

## STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Delaware public school attendance laws state that every parent, guardian, or other person having legal control of a child between five (5) and sixteen (16) years of age is required to send such child to school in the district of residence each day of the minimum school term beginning the first day of the school year. A child shall be considered five (5) years of age if that child celebrates his/her birthday on or before August 31 of the respective year.

### I. Definitions

**Early Dismissal:** Departure from school prior to the official ending time. All early dismissals will require a written request from the parent or guardian. Requests will not be granted over the telephone. In an emergency, persons having legal custody of the student may present themselves at the student's school office to sign an early dismissal. Upon accumulation of ten (10) unexcused early dismissals per year, the school's Attendance Review Board will be notified and a formal meeting may be requested. The Attendance Review Boards' contact with the parents will determine the cause of the student's excessive early dismissals and offer possible interventions. The school may impose disciplinary action as a consequence for repeated unexcused early dismissals from school.

**Excused Absence:** An excused absence is an absence covered under the valid and acceptable excused absences listed in this policy. A signed note from the parent or guardian stating the reason for the absence and the date will be required. It is recommended that the note be submitted the date of the student's return to school; however, the note must be submitted to the school office no later than two (2) days following the student's return to the school or the absence will be coded unexcused. Students who are eighteen years of age or older and who are legally independent may sign their own notes. Parents, guardians and students must understand that writing a note does not excuse a student for an absence unless it can be classified as a necessary and legal absence.

**Extended School Absence Request:** Parents may request, in writing, permission for their child to be excused from school for a family trip or for approved personal matters. Excuses are granted only to students with favorable attendance and academic records. This letter is requested at least one week prior to the departure. The letter should state the purpose and the date of the absence and must also be signed by the parent/guardian. Upon approval of the principal, a copy of the request letter will be attached to an administrative excuse form that must be signed by the principal. A copy of this form will be sent to the parent. It becomes the student's responsibility to obtain all assignments before he/she leaves and to complete the assignments prior to their return to school.

**Homebound:** Instruction furnished by the school district at the student's place of residence. Such instruction is normally furnished when a student's medical condition prevents her/him from attending regularly or for an extended period of time, as deemed necessary by a physician in writing.

**Make-Up Work:** Any student who has an absence from school can make-up class work and assignments missed, if the request is made within a reasonable length of time of the student's return but not to exceed three (3) days. The time allowed to complete make-up work will equal the time missed. It is the student's responsibility to take advantage of this opportunity. If the student does not make-up missed work his/her grade should reflect a failure to comply.

**School Suspension:** In-school suspension (ISS) is considered excused, but work must be completed in ISS that day. Out-of-school suspension (OSS) is considered an excused absence. Students are responsible to make up any work or tests that they miss while they are suspended. Tests missed during suspensions should be made-up within three (3) days after the suspension is fulfilled. Arrangements to complete any make-up tests or work are the responsibility of the student.

**Tardy:** A late arrival after a school's official starting time. Upon accumulation of ten (10) occurrences of unexcused tardiness per year, the school's Attendance Review Board will be notified and a formal meeting may be requested. The Attendance Review Boards' contact with the parents will determine the cause of the student's excessive tardiness and offer possible solutions to the problem. The school may impose disciplinary action as a consequence for repeated unexcused tardiness to school.

**Truancy:** Any unexcused absence will be regarded as an incident of truancy. According to 14 Delaware C, 2729 and 2730, "Truancy" or "Truant" shall refer to a pupil enrolled in grades K through 12 inclusive who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for more than three (3) days without a valid excuse during a given school year.

**Unexcused Absence:** An absence for a reason other than the valid reasons listed in this policy, or an absence with no note. More than three unexcused absences could result in truancy charges being placed against the parent/guardian(s) as provided for in Delaware Code.

## II. Attendance Procedures and Guidelines

Each school in the district will establish a "Student Attendance Review Board". The purpose of the Attendance Review Board will be to determine the cause of a student's excessive absence and evaluate possible interventions. The Review Board will consist of a minimum of three (3) people: one building administrator, one guidance counselor (if available) or one staff person, and the school nurse. Other staff, such as the attendance clerk, may be added at the discretion of the building administration. This board may meet when deemed necessary; however, it is recommended that the Attendance Review Board meet at the end of each marking period.

A designated staff person in each school building will retain and date all notes from parents/guardians for student absences for the current school year.

A designated staff person in each school building will manage attendance data and mail all required letters to the respective parents/guardians in a timely manner.

Students' attendance will be recorded daily in compliance with state regulations. It is highly recommended that notes from the doctor be submitted when applicable to accurately document absences.

