

Proposed Changes to the SVTHS Attendance Policy

Approved by SVTHS School Council on Thursday, April 10, 2025

Approved by SVRVTSD School Committee on Tuesday, April 29, 2025

PART 3. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

3-1 Attendance Rules

SVTHS recognizes that consistent, in-person school attendance is essential for student learning, growth, and development. Students who attend school regularly are more likely to have success in school and careers. When students are absent, they miss valuable instructional time and hands-on learning opportunities that are essential to their skill development. Therefore, SVTHS requires 93% attendance, limiting students to twelve (12) unexcused absences in a 180-day school year. ~~Student attendance is extremely important and one of the primary causes of student failure. You cannot learn if you are not present. Parents/guardians must require their children of school age to attend school. School is the students' present career and must be taken seriously.~~

- Reporting Student Absences. Parents or guardians are required to contact the school if their child will be absent. To report a student's absence please call 978-671-3634 on the morning of the absence. If we do not receive a telephone call and your child is not in school, we will assume you are unaware of your child's absence. The Principal or designee ~~attendance monitor~~ will then make every effort to notify ~~contact a student's~~ parent/guardian ~~based on the information in our school register~~ within three (3) days of the absence.
- Excessive Absence. ~~Attendance Rule.~~ Because there is a direct correlation between good attendance and school achievement, attendance will be closely monitored and serious consequences will result when absence is excessive. Excessive absence will be defined as more than twelve (12) unexcused absences in a school year and/or seven (7) more than four (4) days of unexcused absence in any one term of the school year. A student will be considered absent from school if they are not in attendance by 9:00 a.m. or is if they are dismissed for the day prior to 10:43am. Students cannot participate in extra-curricular school activities and events on days that they are considered absent from school, whether or not the absence is excused. If the absence occurs on a Friday (or the last day of a school week), the student will be ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activities or events over the weekend.
- Pupil-Student Absence Notification Program:
 - Student Attendance will be recorded in Aspen where parents/guardians, students, and staff will have the ability to view up-to-date records regarding excused and unexcused student absences, tardies, and dismissals.
 - The Principal or designee will notify a student's parent/guardian within three (3) days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.
 - The Principal or designee will make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed school days due to unexcused absences, at the following intervals:
 - five (5), ten (10), and twelve (12) days of unexcused absences for the school year.
 - four (4) and five (5) days of unexcused absences in any given term.

The purpose of these meetings will be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. ~~When a student has missed two (2) or more class periods for five (5) school days in the school year due to unexcused tardiness or has missed five (5) or more school days in the school year due to unexcused absences, the parent/guardian will be notified and provided with the opportunity to meet with the Principal or Principal's designee to develop an action plan to address the student's school attendance.~~

- A student who has not graduated from high school and has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence shall not be considered permanently removed (administratively withdrawn) from school unless the following steps have been taken:
 - ⊖ Within five (5) school days of a student's tenth (10th) consecutive unexcused absence, the parent/guardian and student shall be notified in writing by the Principal or Principal's designee of the student's and parent's/guardian's opportunity to participate in an ~~Exit Interview~~ **exit interview** meeting **with the Principal or designee** to discuss the student's attendance, the importance of earning a high school diploma, **the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school**, and **the alternative educational programs and services available to the student.** ~~options that may be available to the student.~~
 - Said notice ~~and meeting shall be consistent with the requirements of state law.~~ **will offer at least 2 dates and times within the next ten (10) days for the exit interview to take place, and will be issued in both English and the primary language of the home, if applicable. The ten (10) day timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed fourteen (14)**
 - **days.**
 - ⊖ The Principal or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present provided the Principal or designee has documented a good faith effort to include the **parent/guardian.** ~~Students who decline to participate in the Exit Interview meeting may be administratively unenrolled from school in accordance with M.G.L. c. 76, § 18.~~

3-2 ~~Validated~~ **Excused** Absences

In addition to the parent/guardian absence notification phone call to the school (See *'Reporting Student Absences' in Section 3-1, above*), a written note from a parent/guardian must be presented to the **Dean's office** ~~student's homeroom teacher~~ on the day the student returns to school. The note must contain an acceptable reason for the absence. ~~which include the following:~~ **Students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons:**

- Illness that can be documented with a written verification from a doctor or medical facility visited by the student on the date(s) of the absence(s).
- Court appearance documented by a written court verification.
- Hospitalization or day treatment services documented by written medical verification.
- Major religious observations.
- Extraordinary family circumstances (excused at the discretion of the Principal).
- Suspensions from school.
- **College/Career Visits (limited to 3 per year - with pre-approval)**
- ~~Hospitalization or treatment services documented by written medical verification.~~

- ~~Special note concerning concussion. Absences of students who present medical verification of concussion will be validated, and physician recommended accommodations (especially those related to school attendance) will be implemented at the discretion of the school during the student's recovery period. However, the duration of such accommodations must be specified in writing by the physician. Students and their teachers will agree on a schedule of make-up completion at the conclusion of the accommodation period.~~

If after two (2) days documentation of an absence is not received, the student will be treated as having been absent without excuse or authorization.

