



A photo of the 2024-2025 absence documentation form taken Sunday, October 27. Photo by Eugene Caibal ('25)



DR. LORI RHODES is the Superintendent of Stamford high schools and is the author of the latest attendance policy. Photo via Stamford Public Schools

Unexcused Absences and a Frustrated Student Body: Westhill weighs in on new Attendance Policy

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The new attendance policy for high schools instituted by Superintendent of Stamford High Schools, Dr. Lori Rhodes, has caused great controversy and discussion amongst high school students and staff.

The most notable feature of this new policy is that four unexcused absences used during one quarter will lead to failure of the class, unless the student takes an attendance recovery program to regain the credit.

This is quite the contrast to the attendance policy from last school year, where students' attendance did not count towards their grade whatsoever. The new, more punitive approach has seemed to provide reason for great uproar within the student population.

Madeline Rosenhaft ('25) said the policy "puts unnecessary pressure on the student body, in comparison to the old one."

Landon Barrett ('25) said that "it's a shock to the system, especially for the upperclassmen due to how comfortable we were with simply getting our work done, without the pressure of showing up everyday."

Although the student body seems to collectively disagree with the attendance policy, Mr. Spiro Milas, a school counselor at Westhill High School provides deeper insight from a staff perspective.

"Personally, I do not find this policy to be too punitive. This is because when I was in high school,

the consequences for absenteeism were much more harsh, compared to the current Westhill policy. I could understand with such a large student body that change takes time, but there are certainly differences in the policy compared to last year. What we can all agree upon is that strong attendance will only equate to better learning, and we should all support our students towards that goal in a comprehensive manner."

Mrs. Sheryl Berkley, a teacher at Westhill High School, agrees with the insight from Mr. Milas. "First and foremost, attendance is one of the most important parts of education. In order to learn, students need to be participating in the school community and the classroom community. The policy itself is not as important as the behavior of the members of the school community."

Berkley said "Our goal should not be attendance compliance, our goal should be creating an environment where our young people *want* to learn, and the teachers *want* to teach."

Despite the differences of opinion on the new policy throughout Westhill, each person makes valid points. We will soon see how this policy impacts everyone in the high schools of our district.

"Happy people learn more, and therefore the outcome could only be more positive," Berkley said.