Policy Code: 4400 Attendance

School attendance and class participation 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. State law also prohibits any person from encouraging, enticing or counseling a child to be unlawfully absent from school.

A. Attendance Records

School officials shall keep an accurate record of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. A student must be present at least one-half of the instructional day to be recorded as in attendance for that day. Attendance records will be used to enforce the Compulsory Attendance Law of North Carolina.

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; 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. Excused Absences

The superintendent, principal or the superintendent or principal's designee is authorized to excuse a student temporarily from attendance due to sickness or other unavoidable cause. When a student must miss school, a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian must be turned into the student's teacher or front office on the day the student returns after an absence. The number of parent or guardian written excuses for attendance due to sickness or other unavoidable causes is limited to 10 per school year for grades K-8, and limited to 10 per semester for grades 9-12. After the 10th parent or guardian written excused note has been submitted, any other parent or guardian written notice will result in the absence being marked as unexcused. Additionally, parents and guardians will have within five school days of the student's return to school to turn in written excused notes and/or physicians notes. Notes that are turned in after the fifth school day of the student returning to school will not change the absence from unexcused to excused. The student is also required to provide other satisfactory evidence of the excuse upon request by the teacher, principal or principal's designee. An absence may be excused for the following reasons:

1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school;

2. isolation ordered by the local health officer or the State Board of Health;

3. death in the immediate family, including, but not limited to, grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters;

4. medical or dental appointment;

5. participation as a party to an action or under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding or administrative tribunal;

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 with written approval from the principal. The superintendent or designee may approve additional absences, provided they do not interfere with the education of the student. The student shall have the opportunity to make up any tests or other work missed due to the excused absence for a religious observance;

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 or designee and in accordance with any requirements established by the principal or superintendent;

8. absence due to pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary; or

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 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 addition, a student whose 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 will be granted up to five additional excused absences upon approval by the superintendent or designee to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian.

Absences due to extended illnesses generally require a statement from a physician.

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 in accordance with section D of this policy. (See also policies 4110, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission, and 4351, Short-Term Suspension.) The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and arranging a time with the teacher to make up assignments missed during class time.

C. 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 superintendent is responsible for designating which school-related activities are permissible and consistent with State Board policy. Specifically, the following school-related activities with prior approval from the principal or designee will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

1. field trips sponsored by the school;

2. job-shadowing and other work-based learning opportunities, as described in G.S. 115C-47(34a);

3. school-initiated and -scheduled activities, such as student conventions and music festivals;

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 in accordance with section D of this policy. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and arranging a time with the teacher to make up assignments missed during class time.

D. Opportunities to Make Up Assignments

Makeup of any missed assignments by an elementary, middle or high school student attending school on a regular schedule must be completed within five school days of the student's return to school. Makeup of missed assignments by a high school student on a 4 x 4 schedule must be completed within three school days of the student's return to school.

If the teacher is unable to give a student the original assignment as makeup work, then the teacher shall provide an alternative but comparable assignment to be completed by the student. A teacher may allow for an extension of makeup assignment deadlines in the case of valid, extenuating circumstances.

E. 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. Students who are excessively tardy to school or class may be subject to suspension for up to two days for such offense. The Superintendent will develop guidelines for implementation.

The principal shall notify parents and take all other steps required by G.S. 115C-378 for excessive absences. Students may be subject to suspension for up to two days for truancy.

A. Three Unexcused Days, First Notice, Compulsory Attendance Law. If a student accumulates three (3) unexcused absences in a school year, the Principal or a designee shall notify the student's parent, guardian, or custodian in writing, of the student's excessive number of unexcused absences.

B. Six Unexcused Days, Second Notice, Compulsory Attendance Law. If a student in grades K through 12 who is subject to the Compulsory Attendance Law has been absent without an acceptable excuse for six (6) cumulative school days during the school year, the Principal or a designee shall notify the student's parent, guardian, or custodian, in writing, of the student's excessive number of unexcused absences and (unless the student is over sixteen (16) years of age) the student and the parent/guardian may be prosecuted under the Compulsory Attendance Law (NCGS 115-378) if the absences cannot be justified.