3-3 College/Career Visitation Policy for Excused Absence

During their junior and senior years, students can be excused for no more than three (3) school days per year for college/career visits. Students must receive prior approval for each visit and bring documentation of each visit to the Dean's office the day they return to school from their visit. All schoolwork must be completed before college/career visits, and it is the student's responsibility to collect and complete work assigned. Whenever possible, college/career visits should be made during school vacations or on weekends.

3-4 Unexcused Absences

A student with more than twelve (12) unexcused absences in a school year or more than four (4) unexcused absences in a quarter will automatically fail all academic and vocational courses that school year or term (whichever is applicable). Any absence not qualifying as an excused absence, in accordance with section 3-2, will be considered an unexcused absence. Absences considered unexcused include, but are not limited to, the following: ~~missing the school bus, assisting relatives, or completing appointments that can be made during non-school hours will not be acceptable reasons for being late or absent. Absences for the following reasons will not be excused.~~

- Illness without medical documentation
- Appointments that can be made outside of school hours
- ~~Tardy after 9:00 a.m.~~
- ~~Dismissal for the remainder of the day prior to 10:43 a.m.~~
- Truancy
- Missing the school bus
- Assisting relatives
- Driving lessons/Driver's Ed
- Family vacations taken outside of designated school vacations
- ~~Any other absence not defined as "Validated" or "Excused."~~

It is the homeroom teacher's responsibility to report absences that are not validated to the Attendance Monitor. A parent/guardian of a student who has five absences that have not been validated in any one term will receive a letter requiring a parental/guardian conference with the Dean of Students. A student who has five (5) unexcused absences in any two (2) terms during one school year may be placed on probation for the duration of the term. Under probation, the student will be unable to participate in extracurricular, athletic, and social activities, and if applicable, will have driving privileges suspended, and will be removed from co-op.

A student who has four (4) seven (7) unexcused absences in any one term will immediately fail all academic and vocational courses for the term, and will receive grades on all courses of not more than 59%. This student has violated the 85% attendance rule and will be placed on probation for the next full term. Probation will be

~~defined as above. (This may carry over to the next school year if a returning student violates the 85% rule during the fourth term of any one year.) The parent/guardian of a student who has seven (7) unexcused absences in any one term will receive a letter requiring a parent/guardian conference with the guidance department.~~

Parents/guardians should avoid planning trips and extended vacations when school is in session since such interruptions to instructional continuity negatively impact teaching and learning.

~~Parents/guardians who nevertheless schedule such absences must contact the Director of Academic Programs at least two (2) weeks in advance, so that the students can personally make arrangements with each teacher: (a) to acquire all assigned tasks prior to the absence and (b) to submit all assigned tasks and to schedule makeup assessments upon the student's return to school.~~ No student may participate in or attend a school function unless they are in attendance during the regular school day. Any exception must be secured from the Principal or the Principal's designee.

3-5 Individual Course Attendance

Students are expected to maintain 93% attendance or better in each of their academic and vocational/technical courses. A student with excessive unexcused absences in a given course (defined as more than 4 unexcused absences in a quarter, or more than 12 unexcused absences in a school year) will be subject to automatic failure in that course. A student will be considered as unexcused absent from a course if they miss that course due to an unexcused tardy, an unexcused dismissal, or an unexcused absence from school.

3-6 Attendance Make-up Days for Unexcused Absences

Students will be allowed to attend attendance make-up sessions if they exceed four (4) unexcused absences in a given quarter, or twelve (12) unexcused absences for the year. This applies to both daily total absences, and course-based absences, whether due to being absent, tardy, or dismissed early from school. Make up sessions will be offered throughout the year based on need, on designated Saturdays and designated days during school vacation weeks. Each attendance make-up day will be 4 hours in length.

Make up sessions will be staffed by at least one Shawsheen educator (depending on the number of students present). Students will be expected to report to make-up days with their school-issued laptops and any resources they need (textbooks, assignments, etc.) to complete their assignments.

