

R 5200 ATTENDANCE (M)

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Compulsory attendance at school is a long-standing State policy and has been upheld by the courts of New Jersey and the U.S: Supreme Court as a matter of public concern and legislative regulation.

The Board concurs with the Commissioner of Education who wrote:

“...pupil participation in all regularly scheduled classroom for each pupil to receive the maximum benefits of a thorough educational program.

Frequent absences of pupils from regular classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process. The benefit of regular classroom instruction is lost and cannot be entirely regained, even by extra after-school instruction. Consequently, many pupils who miss school frequently experience great difficulty in achieving the maximum benefits of schooling. Indeed, many pupils in these circumstances are able to achieve only mediocre success in their academic programs. The school cannot teach pupils who are not present. The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study in order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefits for each individual child. The regular contact of the pupils with one another in the tutelage of a competent teacher are vital to this purpose. This is a well-established principal of education which underlies and gives purpose to the requirement of compulsory schooling in this end and every other State in the nation.”

The length of the academic year is generally limited to one hundred eighty days for pupils. The curriculum is designed to achieve a maximum educational affect within the limited number of school days. Therefore, any absence from school jeopardizes the ability of a pupil to satisfactorily complete the prescribed course of study. Maximum attendance is a prescribed condition upon which all courses of study are predicated.

The Board, in the interest of the educational welfare of its pupils and the integrity of its program; will not grant credit for courses when a pupil has not complied with the attendance regulation. The Board deems a lack of attendance as a derogation of the long-standing State policy for compulsory and maximum attendance.

The Board further believes that the pupil has the major responsibility to learn, and as such, is accountable for faithful school attendance.



The Board cannot condone or encourage any absence by pupils. Therefore, the Superintendent of Schools shall prepare regulations to insure that the intent of this policy is implemented.

Absence from school jeopardizes the ability of a pupil to satisfactorily complete the prescribed course of study and violates the statutes requiring children to regularly attend school (N.J.S.A. 18A-38:25-26). The Board accepts the responsibility of properly operating schools within the context of prevailing laws and regulations. It cannot succeed in its paramount task of providing an education as proposed through accepted curriculum and courses of study unless the pupils for, which it is intended are present for all regularly scheduled classroom learning activities. Consequently, there is an impelling responsibility upon the parents and pupil for the pupil to attend school as scheduled. Therefore, the Board of Education cannot condone absences from school for whatever reason and will not issue credit if maximum pupil attendance is not accomplished.

A. Absenteeism

Over the years, data indicates the normal absentee rate for legitimate illness ranges between five and eight percent of the student body on a daily basis. School procedures and courses of study are designed to assimilate this level of absenteeism through instructional make-up work.

B. Absence Verification

1. School attendance is a basic responsibility of the pupil to the learning process. Pupils must submit official documentation during the Appeal Process to verify their absences if they have moved to Non-Credit Status. For clarification purposes, the documentation should be in the following form:
 - a. Medical/dental note signed by a physician.
 - b. Official verification of required court appearance.
 - c. Official verification of driver's test.
 - d. Official verification of death in family.
 - e. Official verification of visit to post-secondary educational institution as noted in the college visitation exception.



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- f. Official verification of a Military Examination.
 - g. A note signed by a parent/guardian and approved by the principal. Parent notes can be considered for up to three days in total.
2. Absence due to religious holidays will be excused upon receipt of a note from a parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

C. Attendance - Effect on Credit

Pupils missing over twelve unexcused school days will not receive the assigned credit for courses taken during the school year. This is not permissive policy establishing or “licensing” a limit which may be missed with no harm, but rather assumes absences will occur for personal illness not requiring a doctor's visit, serious personal or family problems, and personal appointments which cannot be scheduled during non-school time.

D. School District Response To Unexcused Absences During the School Year

1. For up to four cumulative unexcused absences, the Building Principal or designee shall:
 - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
 - b. Conduct an investigation of the cause of each unexcused absence, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian;
 - c. Complete a School Attendance Agreement Contract in consultation with the pupil's parent or legal guardian designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any, and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance; a copy of the Agreement Contract must be forwarded to the office of the Chief of Schools/Superintendent's Designee.
 - d. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or abused child abuse situation is detected; and

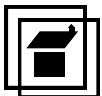


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- e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
2. For seven cumulative unexcused absences, the Building Principal or designee shall:
 - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
 - b. Conduct a follow-up investigation, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian, to determine the cause of each unexcused absence;
 - c. Complete a Pupil Absenteeism Action Plan. A copy of the action plan must be forwarded to the Office of the Chief of Schools/Superintendent's Designee.
 - d. Revise the action plan, as needed, to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based upon the pupil's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes, supporting the pupil's return to school and regular attendance that may include any or all of the following:
 - (1) Refer or consult with the building's Intervention and Referral Services Team, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8;
 - (2) Conduct testing, assessments, or evaluations of the pupil's academic, behavioral, and health needs;
 - (3) Consider an alternate educational placement;
 - (4) Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
 - (5) Refer to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts; and
 - (6) Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or child abuse situation is detected.



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- e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
3. For cumulative unexcused absences of ten or more, the pupil between the ages of six and sixteen is truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, and the Building Principal or designee shall:
 - a. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
 - b. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of the mandatory referral;
 - c. Continue to consult with the parent or legal guardian and the involved agencies to support the pupil's return to school and regular attendance;
 - d. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and
 - e. Proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required.
4. For pupils with disabilities, the attendance plan and punitive and remedial procedures of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.8 and Policy and Regulation 5200 shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the pupil's Individualized Education Programs, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act; the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14; accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. §§794 and 705(20); and individualized health care plans, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3.
5. All receiving schools pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-7.1(a) shall act in accordance with F.1. above for each pupil with up to four cumulative unexcused absences.
 - a. For each pupil attending a receiving school with five or more cumulative unexcused absences, the absences shall be reported to the sending district by the receiving school.



