
FAYETTEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES

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5.7 – ~~UNEXCUSED~~ ABSENCES

Education is more than the grades students receive in their courses. As important as grades are to student evaluation and achievement, the regular attendance of students at school is essential to their social and cultural development, and helps prepare them to accept responsibilities they will face as adults. Interactions with other students and participation in the instructional program within the classroom are crucial experiences that enrich the learning environment and promote a continuity of instruction that results in higher student achievement.

Digital Courses

Absences for students enrolled in digital courses shall be determined by online attendance and time the student is working on the course rather than the student's physical presence at school. Students who are scheduled to participate in a dedicated period for a digital class shall not be considered absent if the student logs the correct amount of time and completes any required assignments; provided, however, a student who fails to be physically present for an assigned period at school may be disciplined in accordance with this Policy.

Precedence of IEP Plan or 504 Plan

If any student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan conflicts with this Policy, the requirements of the student's IEP Plan or 504 Plan shall take precedence over this Policy.

Excused Absences

"Excused" absences occur when (a) the student is on official school business, or (b) the student's absence is due to one of the reasons listed below and the student's parent or guardian reports an acceptable reason for the absence. A parent or guardian's report of an excused absence must be provided to the school within five (5) school days after the student absence occurs. Excused absences shall include all of the following:

1. The student's illness or when attendance could jeopardize the health of other students, provided that a maximum of five (5) days for health reasons are allowed per semester unless the condition causing such absences is of a chronic or recurring nature, is medically documented, and approved by the principal;
2. Death or serious illness in a student's immediate family;
3. Observance of recognized holidays observed by the student's faith;
4. Attendance at an appointment with a government agency;
5. Attendance at a medical appointment;
6. Exceptional circumstances with prior approval of the principal;
7. Participation in an FFA, FHA, or 4-H sanctioned activity;
8. Participation in the election poll workers program for high school students;
9. Absences granted to allow a student to visit a parent or legal guardian who is a member of the military and been called to active duty, is on leave from active duty, or has returned from deployment to a combat zone

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or combat support posting, provided that the number of additional excused absences shall be at the discretion of the Superintendent;

10. Absences granted, at the Superintendent's discretion, to seventeen (17) year-old students who join the Arkansas National Guard while in eleventh grade to complete basic combat training between grades eleven (11) and (12); and
11. Absences for students excluded from school by the Arkansas Department of Health during a disease outbreak because the student has an immunization waiver or whose immunizations are not up to date.

Students who serve as pages for a member of the General Assembly shall be considered on instructional assignment and shall not be considered absent from school for the day the student is serving as a page.

Unexcused Absences

Absences not defined above or not properly reported by the parent; legal guardian; person having lawful control of the student; or person standing in loco parentis, within the time period required by this Policy shall be considered unexcused absences. Students with six (6) unexcused absences in a course in a semester may not receive credit for that course; provided, further, that if a student has otherwise successfully completed the requirements of the course, the principal or designee has discretion to override any loss of credit upon a justified request from a parent; legal guardian; person having lawful control of the student; or person standing in loco parentis, or other person having knowledge of the circumstances of the unexcused absences. Excessive absences shall not be a reason for expulsion or dismissal of a student.

When a student has three (3) unexcused absences in a semester, his or her parents, legal guardians, persons having lawful control of the student, or persons standing in loco parentis, shall be notified of these absences. Notification shall be by telephone contact or by regular mail, with a return address on the envelope.

When a student has six (6) unexcused absences in a semester, the District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or persons standing in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

Students having chronic unexcused absences shall be given assistance in obtaining credits for their courses. At any time prior to a student exceeding the number of unexcused absences permitted by this Policy, the student, or his or her parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student or person standing in loco parentis, may petition the school or District administration for special arrangements to address the student's unexcused absences. If formal arrangements are granted, they shall be formalized in a written agreement which will include the conditions of the agreement and the consequences for failing to fulfill the agreement's requirements. The agreement shall be signed by the student, the student's parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student or person standing in loco parentis, and the District administrator or designee.

Students who attend in-school suspension or serve an out-of-school suspension shall not be counted absent for the days spent in such suspension.

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The District shall notify the Department of Finance and Administration whenever a student fourteen (14) years of age or older is no longer in school. The Department of Finance and Administration is required to suspend the former student's operator's license unless he or she meets certain requirements specified in the statute.

General Attendance Rules

The Board of Directors recognizes that excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, disrupt the academic environment in all buildings. Each building principal shall have the discretion to establish an attendance committee to limit the number of absences, including excused and unexcused absences as defined in this Policy, which constitute excessive absences for students within the building. In addition, each attendance committee shall have the discretion to establish procedures to govern the academic impact on students who are excessively absent from school, and to provide appropriate support mechanisms for such students.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-4-302
 A.C.A. § 6-18-107
 A.C.A. § 6-18-209
 A.C.A. § 6-18-220
 A.C.A. § 6-18-222
 A.C.A. § 6-18-229
 A.C.A. § 6-18-231
 A.C.A. § 6-18-507(g)
 A.C.A. § 6-18-702
 A.C.A. § 7-4-116
 A.C.A. § 9-28-113(f)
 A.C.A. § 27-16-701
 Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rules Governing Distance and Digital Learning

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