, an integral part of the teacher's evaluation of the student's grade for the course.

The following policy is in effect:

1. Students are expected to be present at Arlington High School on all days that school is in session. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 76, Section 1 states: "Every child between maximum and minimum ages...attend school during the number of days required by the Board of Education. The Superintendent may excuse cases of necessary absences." Section 2 of the same Chapter stipulates "Every person in control of a child...shall cause him/her to attend as...required." These laws refer to the compulsory school attendance ages but clearly the intent of the law is to develop in all students the practice of regular school attendance.
2. Policy of Arlington Public Schools does not enumerate specific exceptions to the school attendance law. It is the feeling of the Arlington High School faculty and administration that, illness (verified by a physical if appropriate), family emergencies (crisis, unforeseen happening), and religious observations would qualify as acceptable reasons for absence. Family vacations in most cases would not.
3. Within the framework of points 1 and 2 above, students are expected to attend school on all days school is in session, and attend all classes on those days.

4. Nothing in this policy should be interpreted to mean that students are "allowed" or "entitled" to miss school/class. Maximums are exactly that: maximum allowable absences in a given student's circumstances. Perfect attendance for all students, as unattainable as that goal may be in a practical sense, should be the goal for all students individually.
5. Classroom teachers/homeroom teachers are responsible for ascertaining a child's presence in school, recording each student's attendance on a daily basis and maintaining records of attendance should disputes as to a student's attendance arise.
6. A student absent more than 16% (one out of every six) of the classes in a marking period for any reason will receive a failing grade for that marking period. In the world of work, attendance that bad would result in most employees being fired. Seniors during fourth quarter will be limited to the same rate of absences, but which, of course, will be a smaller number.
7. A student who exceeds the limit will be withdrawn/failed from that course and assigned to a directed study for the remainder of the year, regardless of their class standing.
8. Extended absences for reason of illness or serious family problems may be excused by the House Deans if the proper documentation is established by the student as soon as the issue surfaces.
9. It is the responsibility of the student (and parent/guardians) to see that the proper documentation for all absences is provided to the House Dean in a timely fashion. Lacking such documentation, the classroom teacher will activate section(s) six (6), seven (7) of this policy either or both, whichever applies. There will be no long term retroactivity on previous absences.
10. Students may be excused from strict adherence of the "no more than 16%" per term rule as described in #6 for some special school-sponsored programs approved by the Principal. However, the intention of the grading/attendance policy is to limit the number of classes missed in a subject and it is the responsibility of the student to see that the combination of different circumstances (illness, cuts, approved school absences) does not exceed seven. Generally, student absences will be approved if the school requires the students' presence elsewhere.
11. Because some students will be ill for extended periods or have special problems that would involve extenuating circumstances, a Review Board will be established to consider appeals. Students (and parent/guardians) may appeal to the Attendance Review Board if they are not satisfied with the House Dean's decision. A further appeal to the Principal or his/her designee can be made if the student (or parent/guardian) is not satisfied with the Review Board's decision. The Principal's decision will be final. The Review Board will consist of two teachers, two students, and an administrator. The teachers and students will be chosen from groups of each respectively who volunteer to serve in that capacity.

On a peripheral but related issue: The last five days of each marking period should be free of all field trip, assembly, or special program activities. Quarterly exams and review for them should take precedence over all activity during that period.

Arrival

Students must be in their homerooms by 8:00 AM. Students arriving after 8:00 must report to the House Dean, make out a TARDY SLIP and proceed to homeroom or class according to time of arrival.