

2020-21 MNPS Attendance Expectations Letter Template

The purpose of this letter is to communicate clear school-level expectations to your students and their families in regards to attendance. The letter template on the following page can be modified; however, we do ask that the letter cover the following information.

- School Policies and State Laws
 - Compulsory Attendance Law
 - Overview of Daily Attendance in Regular, Hybrid, and Virtual Scenarios
 - Overview of Excused Absences
 - Consequences for Late Arrivals & Early Dismissals
 - *Consequences **cannot** result in further loss of instructional time*
- Guidelines for Parents on What to Do When Their Child is Absent
- General Information on the Impact of Chronic Absence
- Student Incentives & Recognition for Positive Attendance
 - *The CDC guidelines discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives for the 2020-21 school year. Students who are ill for any reason are encouraged to stay home.*



C.A.R.E.

Connecting Attendance to Results in Education

"All Day. Every Day."



Thurgood Marshall 2020-2021 Attendance Expectations



Dear Parent or Guardian:

We recognize that many students and families have suffered during the pandemic, continue to have challenges and concerns, and we want to do all we can to support our families during this difficult time. All students will begin this school year attending remotely. However, when our students can safely return to school, we will still offer remote learning in lieu of in-person classes for those who want it. For those returning to an in-person learning environment, we will have safeguards in place to promote social distancing, mask wearing, cleaning and disinfecting, and other protocols to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect all who enter our buildings.

Regardless of the option selected, Tennessee law for mandatory attendance requires children ages 6 through 17 to attend school. School attendance is a critical component to ensure that a child is successful at school. When students attend school daily, they will have a better opportunity of having higher student achievement and feel confident about their work at school. Our goal is for every student to have **Satisfactory Attendance** meaning that they attend 95% of all school days and have 8 or fewer total absences during the school year.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) of the school year increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Late arrivals and early dismissals contribute to loss of instructional time.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

We miss your student when they are gone and we value their contributions to our school. We would like you to help ensure that your student attends regularly and is successful in school. If your student is going to be absent, please contact Ms. Henry (5th/6th grade secretary) at (615) 941-7515 Ext 814845 or Christian.Henry@mnps.org or contact Ms. Reyes (7th/8th grade secretary) (615) 941-7515 Ext 551303 or Anahi.Reyes@mnps.org. Parent or guardian absence notes will not be accepted after **10 absences**, regardless of whether the absences are consecutive or not. Physician notes will be required for students after reaching this number of absences.

COVID-19 GUIDANCE

Students who are ill for any reason are encouraged to stay home. Students attending school in-person who miss school due to illness or Covid-19 related circumstances may attend school virtually if able to actively participate in distance learning. **Active participation is defined as students logging into Schoology by 11:59 pm each instructional day and attending and participating in all live sessions Monday through Friday (including PLT).** In these circumstances, the new attendance code D, Distance Learning, will be used to report attendance. Students who are unable to actively participate due to illness should be coded as an excused absence and provided the opportunity for make-up work upon their return.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. **Mr. King (Brandon.king@mnps.org) (5th/6th grade counselor), Ms. Sowell (Amanda.sowell@mnps.org)**, Ms. DuGan (dena.dugan@mnps.org) (School Social Worker). We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your student is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they

were absent, and to identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your student attend school.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our district policies and procedures, as well as Tennessee State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. Students attending school in-person must attend at least 50% of the scheduled school day to be counted present for the day. **The expectation is that all remote learning students attend and participate in all live classes Monday through Friday, including PLT, and log into Schoology no later than 11:59 pm to be counted present for the day.** A student is considered to be truant after he or she has more than four unexcused absences in a school year. When a student has five unexcused absences, the principal may make a referral to juvenile court so the court can intervene with the student's truancy if school-level interventions have failed. For more information on district attendance policies, please review our district's Student-Parent Handbook available on the MNPS website at www.mnps.org.

WHAT ABSENCES ARE COUNTED AS EXCUSED ABSENCES?

- Student's personal illness
- Family member's illness that requires the student's temporary help
- Death in the family (up to three days)
- Deployment of a parent or guardian serving in the military (one day for deployment, one day for return and up to 10 days when the service member is on temporary leave at home)
- Head lice (up to three days per infestation)
- Recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of the child's faith
- Court appearance or legally mandated meetings
- Documented college visitations (up to three days per year for juniors and seniors)
- A principal may allow the following circumstances to be considered an excused absence if the parent or guardian submits a written request:
 - Unexpected emergencies such as car problems
 - Job interview or conference
 - Doctor or dental appointments
 - Other circumstances requested in writing by the parent or guardian that the principal considers to require a child's absence

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES FOR LATE ARRIVALS AND EARLY DISMISSALS?

All instructional time is important. Starting school on time and attending all day allows students to receive all available instruction, engage in social and emotional experiences, hear important announcements, and develop positive lifelong habits.

For students attending school in-person and arriving late (but within **15** minutes of the school start time/prior to 9:10 am), they will report to the grade level dean's office to receive a tardy pass and then will be sent to class. Students arriving after 9:10 am, will need to sign a tardy log in the main office and receive an admit slip before returning to class. Students on late busses will be excused and sent directly to class. To request an early dismissal, a parent/guardian or adult whose name is listed on the student's school file must report to the office and show their picture ID for a student to be released from school.

Students attending remotely must log into **Schoology** by 11:59 pm each instructional day and attend and participate in all live classes Monday through Friday (including PLT). Parents/Guardians must notify **their child's teacher and/or grade level secretary** by phone or email if their child intends to deviate from their regular virtual schedule on a given day.

The information below outlines our consequences for excessive late arrivals and/or early dismissal. These consequences will not result in further loss of instructional such as in-school-suspension or out-of-school suspension and are designed to encourage on-time arrival and dismissal.

| Late Arrival or Early Dismissal | Consequences |
|--|---|
| 5 or more Late Arrivals per quarter | May result in office referral, parent phone call, and potential attendance plan with teacher, dean, and counselor |
| 5 or more Early Dismissals per quarter without medical documentation | May result parent phone call, parent conference, and/or potential attendance plan with teacher, dean, and counselor |

HOW DO WE CELEBRATE POSITIVE ATTENDANCE?

This year, **Thurgood Marshall** is making a special effort to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly and on time. We celebrate school attendance in a variety of ways: whole school, grade level, classroom and individual. The following reward program will be implemented this year to encourage regular daily attendance. Students who meet these individual attendance goals will be recognized each quarter.

| Recognition | Criteria | Reward |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Satisfactory Attendance | Attending school 95% or more of the available school days in the quarter | Students will have the opportunity to attend and be recognized at quarterly attendance incentives/opportunities |

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance.
- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for attending school if something comes up. Contact family members, friends, or other parents for help.
- Keep track of your student's attendance through the *Campus Family Portal*, or by messaging your student's teachers.
- Talk to your students' teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.