
ATTENDANCE

Attendance in school and participation in class are integral parts of educational 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.

A. Attendance Defined

To be considered in attendance, a student must be present in the school for at least one-half of the school day or at a place other than the school with an appropriate school official to attend an authorized school activity. Such activities may include, but are not limited to, field trips sponsored by the school, athletic contests requiring early dismissal from school, student musical festivals, or similar activities.

B. 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.

C. Absences

Parents shall be notified of the attendance policies of the district and of any procedures followed at the individual school. Attendance procedures shall be outlined in school and parent handbooks.

There are four (4) types of absences:

1. Absences due to school-related activities or in-school suspension (Code 0)

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 advanced by the principal; and
6. in-school suspension.

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.

A student will be required to make up any assignments missed, but shall not be required to make up time missed due to these activities.

2. Lawful or excused absences (Code 1)

The following shall constitute lawful excuses for the temporary nonattendance of a student at school, provided satisfactory evidence or a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian is presented in writing to the school within five (5) days of the absence. Lawful absences shall not be considered as violations of the Compulsory Attendance Law. However, they will count as absences in other policies that relate to class credit and participation in athletics and other extra-class activities.

- a. Personal illness or injury that prevents the student from being physically able to attend school. The school district may require a statement from a physician if the absence extends more than 10 school days or require as part of an attendance plan if 10 or more school days are missed within a school year for personal illness or injury. Students having excused absences due to extended illnesses or other documented chronic health problems will be exempted from this policy;
- b. Isolation of the student is ordered by local health officials or by the State Board of Health;
- c. Death in the immediate family;
- d. Medical or dental appointments;
- e. Attendance of the student at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal, if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness;

- f. Observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or his/her parent, guardian, or custodian. Upon prior request, each school principal shall authorize at least two excused absences each school year for such religious observances;
 - g. Participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page, with prior approval of the principal. The principal may add additional requirements to approve the absence such as an itinerary, journal, or other assignments that are educational in nature. Excused absences due to educational leave may not exceed ten school days in any school year. Touring K-8 schools does not qualify for educational opportunity leave;
 - h. Pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary;
 - i. Absences caused by homelessness must be excused; and
 - j. Visitation with a parent or legal guardian, at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee, who is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting.
3. Unexcused Absences (Code 2): Any absence that is not coded as above will be considered to be an *unlawful or unexcused* absence. In addition, any absence for which written documentation was not provided to the school within two days (an "excuse") shall be considered to be an unlawful absence.
4. Out-of-School Suspension (Code 3): Out-of-school suspensions shall not be counted as either lawful or unlawful absences. Suspended students will be allowed to take any nine-week, semester, or End-of-Grade or End-of-Course tests that may be missed during the period of suspension.

D. Excessive Absences

Class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process and may be taken into account in assessing academic achievement. Students are expected to be at school on time and to be present at the scheduled starting time for each class.

The principal or designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian by mail of the child's excessive absences after he/she has accumulated three unlawful absences in a school year. After six unlawful absences, the principal or designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian by mail that they may be in violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under established attendance policies of the State and the Board.

Once the parents are notified, the school attendance counselor (or principal or designee) shall work with the child and his/her family to analyze the causes of the absences and determine steps, including adjustment of the school program or obtaining supplemental services, to eliminate the problem.

After ten (10) accumulated unlawful absences in a school year, the principal shall notify the district attorney and parent in writing of the Attendance Law violation. Documentation showing that the parent, guardian, or custodian were notified and that the child has accumulated ten (10) absences which cannot be justified under the established attendance policies of the Board shall constitute prima facie evidence that the child's parent, guardian, or custodian is responsible for the absences.

E. Make-up Work

It is the responsibility of the student to request and the responsibility of the school to give, on the first day the student returns to school following an excused absence or a short-term out-of-school suspension, assignment of work to be made up for the period of the student's absence. The teacher will determine when make up work is due.

F. Tardiness

Arriving late to school is considered to be tardy. Arriving when less than one-half of the school day remains is considered as a full-day absence. Students who report to school late due to an excused absence will be given a *lawful tardy* excuse. All other reasons shall be deemed an *unlawful tardy*.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-47, -84.2, -288(a), -375.5, -378 to -383, -390.2(d), -390.5, 407.5; 42 USC §§ 11432(g)(l)(I)(g)(7), McKinney-Vento Act; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E.0102-.0103; State Board of Education Policies TCS-L-000, -002, -003

Cross References: Policy 3621, School Sponsored, Extra-Class Activities, Short-Term Suspension (policy 4351)

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