



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Research studies in education show that school attendance is a major factor affecting student achievement, as chronic absenteeism is a proven, early warning sign of academic risk and school dropout, according to Attendance Works and Child & Family Policy Center. Parents, guardians, and students must adhere to the attendance policy and procedures below and should refer to the school calendar, when scheduling appointments and vacations.

Students enrolled are considered lawfully absent (**Excused Absence/Excused Tardy**) from school, including absence for any portion of the day, unless under the following conditions:

- a) Illness or injury of the child or the child's family member which requires hospitalization or bed rest.
- b) Physician or dental appointment.
- c) Infectious disease or parasitic infestation.
- d) Funeral service, memorial service, or bereavement upon the death of the child's family member.
- e) Life-threatening illness or injury of the child's family member.
- f) Compliance with a court order (e.g. visitation, subpoena).
- g) Special educator or related services as defined in 10 U.S.C. 1401 (2004) for the child's disability.
- h) Observance of a religious holiday or service, because the child's or parent's religion forbids secular activity on the instructional day.
- i) Extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the child's parent.

A note that explains the reason for the child's absence must be sent following each absence (-no later than 5 days after the absence, see attached attendance letter/Appendix B). Parents and/or guardians will receive daily messages when students are absent and tardy via School Messenger. Teachers and Student Support Staff will also contact families when students are experiencing excessive tardies, early dismissals and unexcused absences. If a student arrives after 8:30am, they are considered unexcused tardy.

## UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

- Three (3) or more unexcused absences and/or unexcused tardies will result with a phone call and letter home.
- Three (3) *consecutive* unexcused absences will result with a phone call to parent, guardian and/or emergency contact. If parent, guardian and/or emergency contact cannot be reached, Cedar Tree Academy will contact

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Metropolitan Police Department to have them complete a safety/wellness check to ensure student's safety.

- Five (5) unexcused absences and/or unexcused tardies will result with a phone call, letter and **mandatory** attendance conference with the attendance monitor.
- Seven (7) unexcused absences and/or unexcused tardies will result with a phone call and additional letter. Executive director will be notified of absences.
- Ten (10) unexcused absences will result with a letter, **mandatory** attendance conference and Educational Neglect Report submitted to the District of Columbia's Child & Family Service Agency (after the second day of the 10<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence).
- Twenty (20) consecutive unexcused absences will result in dismissal from Cedar Tree Academy.

***Note: Trips and vacations will be coded as unexcused absences.***

## ATTENDANCE APPEAL PROCESS

A written appeal may be filed by a parent on behalf of any student receiving a reduced or a failing grade(s) due to unexcused absences. An appeal shall be submitted to the principal of the school within ten (10) business days after receipt of the failing grade(s).

Upon receipt of an appeal, the principal shall appoint an Appeals Panel and shall forward all written appeal requests to the panel chairperson within three (3) business days.

- I. The Appeals Panel referenced above shall consist of not less than three (3) members to be selected from the following:
  - (a) The principal's designee, who shall be the panel chairperson;
  - (b) A school counselor;
  - (c) A department chairperson;
  - (d) A teacher, other than the one involved;
  - (e) An attendance staff person;

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(f) A parent organization representative.

- II. Appropriate substitutions in the Appeals Panel described above may be made, when necessary.
- III. The Appeals Panel shall hold a hearing within ten (10) calendar days after its appointment by the principal.
- IV. The parent, guardian or duly authorized representative shall appear at the hearing. One of these individuals shall be given the opportunity to present the student's case and upon request, to question the involved teacher and to be duly informed of the panel's recommendations.
- V. Each appeals panelist, including the chair, shall have an equal vote.
- VI. In the case of a tie vote, the Appeals Panel shall recommend that the initial grade be upheld.
- VII. The Appeals Panel's recommendation shall be forwarded immediately to the principal who shall issue the Panel's decision within ten (10) calendar days after the hearing.
- VIII. When an appeal is filed, the Cedar Tree Board of Directors shall convene a hearing and shall issue the final administrative decision in the matter.
- IX. The following procedural guidelines shall apply to hearings convened as described above:
  - a) The burden to show why the grade(s) in question should be changed shall be on the student's parent or guardian;
  - b) Strict rules of evidence shall not apply;
  - c) Testimony or evidence shall be heard from both parties; and
  - d) A written determination shall be issued within five (5) business days of the hearing.

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