For the purpose of this policy, the following conditions are recognized by the Caesar Rodney School District as being legal and necessary absences:

- a. Illness of the child, attested to by a physician, if necessary.
- b. The presence of contagious disease at the child's home subject to regulations of the Department of Health and Social Services.
- c. Death in the immediate family or in the home of grandparents. Excused time will not exceed one week. Excused time allowed for the funeral of other relatives will not exceed one day. Additional time may be allowed when services are held at long distances from the student's home.
- d. Legal business.

- e. Suspensions or expulsion from school for misconduct.
- f. Appointment with medical practitioner/remedial health treatment (includes student pregnancy).
- g. Prearranged Administrative Excuses with documented parental knowledge:
  - College visit.
  - Participation in other educational experience.
  - Family activities/trips/personal matters.
- h. Emergency situations as determined by the school principal.
- i. Religious holidays.

A student who is receiving homebound instruction in accordance with district procedures will be regarded as present and will not be penalized under any provision of this policy. However, an unexcused absence may be recorded if the student is not present, without just reason, at his/her scheduled location when a homebound instructor arrives to provide service.

Any day of summer school, any session of after school/extra instruction, or any session of mentoring which a child is required to attend as an academic improvement activity is in conformity with this policy and shall be considered a school day.

A student who is absent during regular school hours because of school-directed or district-approved activities (class trips, field trips, early dismissals for athletic participation, etc.) shall be marked as present for attendance purposes.

Exceptions to the Caesar Rodney School District Attendance Policy may be made in cases of severe family hardship or student illness by an appeal to the Attendance Review Board in each school within 10 days of written notice.

### III. Compulsory Attendance Requirements and Parent Notification

When a student accumulates more than three (3) unexcused absences, he/she is considered in violation of district policy and Delaware state law on attendance. The following actions will be considered:

- Parent notification/letter sent home
- Certified letter sent home
- Parent conference
- Visiting Teacher notified
- Possible home visit
- Charges filed in truancy court
- Notification of The Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Upon accumulation of three (3), five (5), and seven (7) unexcused absences, a letter from the school will be sent home to the parents/guardians. The school's contact with the parents/guardians will determine the cause of the student's excessive absence and offer possible interventions. Any unexcused absence will be regarded as an incident of truancy. According to 14 Delaware C, 2729 and 2730, "Truancy" or "Truant" shall refer to a pupil enrolled in grades K through 12 inclusive who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for more than three (3) days without a valid excuse during a given school year. Parents of students deemed truant will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Parents found guilty of violating Delaware's compulsory attendance requirements may be subject to fines and/or imprisonment.

The following provisions shall be applicable in regard to statewide minimum mandatory attendance requirements:

- a. Following the 10<sup>th</sup> day of unexcused absence by a student in grades K-12, the school shall immediately notify the parent or parents or guardian and a visiting teacher for the district shall visit the student's home;
- b. Following the 15<sup>th</sup> day of unexcused absence by a student in grades K-12, the student's parent or parents or guardian shall be notified by certified mail to appear at the school within 10 days of notification for a conference and counseling;
- c. Following the 20<sup>th</sup> day of unexcused absence by a student in grades K-12, the school shall refer the case for prosecution;
- d. Following the completion of prosecution of the case and the subsequent failure of the student to return to school within 5 school days thereof, the school shall immediately notify the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families requesting intervention services by the Department.

If contacted by the school pursuant to paragraph (b) of the above section, each parent/guardian of a student shall sign a contract with the district agreeing they will make every reasonable effort to:

- Have their child or children abide by the school code of conduct;
- Make certain their child attends school regularly; and
- Provide written documentation for the reasons for any absence.

Upon accumulation of ten (10), fifteen (15) and twenty (20) absences (excused or unexcused), a letter from the school will be sent home to the parents/guardians. The school's contact with the parents will determine the cause of the student's excessive absence and offer possible interventions.

Upon accumulation of ten (10) unexcused early dismissals per year, the school's Attendance Review Board will be notified and a formal meeting may be requested. The Attendance Review Boards' contact with the parents will determine the cause of the student's excessive early dismissals and offer possible interventions. The school may impose disciplinary action as a consequence for repeated unexcused early dismissals from school.

Upon accumulation of ten (10) occurrences of unexcused tardiness per year, the school's Attendance Review Board will be notified and a formal meeting may be requested. The Attendance Review Boards' contact with the parents will determine the cause of the student's excessive tardiness and offer possible interventions. The school may impose disciplinary action as a consequence for repeated unexcused tardiness to school.

Legal Refs: 14 Del. C., Ch. 27  
Adopted: August 1996  
Revised: July 2013  
Caesar Rodney School District, Wyoming, DE