



*Serving With Pride The
Township of Manalapan
and the
Borough of Englishtown*

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Dear Parent/Guardian:

As we prepare for September 2021, I wanted to take a moment to address our attendance policy. As you are aware, continuity of instruction is an important component of student achievement and success.

A few years back, we did have a concern over chronic absenteeism, which is defined as a child not being present for 10% of the school days in which the child is enrolled. After a revision of our [District Attendance Policy](#) and updates in our protocols, we saw a great improvement. Last year, due to COVID-19, we were more relaxed with our protocols. But now as we prepare for September, we once again would like to stress the importance of attendance and share these protocols.

To determine if a student's absence is excused or unexcused, we utilize the following guidelines:

- A child may be marked excused if the student is absent for the observance of a religious holiday pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 through 16, for Take Your Child to Work Day, or any other absence determined to be excused by the Commissioner of Education and/or a New Jersey Department of Education rule.
- A child may be marked unexcused, not truant, if there is parent notification of a student illness, if the student is required to attend court; when it is consistent with an IEP or IHP; if a student is suspended, a family illness or death; necessary medical and dental appointments; or any other reason that is deemed not truant by the Principal upon written request from the parent or guardian.
- For all other possibilities, the student will be marked unexcused, truant.

The school district will take the following actions based on attendance:

- If a child has 5 or more unexcused absences of any kind, a letter will be mailed home and placed in the child's cumulative folder. If these are truant absences, administration may request a parent meeting/phone conference to develop a collaborative attendance improvement plan.
- If a child has 10 or more unexcused absences of any kind, a letter will be mailed home and placed in the child's cumulative folder. If these are truant absences, a truancy referral will be made to the district attendance officer at whose discretion a court referral will be made. The district attendance officer may also contact the parents/guardians for a meeting.

- If a child has 15 or more unexcused absences of any kind, a letter will be mailed home and placed in the child's cumulative folder. This letter will serve as initial notification that an attendance review committee will convene at the end of the year to determine whether or not the student will be retained or promoted.
- If a child has 15 or more unexcused absences of any kind, they will be identified by the State of New Jersey as a "chronically absent" student. The attendance review committee will automatically recommend the following: Students will be required to attend the district summer program with 90% attendance in order to be considered for promotion to the next grade level.

Unfortunately, this year there will be instances in which students will need to quarantine or isolate. Our goal is to make sure these instances do not affect continuity of instruction and our students are given an opportunity to still participate in their learning. If a student needs to quarantine or isolate due to COVID-19 compatible symptoms, testing positive for COVID-19, being an unvaccinated close contact, or anything similar, one of following alternate instruction will be offered based on the child's instructional needs, program, the amount of students quarantining and grade level:

- Students may receive synchronous instruction with their current classes. The child will be marked present for the day.
- Students may receive 10 hours of virtual home instruction individually or in small groups. If a child in Grades K-8 completes 4 hours and a child in ½ day Pre-K completes two hours and 15 minutes of synchronous and asynchronous instruction, they will be marked present for the day.
- If parents prefer not to have their child receive virtual instruction, they can be provided with asynchronous class assignments. The child will be marked as an unexcused absence, not truant for the day.

The New Jersey Department of Health and the New Jersey Department of Education recently updated their close contact guidance. In the K-12 indoor classroom setting, the close contact definition excludes students who were within 3 to 6 feet of an infected student (laboratory-confirmed or a clinically compatible illness) where both the infected student and the exposed student(s) correctly and consistently wore well-fitting masks the entire time. This exception does not apply to teachers, staff, or other adults in the indoor classroom setting. All Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines can be found [here](#).

If you have questions regarding attendance, please reach out to your child's building administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Santora". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Nicole Santora, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools