

ABSENCES

If any student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan conflicts with this policy, the requirements of the student's IEP or 504 Plan takes precedence.

Education is more than the grades students receive in their courses. Important as that is, students' regular attendance at school is essential to their social and cultural development and helps prepare them to accept responsibilities they will face as an adult. Interactions with other students and participation in the instruction within the classroom enriches the learning environment and promote a continuity of instruction which results in higher student achievement.

In recognition of the need for students to regularly attend school, the district's policy governing student absences are as follows:

Virtual Students will be held to the same standard below for absences as onsite students.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are those where the student was on official school business or when the absence was due to one of the following reasons and the student brings a written statement to the principal or designee upon his/her return to school from the parent or legal guardian stating such reason. A written statement presented for an absence having occurred more than five (5) school days prior to its presentation will not be accepted.

1. The student's illness or when attendance could jeopardize the health of other students. A maximum of six (6) such days are allowed per semester unless the condition(s) causing such absences is of a chronic or recurring nature, is medically documented, and approved by the principal;
2. Death or serious illness in their immediate family (parents/guardians, grandparents, siblings, aunts/uncles);
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 his/her 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 or combat support posting. The number of additional excused absences shall be at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.

10. Absences granted, at the superintendent's office discretion, to seventeen-(17) year-old students who join the Arkansas national Guard while in eleventh (11th) grade to complete basic combat training between grades eleven (11) and twelve (12).

11. Absences for students excluded from school by the Arkansas Department of Health during a disease outbreak, or the student has an immunization waiver or whose immunization 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.

It is the Arkansas General Assembly's intention that students having excessive absences be given assistance in obtaining credit for their courses. Excessive absences may, however, be the basis for the denial of course credit, promotion, or graduation.

Unexcused Absences

Absences not defined above or not having an accompanying note from the parent or legal guardian, presented in the timeline required by this policy, shall be considered as unexcused absences. Students with ten (10) unexcused absences in a course in a semester may not receive credit for that course. At the discretion of the principal after consultation with persons having knowledge of the circumstances of the unexcused absences, the student may be denied promotion or graduation. Excessive absences shall not be a reason for expulsion or dismissal of a student.

When a student has five (5) unexcused absences, his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis shall be notified. Notification shall be by telephone by the end of the school day in which such absence occurred or by regular mail with a return address sent no later than the following school day.

Whenever a student exceeds ten (10) unexcused absences in a semester, the Hillcrest School District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, guardian, or persons in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

At any time prior to when a student exceeds the number of unexcused absences permitted by this policy, the student, or his/her parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis may petition the school or district's administration for special arrangements to address the student's unexcused absences. If formal arrangements are granted, they shall be formalized into a written agreement which will include the conditions of the agreement and the consequences for failing to fulfill the agreement requirements. The agreement shall be signed by the student, the student's parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis, and the school or district administrator, or designee.

Students who attend in-school suspension shall not be counted absent for those days.

Days missed due to out-of-school suspension or expulsion shall be unexcused absences.

The Hillcrest School 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/she meets certain requirements specified in the statute.

Applicants for an instruction permit or for a driver's license by persons less than eighteen (18) years old on October 1 of any year are required to provide proof of a high school diploma or enrollment and regular attendance in an adult education program or a public, private, or parochial school prior to receiving an instruction permit. To be issued a driver's license, a student enrolled in school shall present proof of a "C" average for the previous semester or similar equivalent grading period for which grades are reported as part of the student's permanent record.

Virtual students will be held to the same attendance standards as onsite students.

Virtual Attendance Policy

K-6 TRVP (TRVP)

All instruction will be synchronous, and students will be required to meet daily. However, a district may determine that the needs of a student with extenuating circumstances would be better met with asynchronous instruction. In these cases, attendance will be taken through the evidence of completed assignments. Monitoring of synchronous and asynchronous interaction will occur on a daily basis, but a waiver is needed for the manner in which attendance is calculated.

7-12 Virtual Arkansas

In the online environment, students assume more responsibility for keeping up with the course requirements. It is critical that students access and interact with the online content on a daily basis and participate in the scheduled live interactive Zoom sessions. If a student is absent from a digital learning class, the student is responsible for making up the missed assignments. When students' put-off accessing the course content, they soon discover that they are behind and then may not be able to satisfy the course requirements to pass a class. There will be times when students have to miss class for locally scheduled activities. If Hillcrest has scheduled an event that will interfere with a Virtual Arkansas course, we will reinforce with the students the need to access the course content so they do not fall behind. Students absent from Virtual Arkansas classes are responsible for making up the missed assignments. Facilitators will not be responsible for reporting attendance to the Virtual Arkansas teacher, but they may need to provide this information to the appropriate individual at their Hillcrest High School. Teachers monitor student progress and if a student is not accessing the course content on a consistent basis, Hillcrest will be notified by the teacher.