

Northwest High School

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September 1, 2011

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of an important change in attendance procedures. Student attendance in all classes is critically important to maximize student learning, attain good grades, and earn credits in high school. Due to inconsistencies in the implementation of attendance procedures and resulting inequities among students across Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high schools, the loss of credit procedures were eliminated during the 2010–2011 school year. However, it was found that the elimination of these procedures during this past school year resulted in an unprecedented number of students being either late to class or not attending class, particularly seniors in their second semester.

As a result of these findings, a team consisting of high school principals and other MCPS staff members worked to create a plan for the 2011–2012 school year to address these issues. The following procedures will be implemented at all high schools for this upcoming school year and are designed to bring consistency to addressing student attendance issues and to reinforce the expectations that class attendance is critical to student learning:

- Students with three unlawful absences in a class will be warned of the possibility of failure and referred to their counselors and administrators. The counselor/administrative team will consult with each student and parent/guardian, verify reasons for the absences, and determine appropriate attendance interventions.
- Students who are unlawfully absent from class five times will be considered in danger of failing the course. They will be required to submit an appeal of the recording of their absences if they or their parents/guardians believe that any absences were recorded incorrectly, or an attendance intervention plan. The counselor/administrative team will assist the student and consult with the teacher regarding requirements for make-up work and the administrator for any behavioral issues. This information will be shared with the student and the student's parents/guardians.
- Attendance appeal and intervention plan forms will be available in the counseling and administrative offices and on the school's website.
- Unexcused tardies will be recorded and three unexcused tardies will equal one unexcused/unlawful absence. A tardy is defined as "late to class."
- A new attendance program will be part of the MCPS current grade book program (Pinnacle) and, if warranted, you will automatically receive one of the following:
 - A warning letter or an e-mail if your student has three unlawful absences.
 - A letter or e-mail if your student has five unlawful absences to inform you that your student will fail the class unless an appeal or an attendance intervention plan is completed.
 - **Please be sure our main office has current home and e-mail addresses.**
- The new attendance program also will—
 - automatically send an e-mail informing the student's counselor and administrators when notices are generated;
 - identify students who are in danger of failing, to assist counselors and administrators in the development of attendance intervention plans;
 - provide period-by-period attendance reports accessible by teachers, counselors, and administrators; and
 - provide an automatic notice to administrators of teachers not taking attendance.

Thank you for your support. Class attendance is critical to student learning, and I expect that these new procedures will provide additional support in ensuring our students are attending school.

Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Lance Dempsey
Principal