



January 2023

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The Tenafly Public School District is committed to providing its students with a comprehensive, rigorous curriculum and diverse, innovative learning opportunities that allow students to achieve and exceed their greatest potential. The best curricula, however, can only be successful when classroom seats are filled.

The 2016 implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act* required states to re-examine the amount of attention given to attendance when assessing public school districts. It also resulted in changes to attendance recording and placed strict limitations on the days when students could be absent from school without the absence counting against their attendance. The strong focus on attendance is due in part to the vast amount of research performed in recent years to show just how important daily school attendance is to students' success.

As per the 2016 *Every Student Succeeds Act*, the attendance percentages of school districts must be reported annually. In NJ, this is done through the NJ School Performance Reports. We are so proud that ***all of Tenafly Public Schools are meeting this requirement, each having student attendance percentages above 90%.***

Parents, we thank you for your work in ensuring that your children attend school regularly, on time, and prepared for each school day. We extend our thanks to you now for your continuation of such practices in the future. While we never want children to be in school when they are sick, we certainly do not want them missing school for unwarranted reasons. Together we recognize that the practices instilled now can set the foundation for lifelong habits that will likely pay off when he/she is away at college and deciding whether or not to attend class . . . or when he/she is employed in a full-time career and deciding whether or not to report to work.

**On the pages that follow, we are providing information about the legal definition of an “absence” and the effect that all absences have upon your child and the district as a whole.** I encourage you to review this information with your child, and consider it whenever an absence, for reason other than illness is anticipated.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bruce Watson'.

Bruce Watson  
Interim Superintendent of Schools

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## **Individual Student Attendance Requirements of the *Every Student Succeeds Act (2016)***

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***Of the days that school is in session (minimum is 180), students are expected to be marked as present at least 90% of the time. Any student who falls below this percentage of time present is deemed “chronically absent.”***

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It is the district’s responsibility to monitor and identify any indication that suggests a student may be suffering from chronic absenteeism for unwarranted reasons (illness, family emergency, etc.).

This issue must be addressed actively by the school by working with the student and his/her parents/caregiver to improve attendance and prevent further absenteeism.

### **REASONS FOR ABSENCES**

All absences from school MUST be reported to the school before the start of the school day. This ensures our awareness that the student is safe and sound. Reported reasons for absences should be limited to serious reasons such as these:

- Illness
- Family Emergency
- Funeral/Family Death
- Court Appearance

Regardless of the reason, EVERY ABSENCE COUNTS towards the student’s attendance percentage. Therefore, absences deemed “excused” for the reasons noted above are, indeed, absences and count towards the maximum allowance of 18/year/student (10% of 180 = 18 absences/student/year).

### Specific absences ARE NOT DEDUCTED from a Student’s Total Number of Absences

The ONLY reasons the State of New Jersey allows students to be absent WITHOUT it counting against their attendance are as\* follows:

- Religious Observance (must be documented by parent/caregiver)
- College Visit (3/year for students in grades 11 and 12 ONLY)
- Take Our Children To Work Day (must be documented by parent/caregiver)

*\*The only other time a student may not be in school, but the absence does not count against him/her is if the student receives bussing from the district and the district is unable to provide bussing on the given day.*

## **THE STANDARD (FULL) SCHOOL DAY**

For a student in any full-day program to be marked present on a standard day of school, he/she MUST be present in school for at least one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon.

- If a student is present for one hour in the morning session, but not for one hour in the afternoon session, he/she is AM Present and PM Absent.
- If a student is present for one hour in the afternoon session, but not for one hour in the morning session, he/she is PM Present and AM Absent.
- Both of these scenarios result in a half-day's absence for the student.

For a student in any half-day program to be marked present on a standard school day, he/she MUST be present in school for at least one hour.

## **HOME INSTRUCTION**

Student who are on an approved "Home Instruction" plan are marked as Present on days school is in session as long as they are satisfying the criteria of the Home Instruction plan designed for them.

## **FIELD TRIPS AND SCHOOL SPONSORED, OFF-SITE ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS**

When a student is participating in a school trip or any other school-sponsored program, under the guidance and direction of a teacher, the student is considered and marked as Present.

## **ABSENCES DUE TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION (E.G.: SUSPENSION)**

Students assigned to full-day In-School Suspension or Out of School Suspension are marked as Absent since they are not continuing with the curriculum appropriately under the guidance and direction of a teacher certified in each content area.

When only a portion of the school day is spent in In-School Suspension, it does not result in an absence.

## **EXTENDED TRAVEL WITH FAMILY**

Travel with family, for vacation or other purposes, is not a recognized reason for absence and is not endorsed by the Tenafly Public Schools, the State of New Jersey or by ESSA Regulations.

It is the collective belief of all three groups that students should be present, in school with their peers on all days school is in session provided they are healthy. Vacations should be scheduled for days/breaks/time when school is not in session.

We do recognize, however, that it is a family's prerogative to remove children from school for travel/other "educational" reasons.

In these situation, and since students are not in school receiving the instruction that is a vital component to the homework assignments, It is not the district's obligation to provide work for students to complete during the travel time. It is expected that students will be encouraged to read daily and will be engaged in stimulating academic activities during their time out of school. It will be the student's responsibility to make up the work within the time frame allowed by policy upon his/her return to school.

Any travel that is less than 10 consecutive days in total will be accumulated as absences for the student.

Any travel that is equivalent to or greater than 10 consecutive days will result in the student's disenrollment from the Tenafly Public Schools.

The student is removed from our roster, just as he/she would be if he/she were moving/transferring. Depending on the circumstances of the travel and information available pertaining to the child's return date, the parent/caregiver may be required to re-enroll the student into the district, completing and submitting all required residency paperwork, health information, etc. upon return to district.

**UPON DISENROLLMENT, THE STUDENT FORFEITS HIS/HER PLACE IN THE SCHOOL AND IN HIS/HER ASSIGNED CLASS/CLASSES**

Therefore, at the time of re-enrollment the student MAY or MAY NOT be re-assigned to his/her previous school, class, or schedule. Any return to his/her previous school and class/classes will depend upon a variety of factors which will be assessed accordingly. We will do our best to return the student to his/her previous placement, but there are absolutely no guarantees that this will happen.

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