

Attendance in school and participation in class are integral parts of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Through regular attendance, students develop 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 are responsible for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

A. ATTENDANCE RECORDS

School officials shall keep an accurate record of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. Attendance records will be used to enforce the Compulsory Attendance Law of North Carolina.

Teachers are responsible for maintaining accurate records of student absences and tardies for their classes. The student's report card is considered notification of absences.

In accordance with North Carolina General Statute 115C-378 and McDowell County Board policies, notification will be given when a student has accumulated three (3), six (6) and ten (10) unexcused daily absences.

B. DEFINITION OF ATTENDANCE

A student in (Kindergarten through thirteenth grade) must be present at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the school's instructional day to be recorded present for that day. A student in ninth through thirteenth (9th-13th) grade must be present at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the class period to be recorded present for that class period.

C. TARDIES AND EARLY CHECKOUTS

Students are expected to arrive on time and remain in school the full day. A student is tardy if the student arrives any time after the tardy bell. An early checkout occurs when a student leaves any time before the dismissal bell. Tardiness and early checkouts are strongly discouraged because they result in students missing important information and instruction.

Students who are tardy for school must sign in through the office and pick up a class admission slip. A tardy may be excused for the same reasons as an excused absences (see "D. Excused Absence"). Students on campus are expected to be in class. Students are not to leave the school premises without permission from the principal or designee. For a student to leave school early, a parent or legal guardian must sign him or her out in accordance with school rules. If a student who has left school early later returns to school, he or she must first report to the office.

The school principal is expected to deal appropriately with those students who are chronically tardy or who leave school early.

D. EXCUSED ABSENCES

When a student fails to meet the attendance requirements under Paragraph B above (i.e. “the 75% rule”), a written excuse signed by a parent or legal guardian must be presented to the student’s teacher on the day the student returns to school or class after an absence. Generally, a parent or legal guardian may request that up to six (6) days of their child’s absences be excused for the reasons below without further review by the school. In addition, absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a physician. Note: Total absences beyond six (6) in a semester, including any and all excused absences, are considered “excessive” which is addressed in Section F below.

An absence may be excused for any of the following reasons:

1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school;
2. isolation ordered by the State Board of Health;
3. death in the immediate family;
4. medical or dental appointment;
5. participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding or if the student is required to appear in court;
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;
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;
8. pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary;
9. visitation with the student’s parent or legal guardian, at the discretion of the superintendent or designee, if the 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.

When a child is found to have head lice, the parent or legal guardian shall be notified either by phone or in writing. A parent or legal guardian must treat the lice immediately with an appropriate product and make every effort to remove all nits. Students may return to school upon completion of treatment. The parent or legal guardian must make every effort to remove all nits and provide proof of treatment. Students will not be admitted to school

with live lice. Other than the day the student is originally sent home, the student shall accumulate unexcused absences for days missed due to the occurrence of lice. If a student returns to school after being diagnosed with head lice and live lice are still present, the student shall be sent home and receive an unexcused absence.

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 with 30 days of entering school) the student will be permitted to make up his or her work. (See also policies 4110, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission, and 4351, Short-Term Suspension.) The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

E. 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 following school-related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

1. field trips sponsored by the school;
2. job shadows and other work-based learning opportunities, as described in G.S. 115C-47(34a);
3. school-initiated and -scheduled activities;
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. The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

F. 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 suspended for up to two (2) days for such offenses.

The principal shall notify the parent or legal guardian and take all other steps required by G.S. 115C-378 for excessive absences. Students may be suspended for up to two (2) days for truancy.

Students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt 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.

Kindergarten through Eighth (K-8th) Grade

If a student is absent from school for six (6) or more days, the principal or a committee established by the principal shall consider whether the student's grades should be reduced because of the absences. The principal or committee shall 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. A committee may recommend to the principal and the principal may make any of the following determinations:

1. the student will not receive a passing grade;
2. the student will receive the grade otherwise earned;
3. the student will be given additional time to complete the missed work before a determination of the appropriate grade is made; or
4. the student will be given the opportunity to make up missed instructional time.

Ninth through Thirteenth (9th-13th) Grade

A student absent more than six (6) times in the same class period in a semester shall not receive credit for that class. However, the student must continue in the class with appropriate behavior and must complete required work. Students who lose credit for absences but who are passing the course(s) may make up the credit by attending the after school enrichment sessions or the summer school enrichment class.

The parent or legal guardian shall receive a letter notifying them of the student's loss of credit. Within thirty (30) days of notice or prior to the end of the grading period whichever occurs first, the parent or legal guardian may make a final appeal

regarding the loss of credit directly to the Principal who has the final legal authority to grade and classify the student.

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(d), -390.2(l), -390.5, -407.5; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, .0103; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003, NCAC-6E.0104

Cross References: Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations (policy 3620), 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), Short-Term Suspension (policy 4351)

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