

Attendance in school and participation in class are an integral part of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Regular attendance develops 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 or legal guardians have the responsibility for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily. To be counted present, a student must be in attendance at least one-half of the school day.

**A. ATTENDANCE RECORDS**

School officials shall keep an accurate record of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. Attendance records will be used to enforce the Compulsory Attendance Law of North Carolina and this policy.

Teachers must be familiar with and comply with current rules and regulations related to attendance and absence. Principals must be familiar with current rules and regulations related to attendance and absences and regularly monitor (1) teacher compliance, (2) decisions related to classifications of absences as excused or unexcused and (3) absence cases needing further review or action.

**B. TARDINESS**

If a student is not seated or at his or her assigned station for work at the time appointed for the school day or class to begin, he or she shall be recorded as tardy for the day or class. In an effort to ensure students maintain pace, teachers may require additional work or give assignments to students who are habitually tardy.

1. Grades K-8 students who accumulate a combined total of 3 tardies to school and/or early dismissals from school will earn 1 absence. (ex. 6 tardies = 2 absences)
2. Grades 9-12 students who accumulate a combined course total of 3 tardies and/or early dismissals will earn 1 absence. (ex. 6 tardies = 2 absences)

**C. EXCUSED ABSENCES OR TARDIES**

When a student must miss school for all or part of the day, the parents/guardians should maintain and be able to furnish upon request appropriate documentation stating the reason for the absence. This documentation may be presented to the superintendent's office during a grade level retention hearing. An absence may be excused for the following reasons:

1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school as confirmed by a doctor's or physician's note;
2. isolation ordered by the State Board of Health;
3. death in the student's immediate family;
4. a student's emergency medical or dental appointment or a scheduled medical or dental appointment which has been approved in advance by the principal;
5. participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding;
6. up to two days each academic year for observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent(s);
7. participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page, with prior approval from the principal;
8. absence due to pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary; or
9. visitation with the student's parent or legal guardian, at the discretion of the superintendent or designee, if the parent or legal guardian (a) is an active duty member of the uniformed services as defined by policy 4050, 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.

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 work. (See also policies 4110, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission, and 4351, Short-Term Suspension.) The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The responsibility for securing and arranging for make-up work rests with the student at the secondary level. Teachers shall arrange the make-up work for elementary students.

#### **D. SCHOOL-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

All classroom activities are important and difficult, if not impossible, to replace if missed. Principals shall ensure that classes missed by students due to school-related activities are kept to an absolute minimum. 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 that require early dismissal from school;
5. Career and Technical Education student organization activities approved in advance by the principal; and
6. in-school suspensions.

Assignments missed for these reasons are eligible for makeup by the student. The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

#### **E. EXCESSIVE ABSENCES**

Class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process and may be taken into account in assessing academic achievement.

The principal or designee must notify a student's parent, guardian or custodian of a student's excessive absences after the student has accumulated three absences in a school year. When a student accumulates six absences, the principal or designee shall notify the student's parent, guardian or custodian by mail that he or she may be in violation of the compulsory attendance law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified by state law and local board policy.

If, after the warning letter described above has been sent, the student has any further absences in the school or semester course year, then the principal may refer the student to the Judicial Attendance Committee ("JAC"). The JAC is charged with investigating the reasons for the student's absences and informing the student's parent or guardian of available resources and assistance that will enable the student to avoid absences. The parent or guardian referred to the JAC will be strongly encouraged to follow the recommendation of the JAC and any plan developed by the JAC to prevent further absences.

Upon 10 accumulated absences in a school year, the principal or designee, in compliance with G.S. 115C-378 shall review the report of the JAC and also shall confer with the student and the student's parent or guardian, if possible, to determine whether the parent, guardian or custodian has received notice of the principal's correspondence about the absences and whether the parent, guardian or custodian has made a good faith effort to comply with the compulsory attendance law. If the principal determines that the parent, guardian or custodian has not made a good faith effort to comply with the law, he or she shall notify the district attorney and the Department of Social Services. If the principal or designee determines that the parent, guardian or custodian has made a good faith effort to

comply with the law, the principal or designee may file a complaint with the juvenile court counselor that the child is habitually absent from school without a valid excuse.

The principal also shall make a report to the superintendent regarding the student's attendance record, the recommendation or plans developed by the JAC and any information deemed pertinent by the principal. Such report prepared by the principal shall constitute a report of the school social worker as contemplated in by G.S. 115C-381.

#### **F. OUTCOMES DUE TO EXCESSIVE ABSENCES AND/OR TARDIES**

1. Grades K-8 students who accumulate 21 absences for a school year will be retained on their current grade level for the following school year.
2. Grades K-8 students who accumulate a combined total of 3 tardies to school and/or early dismissals from school will earn 1 absence as calculated in line 1 above.
3. Grades 9-12 students who accumulate 11 absences for a semester course will receive no credit for that specific course. The grade will be recorded as an F or FF on the report card and transcript.
4. Grades 9-12 students who accumulate a combined course total of 3 tardies and/or early dismissals will earn 1 absence for that specific course as calculated in line 3 above.
5. Excessive absences may impact eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics. See policy 3620, Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations.

Students receiving homebound services and students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems will be exempted from this policy. In addition, for students experiencing homelessness (see board policy 4125, 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.

#### **G. APPEALS OF PROMOTION DECISIONS DUE TO EXCESSIVE ABSENCES**

Parents and/or guardians wishing to appeal the principal's written decision to retain a student due to excessive absences, tardies, and/or early dismissals may appeal the decision to the superintendent. See policy 3420, Student Promotion and Accountability, Section D.1 for procedural guidance.

Legal References: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 11431, *et seq.*; G.S. 115C-47, -84.2, -288(a), -375.5, -378 to -383, -407.5; -390.2(1), 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102-.0103; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003, NCAC-6E.0104

Cross References: Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations (policy 3620), Education for Pregnant and Parenting Students (policy 4023), Children of Military Families (policy 4050), Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission (policy 4110), Homeless Students (policy 4125)

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