

6.4 ATTENDANCE

School attendance and class participation are an integral part of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Through regular attendance, students develop patterns of behavior essential to professional and personal success in life. Regular attendance by every student is mandatory. The State of North Carolina requires that every child in the State between the ages of 7 (or younger if enrolled) and 16 attend school. Parents and legal guardians are responsible for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily. School administrators shall communicate attendance expectations to parents or guardians and work with students and their families to overcome barriers to attendance.

A. Attendance Records

School officials will keep accurate records of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. Students at the elementary and middle school levels will be considered in attendance if present at least half of the instructional day on-site in the school or at a place other than the school attending an authorized school-related activity. In high school, attendance is taken per class period and students at the high school level must be present for two-thirds (2/3) of each class period in order to be counted present for that class period. To be in attendance during remote instruction days (with the exception of the initial enrollment day), students must: (1) complete their daily assignments, either online or offline; and/or (2) have a daily check-in through two-way communication with (a) the homeroom teacher for grades K-5 or (b) for all other grade levels, each course teacher as scheduled. School officials shall communicate the attendance procedures to students and their families before the first day remote instruction begins.

B. Late Arrivals and Early Departures

Students are expected to be at school on time and to remain at school until dismissed. During the school day, students are expected to be present at the scheduled starting time for each class and to remain until the class ends.

When a student must be late to school or leave school early, a written excuse signed by a parent or legal guardian should be presented upon the student's arrival at school. Tardies or early departures may be excused for any of the reasons listed below in Section C.

Any disciplinary consequences for unexcused tardiness or unexcused early departures from school or class will be consistent with Section D of policy 6.10, Student Behavior Policies. The superintendent or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range of consequences that may be imposed on a student for such offenses. Consequences may not exceed a short-term suspension of two days.

C. Excused Absences

When a student must miss school, a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian must be presented to the student's teacher on the day the student returns after an absence. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a health care practitioner. Failure to submit

appropriate documentation as to the reason for the absence(s) within three (3) days of returning to school will result in the absence being coded as unexcused. An absence may be excused for any of the following reasons with a written excuse from the parent or guardian:

1. Illness or injury which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school;
2. Quarantine which is isolation ordered by local health officer or the State Board of Health;
3. Death in the immediate family (including but not limited to the grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters) of the student;
4. Medical or dental appointments with appropriate documentation provided to the school;
5. Attendance at the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness;
6. Religious observance (school principals are required to authorize a minimum of two excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by the faith of a student or a student's parents or legal guardian. The student shall be given the opportunity to make up any tests or other work missed due to these excused absences.);
7. Educational opportunity such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page with prior approval from the principal/designee not to exceed 5 days per year;
8. Child care for illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent (G.S. 115C-375.5);
9. A minimum of two days each academic year for visitation with the student's parent or legal guardian if the student is not identified as at risk of academic failure because of unexcused absences and the student's parent or legal guardian (a) is an active duty or inactive member of the uniformed services as defined by policy 6.39.6, Children of Military Families, and (b) has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting.

D. School-Related Activities

While recognizing the importance of classroom learning, the board also acknowledges that out-of- classroom, school-related activities can provide students with valuable experiences not available in the classroom setting. The following school-related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

1. Field trips sponsored by the school;
2. Job shadows and other work-based learning opportunities, as described in G.S. 115C-47(34a);

3. School-initiated and scheduled activities;
4. Athletic events requiring early dismissal from school; and
5. Career and Technical Education student organization activities approved in advance by the principal; and

In addition, students participating in disciplinary techniques categorized as in-school suspensions will not be counted as absent.

E. Makeup Work

In the case of excused absences, short-term out-of-school suspensions, and absences under G.S. 130A-440 (for failure to submit a school health assessment form within 30 days of entering school), the student will be permitted to make up his or her missed work (see also policies 6.1.3, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission, and 6.11.2, Procedures to be Followed for Suspensions and Expulsions of Students). Assignments missed due to participation in school-related activities also are eligible for makeup by the student. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

F. Unlawful Absences

Unlawful absences will be defined as the following:

1. A student's willful absence from school with or without the knowledge of the parent;
2. A student's absence for any reason other than those listed in B. and C. above;
3. When students are not allowed to attend school because they lack proper immunization;
4. When students are not allowed to attend school for lack of a required health assessment.

G. Unexcused Absences

The principal shall notify parents and take all other steps required by G.S. 115C-378 for excessive, unexcused absences.

Any school disciplinary consequences for unexcused absences will be consistent with Section D of policy 6.11, Student Behavior Policies. The superintendent or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range of consequences that may be imposed on a student for such offenses. Consequences may not exceed a short-term suspension of two days.

H. Chronic Absenteeism

Because class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process, any absences, whether excused or unexcused, can have a negative impact on a student's academic achievement. Regular attendance must be prioritized within each school and encouraged throughout the community. School administrators shall monitor and analyze attendance data to

develop and implement strategies for reducing chronic absenteeism. Such strategies should involve engaging students and parents, recognizing good and improved attendance, providing early outreach to families of students missing school, and identifying and addressing barriers to attendance.

When a student's absences exceed twelve (12) days in the same academic year for illness or injury and documentation from a medical professional has not previously been provided, further absences will be coded as unlawful unless documentation from a medical professional is provided to the school within three (3) days of the absence.

I. Special Circumstances

1. Students with Chronic Health Problems

No penalties will be imposed for absences due to documented chronic health problems.

2. Student Experiencing Homelessness

For students experiencing homelessness (see board policy 6.1.2, Homeless Students), school officials must consider issues related to the student's homelessness, such as a change of caregivers or nighttime residence, before taking disciplinary action or imposing other barriers to school attendance based on excessive absences or tardies.

3. Attendance Requirements for Extracurricular Activities

Absences may impact eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities. Principals shall inform students and parents of the applicable attendance standards for the various types of extracurricular activities, including interscholastic athletics. See also policy 6.48.3, Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations.

J. Miscellaneous Provisions

1. Pattern of Absences: Referral and Waivers

When a pattern of absences exists (i.e., once a student reaches six (6) daily absences within a semester relating to illnesses), school officials should be alerted to the possibility of a disability and referral is made to the Student Assistance Team to gather multiple sources of data for the purpose of determining possible eligibility under Section 504 and/or IDEA.

2. Make-up Work for Absences:

Students are permitted to make up all work missed during an absence. All work must be made up within five (5) days following the student's return to school unless the principal/designee determines that extenuating circumstances might support an extension of this time restriction. (See Section E.3, this policy.)

3. Maximum Number of Absences **for Athletic/Extracurricular Eligibility:**

There will be a maximum of sixteen (16) absences allowed for students participating in yearlong programs and eight (8) absences allowed for students participating in semester length programs. For the purpose of determining athletic/extracurricular eligibility, all middle and high school students will be allowed a maximum of eight (8) absences per semester. For the purpose of enforcement of this policy in determining athletic/extracurricular eligibility, two school quarters shall equal a semester.

Legal Reference: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 11431, et seq.; G.S. 115C-47, -84.2, -288(a), -375.5, -378 through -383, -390.2(d), -390.5, -407.5, -407.12; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, -.0103, -.0106; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003.

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