



PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE

A GUIDE FOR WEST NIAGARA STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, updates to Ontario's Growing Success policy require **attendance and participation to contribute to students' final grades in secondary courses.**

At West Niagara Secondary School, we want students and families to understand what this change means and how attendance and participation will be assessed in a way that is clear, consistent, and responsive to individual student strengths and needs.

COURSE GRADE BREAKDOWN

Calculating Marks for Attendance and Participation			
	Attendance	Participation	Total
Grade 9 and 10 Courses	7.5%	7.5%	15%
Grade 11 and 12 Courses	5%	5%	10%

Attendance and Participation are **evaluated separately and weighted equally.**

ATTENDANCE

Excused absences do not negatively affect the attendance mark. **Only unexcused absences reduce a student's attendance mark.**

An excused absence may include situations such as illness, medical appointments, family responsibilities or emergencies, religious observances, or other circumstances that require a student to be away from school.

It is important that families report absences to the school in a timely manner so that the attendance record accurately reflects whether an absence is excused. An absence that has not yet been reported may initially appear as unexcused and could affect the attendance information being used to determine the mark.

HOW ATTENDANCE CAN IMPACT GRADES

Attendance	
Student attendance marks will be reduced only for unexcused absences . Excused absences cannot negatively affect a student's mark. Attendance percentages will be calculated using the total scheduled instructional periods for the course.	
Level	Attendance
Level 4 (80-100%)	0-2.5% unexcused absences
Level 3 (70-79%)	>2.5%-5% unexcused absences
Level 2 (60-69%)	>5%-7.5% unexcused absences
Level 1 (50-59%)	>7.5%-10% unexcused absences
Level R (below 50%)	>10% unexcused absences

*Students in asynchronous online courses are expected to log in at least once per week – a week without a log in is recorded as 5 absences. Best practice is to log in daily and stay connected with the learning.

Each teacher only has approximately 75 minutes each day with your student! Being present, arriving on time, and minimizing time out of class when possible helps students make the most of that time - connecting with their teacher and peers, participating in learning, asking questions, receiving feedback, and building momentum in their course.

When a student needs to be absent, the priority is always their well-being. An excused absence will not reduce either the attendance mark or the participation mark. If a student is away, they will not lose participation marks for learning opportunities they were not present to take part in. Their participation mark is based on the evidence teachers gather when the student is present and engaged in learning.

PARTICIPATION - ENGAGING ALL LEARNERS

Participation is about how students engage in learning while they are in class. We recognize that participation does not look the same for every learner. A student does not need to regularly raise their hand or speak in front of the whole class to demonstrate meaningful participation.

Participation may include:

- contributing an idea, question, connection, or perspective
- discussing thinking with a partner or small group
- asking questions or seeking clarification
- responding to a teacher or peer
- engaging in classroom learning activities
- collaborating and problem-solving with others
- providing peer feedback
- completing an entrance or exit card
- responding with a thumbs up/thumbs down or another hand signal
- sharing thinking on a mini-whiteboard, sticky note, or digital response
- sorting, ranking, labeling, annotating, or reacting to ideas
- reflecting on learning or revising thinking
- demonstrating understanding through words, visuals, diagrams, or other forms of visible engagement

Students will be provided with multiple and varied opportunities to demonstrate participation, and teachers will use multiple sources of evidence gathered over time when determining a participation mark. Teachers will also consider individual learning needs, including IEPs, accommodations, language-learning needs, safety plans, and human rights obligations, when creating opportunities for students to participate.

As this is new learning for students, families, and educators, we know questions will come up. Please reach out to your student's teacher or the Main Office at any time. Together, we will work to ensure these changes are implemented thoughtfully, consistently, and in a way that supports students in being present, engaged, and successful in their learning.

100%
Culture

2024