

School attendance and class participation 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. School administrators shall communicate attendance expectations to parents and guardians and work with students and their families to overcome barriers to attendance.

A. ATTENDANCE RECORDS

School officials shall keep an accurate record of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. Students will be considered in attendance if present at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the instructional day on-site in the school or at a place other than the school attending an authorized school-related activity.

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; and/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.

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. LATE ARRIVALS AND EARLY DEPARTURES

Students are expected to be at school on time and to remain at school until dismissed. During the school day, students are expected to be present at the scheduled starting time for each class and to remain until the class ends.

When a student must be late to school or leave school early, a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian should be presented upon the student's arrival at school. Tardies or early departures may be excused for any of the reasons listed below in Section C.

Any disciplinary consequences for unexcused tardiness or unexcused early departures from school or class will be consistent with Section D of policy 4300, Student Behavior Policies. The superintendent or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range

of consequences that may be imposed on a student for such offenses. Consequences may not exceed a short-term suspension of two days.

C. 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.

D. EXCUSED ABSENCES

When a student fails to meet the attendance requirements under Paragraph C above (i.e. "the 75% rule"), a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian must be presented to the student's teacher on the day the student returns 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 health care practitioner. Total absences beyond six (6) in a semester, including any and all excused absences, are considered "chronic absenteeism" which is addressed in Section H 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 local health officer or State Board of Health or isolation or quarantine that is a required state or local control measure;
3. death in the immediate family;
4. medical or dental appointment;
5. attendance at the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal if the student is party to the action or under subpoena as a witness;
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. 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; or

10. any other reason as approved by the board in a board resolution.

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

While recognizing the importance of classroom learning, the board also acknowledges that out-of-classroom, school-related activities can provide students with valuable experiences not available in the classroom setting. 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; and
5. Career and Technical Education student organization activities approved in advance by the principal.

In addition, students participating in disciplinary techniques categorized as in-school suspension will not be counted as absent.

F. MAKEUP WORK

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 missed work. (See also policies 4110, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission, and 4351, Short-Term Suspension.) Assignments missed due to participation in school-related activities also are eligible for makeup by the student. The teacher shall 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.

G. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

The principal shall notify parents and take all other steps required by G.S. 115C-378 for excessive, unexcused absences.

Any school disciplinary consequences for unexcused absences will be consistent with Section D of policy 4300, Student Behavior Policies. The superintendent or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range of consequences that may be imposed on a student for such offenses. Consequences may not exceed a short-term suspension of two days.

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.

H. CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Because class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process, any absences, whether excused or unexcused, can have a negative impact on a student's academic achievement. Regular attendance must be prioritized within each school and encouraged throughout the community. School administrators shall monitor and analyze attendance data to develop and implement strategies for reducing chronic absenteeism. Such strategies should involve engaging students and parents, recognizing good and improved attendance, providing early outreach to families of students missing school, and identifying and addressing barriers to attendance.

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.

I. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1. Students with Chronic Health Problems

No penalties will be imposed for absences due to documented chronic health problems.

2. Students Experiencing Homelessness

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.

3. Attendance Requirements for Extracurricular Activities

Absences may impact eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities. Principals shall inform students and parents of the applicable attendance standards

for the various types of extracurricular activities, including interscholastic athletics. See also 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(d), -390.2(l), -390.5, -407.5, -407.12; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, .0103, .0106; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003

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), Student Behavior Policies (policy 4300), Short-Term Suspension (policy 4351)

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