



DR. JOHN HUGH GILLIS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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October 17th, 2017

Dear Students and Parents/Guardians:

Further to the letter dated September 22, 2017, sent to you from Superintendent of Schools, Ford Rice, regarding the new Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy that came into effect on October 1, 2017, please note the following additional information in regards to the implementation of this Policy at our school:

The Policy recognizes that regular attendance at school supports greater student success and achievement. Attendance supports student learning and promotes a sense of responsibility that students will need as they transition from the school system to post-secondary studies and/or the workforce.

Students:

- are responsible to attend school regularly and punctually;
- are expected to be present and prepared for the beginning of class;
- are responsible for catching up on any work missed as a result of an absence or absences;
- are strongly encouraged to communicate with their teacher in advance of a planned absence to discuss steps that they can take to mitigate the risk of falling behind in their coursework.

Parents/guardians:

- Are responsible for monitoring and ensuring that their children maintain regular attendance and arrive at school on time;
- Are responsible for communicating the reason for their child(ren)'s absence to the school;
- Are responsible for avoiding making commitments for their children during school hours;
- Are responsible for providing schools with a timely explanation of a student's absence;
- Are responsible for attending meetings and working with the school if their child's absenteeism needs to be addressed.

Teachers:

- Are responsible for monitoring and recording student attendance every day and for identifying potential issues related to chronic lateness and/or absenteeism;
- will take reasonable steps to promote and support regular attendance;
- will communicate with students and/or parents/guardians when concerns related to attendance arise;
- are not required to prepare additional materials or release test/examination materials prior to their release to the class.

The Policy includes the following two definitions:

- “Absence” refers to any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity.
- “Late arrival” means a student arriving to class at any point beyond the scheduled start time.

Responses to Student Absenteeism and Chronic Lateness

A staged approach to responding to student absenteeism and chronic lateness will be followed. Responses to student absenteeism and chronic lateness will vary based on the age, grade, and development of the student, the professional judgment of teachers and principals, and the individual circumstances of the student. Responses may include connecting the student and/or their family with school-based or board-based supports and/or with outside agencies, if needed.

- *Increased connections* will be made after 10 per cent of class time is missed
- *Early interventions* are required when between 10 and 15 per cent of class time is missed
- *Targeted interventions* will be provided when a student has missed more than 15 per cent of class time.

IMPORTANT: Calculations determining the percentage of class time missed are based on the following absence codes found in the Parent Portal:

- Absent with notification = E
- Absent without notification = U
- Late = L
- Out of school suspension = OSS

Based on our course schedule, the following thresholds apply for the remainder of Semester 1 and Semester 2 and year long classes:

	10%	15%	20%
S1	9	14	18
S2	11	16	22
Year	10	15	20

Loss of Credit for Grades 10 to 12

At the high school level, one possible response is the loss of credit at the Grade 10 to 12 level. In order to earn a course credit in high school, students are expected to be present for at least 80 per cent of class time. A teacher can recommend loss of credit when a student has missed 20 per cent of class time due to any absences, and strong efforts have been made to improve the student’s attendance, but no improvement has been demonstrated by the student. Upon receiving the recommendation of a teacher, and working in consultation with the teacher and other school staff as appropriate, the principal will make the final decision around loss of credit. The principal is responsible for communicating the decision to the student and family. Students who lose credit(s) due to absenteeism are not eligible for credit recovery for that course.

Communication

Communication is an important part of managing student attendance. Recognizing that there are instances where parents/guardians are unable to provide the school with prior notification of a student absence (e.g., illness, injury, etc.), parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate any planned absences with the school well in advance of the absence occurring.

Promoting and supporting regular student attendance is a shared responsibility. All partners, including students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, school boards, and community partners must work together. This policy is not intended to punish or marginalize students for circumstances beyond their control. The policy provides flexibility by allowing teachers and principals to use their professional judgment to determine when there may be extenuating circumstances affecting a student's attendance. In these cases, the school will work with the student and/or their family to respond with the appropriate incentives and supports, and/or to develop accountability mechanisms that recognize the student's unique situation.

Feedback from students, parents/guardians, teachers, principals, and others will be vital in determining what aspects of the policy and operational document are working well and what aspects need adjustment. You are invited to provide feedback on the policy and its implementation at any time throughout the year directly to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development by emailing attendance@novascotia.ca.

For additional information, you are encouraged to read the Policy and Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guide available at <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/student-attendance-and-engagement-policy>.

Sincerely,

Jyl Boyle

Jyl Boyle
Acting Principal