

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Compulsory education is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and the continued prosperity of our nation. Maintaining regular student attendance is necessary to achieve the goal of an educated citizenry.

Compulsory Attendance Ages

Under state law, full-time attendance at school is required of every child between the ages of 6 and under 17, unless he/she has received a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Exceptions:

- A. A person who graduates from high school before their 17th birthday;
- B. A person who has:
 - 1. Reached the age of 15 years or completed the 9th grade;
 - 2. Permission to leave school from that person's parent;
 - 3. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;
 - 4. Permission to leave school from the Board or its designee; and
 - 5. Agreed in writing with that person's parent and the Board or its designee to meet annually until that person's 17th birthday to review that person's educational needs. When the request to be excused from the school has been denied pursuant to this paragraph, the student's parent may appeal to the Commissioner; or
- C. A person who has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post-secondary, degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to the attendance in public school under this paragraph must be approved by the Commissioner.
- D. A person who is enrolled in an online learning program or course.

Attendance of Children Five Years of Age or Older and Under Six Years of Age:

Although not required to enroll in school, a child five years of age or older and under six years of age who is enrolled in public school and who has not formally withdrawn is required to attend that school during the time it is in session.

Excusable Absences from School

- A Person's absence from school is excused when the absence is for one of the following reasons:

- A. Personal health, including physical, mental and behavioral health;
 - B. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;
 - C. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;
 - D. A family emergency;
 - E. A planned absence for personal or educational purpose which has been approved; or
- E. Education disruption resulting from homelessness, unplanned psychiatric hospitalization, unplanned hospitalization for a medical emergency, foster care placement, youth development center placement or some other out-of-district placement that is not otherwise authorized by an IEP or other education plan or Superintendents' agreement. Education disruption: does not apply to a student who is out of school for 10 or more consecutive school days as a result of a planned absence for a reason such as a family event or medical absence for planned hospitalization or recovery.

Parental Responsibility

Parents are responsible for the school attendance of students who are under 17 years of age. The School Committee expects school administrators and staff to work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

Alternatives to Attendance in Public School

Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows:

- A. A private school approved for attendance purposes pursuant to state law and regulations;
- B. A private school recognized by the Department of Education as providing equivalent instruction;
- C. A home instruction program that complies with state law and regulations;
- D. Any other manner arranged by the School Committee and approved by the Commissioner of Education; or
- E. Pursuant to 20-A MRS Sections 5104-A or 8605 (approved alternative education program or adult education program).

Credit for Attendance at a Private School

A student shall be credited with attendance at a private school only if a certificate showing the name, residence and attendance the person at the school, signed by the person who or persons in charge of the school, has been filed with the school officials of the administrative unit in which the student resides.

Discontinuation of Home Instruction

If the home instruction program is discontinued, students of compulsory school age must be enrolled in a public school or an equivalent instruction alternative as provided for by law. The receiving school shall determine the placement of the student. At the secondary level, the principal of the receiving school shall determine the value of the prior educational experience toward meeting the standards of Maine's System of Learning Results.

Adult Students

Secondary school students 20 years of age or more will only be admitted to the school unit with prior Board approval.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 5001-A; 5003; 5104-A; 5201; 8605 Chapters 125 and 127
(Maine Department of Education Rules)

Cross Reference: JFC – Dropout Prevention Committee
JHB – Truancy
IHBG – Home Schooling

Adopted: February 5, 1979

Revised: January 11, 2001

Reviewed: February 13, 2003

Reviewed: June 14, 2007

Revised: April 14, 2008

Reviewed: June 14, 2010

Revised: December 12, 2011

Revised: December 10, 2012

Reviewed: November 14, 2016

Reviewed: April 8, 2019

Revised: January 9, 2023