C. Ten Day Notice and Action, Compulsory Attendance Law. If a student between the ages of seven (7) and sixteen (16) accumulates ten (10) unexcused absences in a school year the Principal shall:

1. Notify the parent, guardian, or custodian in writing of the student's excessive number of absences and (unless the student is over sixteen (16) years of age) the student and the parent/guardian may be prosecuted under the Compulsory Attendance Law (NCGS 115-378) if the absences cannot be justified.

2. Truancy Mediation Council (TMC) - Schools are expected to utilize the Truancy Mediation Council as an intervention to mitigate barriers and offer services to promote regular school attendance. If the referral to the TMC does not result in improved attendance, then school personnel will coordinate with the Social Work Coordinator to bring the matter to the district court.

D. K-5 – Denial of Student Promotion. A K-5 student is expected to attend 180 days unless absent for lawful reasons. Any student who accumulates and exceeds ten (10) unexcused absences during a semester is in immediate jeopardy of being retained.

a. After more than twenty (20) unexcused cumulative absences for the year, the teacher shall notify the social worker and the principal or designee. The parent/guardian shall be notified that the student will not receive credit for the year and be retained unless a waiver is obtained.

b. If a student is absent (unexcused) twenty (20) or more days in a given year, his/her parent/guardian may apply for a waiver of the attendance requirements in order to demonstrate extenuating circumstances or legitimate illness. The parent/guardian must present written verification acceptable to the principal or his designee within five (5) days of receipt of the retention notification. It shall be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to apply for the waiver. The Student Services Team (SST) will consider whether this policy should be waived. The SST will review other measures of academic achievement, the circumstances of the absences, the number of absences, and the extent to which the student completed missed work. The SST will recommend a decision to the principal, but the principal shall have the final decision whether or not to grant such a waiver. In the absence of a request by the parent/guardian to apply for a waiver, the principal shall decide on this matter and notify the parent/guardian by letter.

i. If the waiver is denied by the principal, a student will have the option of making up work, attending RTA summer camp, or a combination of curriculum resources as available and as prescribed by the individual schools.

E. 6-12 – Denial of Course Credit. A secondary student is expected to attend school for 180 days unless absent for lawful reasons. Secondary students should be in attendance a minimum of seventy (70) days per semester or 140 days per school year to receive credit for a course. Any student who accumulates and exceeds ten (10) absences during a grading period for any course during a semester is in immediate jeopardy of receiving a failing grade and receiving no credit for the course.

a. After more than twenty (20) cumulative unexcused absences for the year for grades 6-8 and more than twenty (20) cumulative unexcused absences for the semester for grades 9-12, the teacher shall notify the social worker, and the principal or designee. The parent/guardian will be notified that the student will not receive credit for the course and may be retained.

b. The student or parent/guardian may apply for a waiver to overturn denial of course credit. The Student Services Team (SST) will consider whether this policy should be waived or whether the student's grades should be reduced because of the absences. The student or parent must submit a waiver request form to the SST and other documentation that supports the student's request. The SST will review other measures of academic achievement, the circumstances of the absences, the number of absences, and the extent to which the student completed missed work.

The SST may recommend to the principal and the principal may make any of the following determinations:

i. The student will not receive a passing grade for the semester (an FF will be awarded), which may also lead to retention;

ii. The student's grade will be reduced;

iii. The student will receive the grade otherwise earned, or the student will be given additional time to complete the missed work before deciding the appropriate grade.

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.

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

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, -390.2(1), -390.5, -407.5, -407.12; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102–.0103; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000-003, NCAC-007

Cross References: 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),

Other Resources: NC DPI Multi-Tiered System of Support Implementation Guide, available at https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2957986#anchor

Replaces: IB (in part) (revised September 12, 1995), (IHEA (revised November 13, 2007), JB (revised June 13, 2006), JBA (revised April 16, 2002), JBD (revised August 11, 1987)

Adopted: May 10, 2011

Revised: November 15, 2012; December 8, 2015; May 30, 2017 (revision to legal citations and/or legal references only); March 12, 2019; January 12, 2021, March 8, 2022; September 12, 2023; September 10, 2024