



Briarcliff High School  
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Dear BHS Families:

As the 2023-2024 school year approaches, it is our responsibility to impress upon parents and students that consistent classroom attendance is essential to school success. Positive attendance is a key ingredient to keeping students on track academically and to healthily engaging them in all aspects of high school life. It is understood that some absences are unavoidable, and students must stay home when they are unwell. Too many absences, either partial days or full days, represent lost learning time in the classroom. Families should avoid extended vacations that require students to miss school. Kindly try to line up vacations with the school's schedule. This applies to medical appointments as well.

**Students are at risk academically if they are chronically absent (missing just two days a month or 10 percent of the school year). When too many absences occur, they can affect learning, regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused. Sporadic, not just consecutive, absences matter. Before you know it – just one or two days a month can add up to nearly 10 percent of the school year.**

- The concerns associated with chronic absence are well-documented and include serious academic, mental, and physical health problems for youth (Maynard, Salas-Wright, Vaughn, & Peters, 2012).
- Chronic absence is associated with decreased academic achievement, increased rates of special education referral, and grade retention (Kearney, 2008b).
- Youth who are chronically absent often experience externalizing and internalizing problems. For example, youth who are chronically absent engage in increased rates of delinquent behaviors, such as violence, risky sexual behaviors, and alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and other substance use (Chou, Ho, Chen, & Chen, 2006; Henry & Huizinga, 2007; Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012; Hirschfield & Gasper, 2011).
- Chronic absence is strongly related to other mental health concerns as well, such as increased risk for suicidal behavior, anxiety, and depression (DeWit, Karioja, Rye, & Shain, 2011; Vaughn et al., 2011).
- The effect of chronic absence is cumulative with research showing that a persistent pattern of chronic absence across multiple years of school is related to poorer outcomes (Connolly & Olson, 2012).
- Harmful consequences also extend to other students at the school. Students who are chronically absent require additional attention from teachers when they are present at school to address their learning and social needs (Ginsburg, Jordan, & Chang, 2014). Thus, classrooms may move at a slower pace and become less engaging, detracting from the educational experiences of other students (Gottfried, 2013).
- Further, students who are chronically absent are more likely to have behavioral issues (Egger, Costello, & Angold, 2003; Farmer et al., 2003), which may contribute to a more negative classroom environment by modeling disengaged behavior and demanding more attention from the teacher. The limited empirical studies of the adverse effects of chronic absence suggest that chronic absence affects both youth who are absent and who attend school.

As noted in the Briarcliff Board of Education Student Attendance Policy, Number 5100, Excused and Unexcused Absences are defined as follows:

*Absence: The student is not in school for a full instructional day.*

*Tardiness: The student arrives after the beginning of the instructional day.*

*Early Departure: The student is dismissed or leaves school before the end of the instructional day.*

Excused ATEDs are defined as absences, tardiness, and early departures from class or school due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads or weather conditions, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearances, attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved conferences, and school activities, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations, or such other reasons as may receive prior approval by the appropriate building principal.

Absent/Exempt is an absence for a field trip, internship, visit to school nurse or guidance counselor, or other authorized school activity.

**All other ATEDs are considered unexcused absences.**

All ATEDs must be accounted for. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school office no later than two hours after the start of the school day on which the child will be absent, tardy or dismissed early and to provide a written explanation upon the student's return to school. Parents must provide a written, signed explanation prior to any early departure (dismissal). Without the required note, the ATED will be considered unexcused.

***Parents must call the Briarcliff High School Attendance line, at 914-769-6299 and press #1 to leave a message or use School Dismissal Manager to report ATEDs.***

**When our students are not at Briarcliff High School, we notice because we care!** School only becomes more difficult when students stay home too much because they have too much work. Missing a day only exacerbates the workload causing students much distress. If a student is expressing concerns about coming to school, please contact your child's counselor, an administrator, school social worker, school psychologist, teacher or staff member for help.

During the first week of school, the administration will be holding grade forum meetings to welcome students back and provide pertinent class specific information. In these meetings, we will be heightening students' awareness that consistent period by period attendance matters to be successful academically. The Briarcliff High School Response to Intervention Team (RTI) comprised of counselors, clinicians, and administrators meet weekly to review students requiring support as well as student attendance data reports. The RTI Team discusses attendance concerns and circumstances and formulates an intervention plan. Attendance plans may include meetings with students and counselors, social worker, parents, and administrators to better understand the circumstances and devise strategies to promote student engagement.

**It is our hope that you will reinforce the connection between arriving at school promptly, instructional time and achievement with your children. We know that you, as parents/guardians, share our commitment to school attendance and your children's success.**

Sincerely,  
Diana Blank, Principal  
Daniel Goldberg, Assistant Principal