

JENNIFER PHOSTOLE
Principal



EAST RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Assistant Principal:
Thomas P. Grace

10 East Ridge Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877
Telephone: 203-894-5500
Fax: 203-431-2851

August 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The state of Connecticut has guidelines which schools must follow regarding student attendance. Absences are categorized as either excused or unexcused according to the guidelines. A student's absence from school is considered unexcused unless they meet one of the following criteria:

- A. the absence meets the definition for an excused absence (including documentation requirements); or
- B. the absence meets the definition of a disciplinary absence.

For absences, there are two levels that pertain to a student. The first nine absences in a school year can be excused by a parent for any reason the parent chooses by contacting the school within 48 hours of the absence. Our expectation is that you will enter the absence in School Dismissal Manager (SDM) or leave a message on the school's attendance line, 203-894-5500 option 1, to report an absence. After 48 hours, a written note from the parent/guardian must be provided. Any absence above the ninth absence is in level 2 (see the chart) and must fall into a particular category with additional documentation in order to be approved. The chart below gives more detailed information regarding the possibilities.

The State Board of Education definitions establish two levels of criteria for an absence to be considered an excused absence (see table below).

Level	Total # of Days Absent*	Acceptable Reasons for a Student Absence to Be Considered Excused	Documentation Required within 10 Days
1	One through nine	Any reason that the student's parent or guardian approves.	Parent or guardian note only.
2	10 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student illness (<i>Note: to be deemed excused, an appropriately licensed medical professional must verify all student illness absences, regardless of the absence's length.</i>)• Student's observance of a religious holiday.• Death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family.• Mandated court appearances (additional documentation required).• The lack of transportation that is normally provided by a district other than the one the student attends (parental documentation is not required for this reason).• Extraordinary educational opportunities pre-approved by district administrators. (Opportunities must meet certain criteria. See below for details).	Parent or guardian note and in some cases additional documentation (see details of specific reason).

* Note: The total number of days absent includes both excused and unexcused absences.

If student absences are at the level 2 threshold and do not have the appropriate required documentation, they are considered unexcused. There are guidelines that all schools must follow for unexcused absences. Connecticut state law reads: “**Sec. 10-198a. Policies and procedures concerning truants.** (a) For purposes of this section, "truant" means a child age five to eighteen, inclusive, who is enrolled in a public or private school and has *four unexcused absences from school in any one month or ten unexcused absences from school in any school year.*”

Effective July 1, 2021, as per Public Act 21-46, all students are allowed two Mental Health Wellness (MHW) Days in a school year. Similar to absences one through nine, parents/guardians will need to notify their child’s school that their child will be utilizing one of these MHW days and are not required to provide any additional documentation. Please note that MHW can not be taken on consecutive school days.

If you have additional questions, please access the State of Connecticut Attendance Guidelines on the RPS website.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Phostole