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- (1) The sending school district shall proceed in accordance with the district Board of Education policies and procedures pursuant to F. above and the provisions of F.2. through F.4. above, as appropriate.
6. At the End of Credit Status (twelve unexcused absences) a final warning will be issued to the parent/guardian of the pupil or sent via certified mail with a return receipt requested. The letter should clearly indicate that one additional absence will result in credit loss. A copy of the letter must be submitted to the Office of the Chief of Schools/Superintendent's Designee.

When a pupil reaches end of credit status, the attendance clerk will complete a notice to warn the parent and pupil that one additional absence will result in the loss of credit for the course. Notification will be by registered letter with a requested return receipt.

End of Credit Status: Twelve Unexcused absences

7. Non-Credit Status begins when the pupil exceeds the End of Credit Status (twelve unexcused absences).

When a pupil reaches the thirteenth unexcused absence the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and pupil will be notified of non-credit status. Notification will be by registered letter with a requested return receipt. A copy of the letter must be submitted to the Office of the Chief of Schools/Superintendent's Designee.

Non-Credit Status: Thirteenth unexcused absences

E. Incomplete School Day

Pupils who are more than two hours late will be counted absent for the entire day.

As indicated in Title 8A; 6:3-9.3c, pupils must receive a minimum of four hours of instruction, exclusive of recess or lunchtime; to be considered "in attendance" for a school day. There are three time frames in our district to be considered in order to remain in compliance with Title 6A; 6:3-9.3c. These times do not include recess or lunchtimes:

Elementary (Pre-K through 5)



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8:50 a.m. - 1:20 p.m.

Middle School (6 through 8)

7:32.a.m. - 12:02 p.m.

High School (9 through 12)

7:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

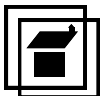
Pupils leaving school prior to the above stated times, will be marked absent for the day. If a pupil is sent home by the nurse for illness prior to the above stated times, the absence will be recorded as excused by the attendance office. If pupils want a before-noon absent excused for reasons other than being sent home by the nurse, they must follow the absence verification procedure.

1. Medical/dental note signed by a physician.
2. Official verification of required court appearance.
3. Official verification of driver's test.
4. Official verification of death in family.
5. Official verification of visit to post-secondary educational institution as noted in the college visitation exception.
6. Official verification of a Military Examination.
7. A note signed by a parent/guardian and approved by the principal. Parent notes can be considered for up to three days in total.

F. Loss of Course Credit

Pupils missing over twelve unexcused school days will not receive the assigned credit for courses taken during the school year. This is not a permissive policy establishing or "licensing" a limit, which may be missed with no harm, but rather assumes absences will occur for personal or family problems, and personal appointments, which cannot be scheduled during non-school time.

G. College Visitation Exception



Pupils seeking admission to post-secondary graduate educational institutions will be permitted two days for visitation purposes. However, pupils must obtain an excused note signed by an official of the institution.

Pupils will be permitted to make up all work missed.

H. Consecutive Absences

Any pupils who missed ten consecutive school days, and is not on home instruction, and/or is not medically verified as incapacitated will be issued a written notification to report back to school within five school days. A copy of the letter/notification must be forwarded to the Office of the Chief of Schools/Superintendent's Designee. Failure to respond will result in the following:

1. Pupils under the compulsory school age (below sixteen years of age) shall have presented to their parents a formal written notice to cause the child to attend school (N.J.S.A. 18A: 38-29). Failure to comply with the provisions for the law may cause the parent to be deemed a disorderly person and the parent will be subject to a fine.
2. Pupils above the compulsory age, not complying with the notice to return, to school will be notified that within ten days they may present to the high school Principal an explanation of their absence and that failing to do so they will be dropped from the rolls of the school and may present a written petition to the high school Principal for re-admittance. Each case will be reviewed upon the merits of the petitioner.

I. Homebound Instruction

Homebound instruction may be accomplished upon request of the parent who must have first notified the school. If the absence is expected to be longer than ten consecutive school days a statement by a physician, giving the prognosis of length of time the pupil will be absent and the nature of illness, is to be filed with the school. Pupils will be placed in a separate local attendance register where upon they will be legally registered as absent from school; but not absent for the purpose of this policy during the total time they are receiving homebound instruction.

J. Make-Up Work



Pupils are provided an opportunity to complete assignments missed because of their absences:

1. The rule of thumb for the time allowed to make up work missed is equal to the amount of time absent. Arrangements to make up work must be initiated by the pupil. Extended time to make up work may be granted by the respective teachers.
2. Pupils choosing to cut classes, or otherwise found to be truant, may not make up work missed during these infractions.
3. Pupils may complete assignments for time missed because of suspension.

K. Recordkeeping

Reporting pupil absences is a primary responsibility of the school and shall be accomplished in the following manner:

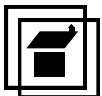
1. Absences from school shall be recorded on report cards issued every nine weeks.
2. Tardiness to school likewise shall be recorded on report cards.
3. A letter of notification will be mailed to parents or guardians alerting some of the dangers of noncompliance with the attendance requirements.
4. A monthly report shall reflect the pupils "dropped" from the rolls.

L. Appeal Process

A Three level Appeal Process will be available if extenuating family emergencies occur.

1. The first level will be with the Building Principal.
2. The second level will be with the Superintendent or designee.
3. The third and final level of appeal will be with the Board of Education.

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