In order to receive credit for an attendance make-up session, students must arrive on time with the necessary materials and remain engaged for the full duration. If students arrive late or leave early, they will receive no credit for that make-up session. Students who successfully complete the required number of make-up sessions will be able to earn full course credits instead of receiving automatic failures. Students will be limited to two (2) attendance make-up days per quarter, and no more than six (6) attendance make-up days per school year. All school rules will be in effect during attendance make-up days.

3-7 Appealing Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences exceeding the allowable amount (12) may be appealed to the Principal. Each student can access the appeal process one (1) time over their four years of school at SVTHS.

3-8 Truancy

A student is considered truant if they are absent from school without permission from a parent/guardian. A day of truancy is counted as an unexcused absence.

~~Truancy is defined as being absent without authorization or valid excuse.~~

- ~~• First offense: The student will receive five (5) detentions. Written notice of the offense will be mailed to his/her parents/guardians. All work must be made up but can receive no more than a minimum passing credit.~~
- ~~• Second offense: The student's parents/guardians will be requested to attend a parental/guardian conference within twenty four (24) hours. The student will be assigned a Saturday detention.~~
- ~~• Third offense: The student's status which will include the written recommendation of shop instructors, academic teachers and his/her guidance counselor will be reviewed. A parental/guardian conference will be scheduled with the Dean of Students to discuss other possible considerations including, but not limited to, suspension in or out of school.~~

If a student leaves school property during the school day without permission, they will not be allowed to re-enter that day without permission from the Principal or the Principal's designee.

3-9 Dismissals

Students having dismissal notes should present these to the ~~school~~ **main** office **during homeroom** ~~early in the day~~ for a dismissal pass. If for any reason a student needs to be dismissed from school, all arrangements should be made prior to the dismissal. These include a note from home (signed and dated by the parent/guardian) specifying the date, time, and specific reason for the dismissal. **Telephone dismissals are not allowed. In extenuating circumstances, an email dismissal through the Dean's office will be allowed if a phone dismissal is requested. The email request for dismissal must come from one of the email addresses on file for a parent/legal guardian.** ~~The Principal or designee will not allow any student to be dismissed from school by reason of a telephone call.~~ Any student leaving school because of illness or other unforeseen emergency may be dismissed by the Nurse, the Principal, or the Principal's designee only. ~~Students being dismissed before 10:43 a.m. will be considered absent.~~ **In order for a dismissal to be excused, the reason for the dismissal must meet the expectations outlined in section 3-2.**

- Students will be considered Dismissed Present if they are dismissed after 10:43am and arrived to school by 7:30am.**
- Students will be considered Dismissed Absent if they are dismissed before 10:43am.**
- Students cannot participate in extra-curricular activities or events on days they are dismissed early from school.**
- On half days (when the dismissal time is 10:43am), students must report by 7:30am and cannot be dismissed before 10:00am or they will be considered Dismissed Absent.**
- Starting with the 6th unexcused dismissal, students will receive one office detention for each dismissal.**

In order for a student to attend or participate in an after school sponsored activity, including athletic events, they must be present for the full school day on the day of the event or activity. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Principal or the Principal's designee.

3-10 Tardies

Students must stop and get a tardy pass from the front office when they enter the building after 7:30am. In order for a tardy to be excused, the reason for the tardy must meet the expectations outlined in section 3-2.

- Students will be marked tardy if they arrive to homeroom after 7:30am.
- Students will be considered Tardy Present if they arrive before 9:00am and stay until 2:04pm.
- Students will be considered Tardy Absent if they arrive after 9:00am.
- Students will be considered Absent if they arrive Tardy after 9:00am and are dismissed before the end of the school day.
- Students cannot participate in extra-curricular activities or events on days they are Tardy Absent from school.
- On half days (when the dismissal time is 10:43am), students must report by 8:15am and remain until 10:43am to be considered Tardy Present.
- Starting with the 6th unexcused tardy, students will receive one office detention for each tardy.

~~A note stating the reason for the tardy arrival is an explanation and not necessarily an excuse. The Principals or the Principal's designee will decide whether or not the tardy arrival is excused.~~

After the ~~fifth~~ **seventh** tardy, the ~~Principal or designee~~ **Dean of Students** will send a letter to the parents/guardians of the student to notify them of the unacceptable behavioral pattern. After the tenth tardy, students with parking passes will lose this privilege for thirty (30) days. ~~Beginning with the eleventh tardy, students will receive a detention for each tardy that is not validated.~~

~~When a student misses two (2) or more classes for five (5) days or more in a school year due to tardiness, the parents/guardians will be notified in writing and invited to a meeting to develop an action plan to address the student's attendance.~~

3-11 Permanent Withdrawal

The District complies with the requirements of M.G.L. c. 76, § 18, in regards to permanent withdrawal of a student from high school.