

Attendance in school and participation in class are integral parts 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.

A. ATTENDANCE RECORDS

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

B. TARDIES AND EARLY RELEASES

Attendance in school for the full time allotted for classes is important for student success. Tardies and early releases cost students valuable educational instruction and also interrupt the learning process for other students. Students who accumulate excessive unexcused tardies to school or class or who leave school or class early without permission may be subject to disciplinary consequences as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

All requests to leave school property during the school day must be approved by the principal or designee. A student may be dismissed from school for medical or dental appointments but generally will not be excused for outside activities such as music lessons, dancing lessons, etc.

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 a college visit also require a signed statement by college admissions personnel on official stationery. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a physician. If the parent or guardian knows in advance that the student will be absent for any reason, the excuse with the dates of the absences should be provided prior to the absence. An absence may be excused for any of the following reasons:

1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school;
2. isolation ordered by the State Board of Health;
3. death in the immediate family;
4. medical or dental appointment;

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. a minimum of two days each academic year for observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent or legal guardian;
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. pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary;
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 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; or
10. with prior approval of the principal, up to two days each academic year for a high school junior or senior to visit college campuses in order to qualify for scholarships, attend orientation sessions, or determine whether to apply for admission.

D. MAKE-UP OPPORTUNITIES

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.) Make-up work for unlawful absences will be at the discretion of the principal.

The teacher shall determine when work is to be made up. Students in grades six through 12 are responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period. The teachers of students in kindergarten through grade five should contact the students.

E. 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.

F. EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

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

Class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process and may be taken into account in assessing academic achievement. Students in kindergarten through grade eight are required to be in attendance 160 school days to receive credit. An exception to this policy may be made by the principal.

A high school student who is absent from a course for a total of eleven (11) or more periods (after all make-ups and waivers are applied) will fail that course. At the discretion of the principal, a high school student who is passing a course and has been absent from the course at least eleven (11) but no more than fifteen (15) periods may be provided an opportunity to make up time missed. Each high school will provide sufficient make-up opportunities to allow a student to make up fifteen (15) class periods per semester, if the work is made up in a reasonable amount of time. A high school student who is passing a course and has missed eleven (11) or more periods of the course may appeal to the principal for a waiver of his or her lawful absences.

A principal's decision concerning course credit and excessive absences may be appealed to the board at the conclusion of the semester in which the absences occurred. Requests for a board hearing must be received in the superintendent's office no later than the fifth business day after grades are reported.

Excessive absences also may impact eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics. See policy 3620, Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations.

Students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt 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 tardiness.

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, -390.2(d), -390.2(l), -390.5, -407.5; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, .0103; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003, NCAC-007

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), Short-Term Suspension (policy 4351)

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