



Smithtown Central School District

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August 2026

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we begin the 2026–2027 school year, we want to share some critical updates regarding the Smithtown Central School District's Attendance Policy #5100. Following a comprehensive review by district administration, the district Attendance Committee and the Board of Education, the district is transitioning from a grade-based penalty system to a credit-denial model focused on Deficient Learning Time (DLT) for students with excessive absences in credit-bearing courses.

Research shows that regular school attendance is a major component of academic success. Our updated policy is designed to minimize absences, latenesses, and early departures (referred to as "ATEDs"), identify negative attendance patterns early, and provide proactive interventions to help our students succeed.

Please review the major policy changes detailed below:

Previously, excessive unexcused absences resulted in a temporary grade of "Incomplete" that students could resolve by making up missing assignments.

Under the new policy, this academic buffer has been removed. Exceeding the established absence limits now triggers an automatic Deficient Learning Time (DLT) designation, which results in a denial of course credit. (Information regarding the DLT appeals process is detailed later in this letter.)

Furthermore, both excused and unexcused absences count toward these credit-denial thresholds, as high rates of absenteeism, even when excused, disrupt continuous learning and academic progress.

- Full-Year Course: Credit is denied if a student exceeds 28 total absences.
- Half-Year / Alternate-Day Full-Year Course: Credit is denied if a student exceeds 14 total absences.
- Alternate-Day Semester Course: Credit is denied if a student exceeds 7 total absences.

It is also important to note that every three (3) tardies or latenesses to a specific class will convert to and count as one (1) absence, directly impacting the DLT thresholds.

To provide greater clarity, the district now categorizes out-of-class time into three distinct groups:

- **Unexcused ATEDs:** Any absence not meeting excused or exempt criteria. These may result in disciplinary action.
- **Excused ATEDs:** Absences due to personal illness, significant family illness, impassable roads, quarantine, medical appointments, approved cooperative work programs, or military obligations. Crucially, personal illness now mandates clear verification, requiring a parent note, a physician's letterhead/script, or official medical portal documentation.
- **Exempt Absences:** These select absences do not count toward the DLT credit-denial thresholds. They include school suspensions, home tutoring, mandated court appearances, assigned music lessons, school-approved field trips, pre-approved college visits (up to 5 days with official documentation), immediate family bereavement, and religious observance.

Parents must notify the school's attendance office within 24 hours of any ATED and provide a written excuse immediately upon the student's return.

If a student receives a DLT designation, dropping the course is not permitted.

- Students are expected to continue attending class daily and actively participate in all instructional opportunities.
- Teachers will continue to take attendance and grade all tests, quizzes, and assignments.
- To recover the denied credit, the student must successfully complete the corresponding course during summer school, if available.

Students and parents maintain the right to appeal a DLT credit-denial designation under a highly structured workflow and timeline. There are three grounds for appealing a DLT:

- Appeals Related to Alleged Attendance Coding Errors
- Appeals Related to an Alleged Failure to Communicate
- Appeals Related to Extenuating Circumstances
- An appeal must be submitted online via the official digital form within five (5) school days of receiving the DLT notification and the form can be found [HERE](#).
- Students completely forfeit their right to appeal if they intentionally cut classes. The allowance for cuts has been reduced by half:
 - Semester / PE Courses: More than 2 cuts forfeits the right to appeal.
 - Full-Year Courses: More than 4 cuts forfeits the right to appeal.

Once submitted, the digital form is automatically routed to appropriate staff for review, with the building principal rendering a final written determination within 10 school days.

This plain-language summary of the full policy is being distributed to all families with students enrolled in credit bearing courses. We ask that you log into your Parent Portal account and follow the prompts to acknowledge you have read and understand these updated guidelines. A

copy of Policy #5100-Attendance can be found [HERE](#) and use the following link to access our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Collectively, we must work together to decrease absenteeism and maximize academic opportunities for all students, and we greatly appreciate your anticipated cooperation. Please contact your school's main office if you have any questions.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Kevin R. Simmons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. Kevin R. Simmons
Assistant Superintendent for Administration and Instruction