

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

In order for the board of education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each pupil, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and pupils is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of pupils from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of pupils to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully.

A pupil must be in attendance for 162 or more school days in order to be considered to have successfully

completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which he/she is assigned.

A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon

recommendation of a review committee, appointed by him/her, and consisting of representative staff, including pupil service personnel and classroom teachers.

In recommending the granting of a waiver of this attendance requirement, the review committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess of the 20 days.

Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the pupil and parent/guardian.

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a child will be absent and

for informing the school of the reason for the absence.

Truancy

The board will report to appropriate authorities' infractions of the law regarding the attendance of pupils.

It shall be the policy of the board to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness to his/her needs of

the educational program that is offered each pupil who is habitually and repeatedly absent from his/her

assigned program and to consult with the child study team for its recommendations.

Excused Absences

The board considers the following as cause for excused absence:

A. Disabling illness

B. Recovery from accident

C. Required court attendance

D. Death in the family

E. Religious observance--In accordance with statute, no pupil absent for religious observance of a day recognized by the commissioner of education or this board of education shall be charged with an unexcused absence, deprived of an award or eligibility/opportunity to compete for an award, or of the right to take an alternate to a test or examination missed through such absence.

F. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal

Attendance need not always be within the school facilities. A pupil will be considered to be in attendance if he/she is present at any place where school is in session by authority of the board. The board shall consider each pupil assigned to a program of independent study, with parent/guardian permission, to be in regular attendance for that program, provided that he/she is under the guidance of a staff member so assigned, reports daily or weekly, as prescribed, to such staff member the place in which he/she is conducting his/her study, and regularly demonstrates progress toward the objectives of his/her course of study.

Regular Release of Pupils Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations which may justify release of certain pupils from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the pupil's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the pupil.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a pupil be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day.

As agent responsible for the education of the children of this district, the board shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the pupil's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- B. Medical disability;
- C. Motor vehicle driver's test;
- D. Interview for college entrance or employment;
- E. Family emergency;
- F. Court appearance;
- G. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

No pupil in grades kindergarten through eight shall be permitted to leave the school before the close of the school day unless he/she is met in the school office by his/her parent/guardian or a person authorized by the parent/guardian to act in his/her behalf.

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed shall be cumulative, and may affect course credit.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each pupil. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the board of any change in the pupil's custodian. If one parent/guardian has been awarded custody of the pupil in a divorce settlement, the other parent/guardian shall present to the principal a letter authorizing him/her to accompany the child from school before the child may be released to him/her. The principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the child is released only to proper custody.

Potentially Missing Children

- A. If daily attendance records indicate a child is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact them.
- B. If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance officer shall investigate.
- C. If the attendance officer cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the appropriate local authorities.
- D. If a child who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

Marking Missing Child's School Record

Whenever the chief school administrator receives notice from the Missing Persons Unit that a child has been reported missing, he/she shall mark the child's records in such a way that whenever a copy of or information regarding the record is requested, district personnel will be aware that the record is that of a missing child. If a copy of a marked school record is requested, the chief school administrator shall supply the record to the requestor without alerting him/her to the fact that the record has been marked, according to provisions in code and statute on accessing pupil records (see policy 5125 Pupil records). After the chief school administrator has complied with the request for copies of records or information, he/she shall immediately report the inquiry or any knowledge as to the whereabouts of the missing child to the Missing Persons Unit.

Regulations

The chief school administrator shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

- A. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
- B. Identify potentially missing and/or abused pupils;
- C. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board, including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- D. Impose on truant pupils such disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations, but no such penalty may have an irredeemable negative effect on the pupil's record of achievement beyond that which naturally follows his/her absence from school activities;
- E. Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of his/her behavior, and consider modification of his/her educational program to meet his/her particular needs and interests;
- F. Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
- G. Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
- H. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Date: Adopted: October 28, 2002

First Reading: September 23, 2002

Key Words

Pupil Attendance, Attendance, Absences and Excuses, Student Attendance

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

According to Law (N. J. S. A. 18A:38), attendance in the school is compulsory for children between the ages of six and sixteen; and, according to universally accepted norms, students cannot benefit fully from the educational programs of school unless attendance is regular and uninterrupted. Therefore, the Board of Education, congruent with law and sound educational principles, directs that attendance of students be controlled and supervised.

The maximum number of absences permitted is twenty (20). All absences will be counted. It is the intention of this policy that the permitted number of absences will provide for normal illness. Students are expected to attend school during the established school time; therefore, any student accumulating five (5) tardies, leaving school early five (5) times, or a combination of the two totaling five (5) shall have a full days absence added to their total of accumulated absences.

If a student is absent, the parents/guardians are requested to call the school to indicate as much. If the parent/guardians have not contacted the school, the attendance monitor will call the parents/guardians. If the attendance monitor is unable to contact the parents/guardians during the course of the student's absence, that student will be required to present a note indicating the reason for the absence upon his/her return to school.

Students shall be required to complete all work and exercises assigned during any absences. Arrangements to make up the work will be initiated by the student, or the parent/guardian.

The effect of excessive absences, excused or unexcused, upon a grade or promotion, shall be made by the principal in consultation with the teacher. The procedures and consequences governing cases of excessive absences as follows:

1. Ten (10) absences: The principal will notify the parent/guardian in writing that the student has been absent for one-half the maximum number of absences. A copy of the attendance policy will be enclosed to give complete information.
 2. Fifteen (15) absences: The parent/guardian shall receive a letter indicating the number of absences, and requiring a parent/guardian conference. The consequences of exceeding the maximum allowable days will once again be discussed.
 3. Twenty-one (21) absences: N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, et. Seq. shall be invoked and an action instituted in municipal court and/or retention proceedings shall be initiated.
- In the event of mitigating circumstances regarding student absences, at any point during the administration of the policy, an adjustment or extension of the policy may be made by the principal.

Level I

1. Any request for appeal must be made in writing to the principal within three (3) school days and the notification of action to be taken regarding a student's violation of attendance requirements.

2. Students who utilize their quota of absences for other than illness and then become ill at a later day may not claim relief on the basis of illness.

3. Parents/guardians will appear before an appeals committee selected by the principal. This committee will include the principal, vice-principal (where applicable), teacher, and school nurse. The parents/guardians requesting consideration to have certain absences excluded from the maximum allowable number of days absence will appeal before the committee with all the pertinent appeal materials at hand.

4. The principal will notify the parents/guardians of the decision of the appeals committee within five (5) school days following the hearing.

Level II

An appeal of the Level 1 decision shall be made in writing to the Chief School Administrator within three (3) days of notification by the principal. Upon receipt of an appeal request, the Chief School Administrator will schedule a meeting with the parents/guardians and within five (5) school days of said meeting will render a decision in the matter.

Level III

An appeal of the Level II decision shall be made in writing to the Board of Education within three (3) school days of notification of the Chief School Administrator's decision. A hearing by the Board of Education shall take place. The final decision in this matter shall rest with the Board of Education.

Date: Renumbered: October 28, 2002

Revised: October 7, 1991

Adopted: November 21, 1983

First Reading: July 11, 1983