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 and legal guardians are responsible for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

To be counted present a student must be in attendance at least one-half of the student school day. This shall include attendance at official school activities at a place other than school with the approval of the principal.

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

B. EXCUSED ABSENCES
   When a student must miss school, a written excuse signed by a parent or guardian must be presented to the student’s teacher or attendance office within two (2) days of the student’s return after an absence. When the absence results from a medical or dental appointment, a written excuse should be presented with a doctor’s signature or stamp and when possible, such appointments should be scheduled during non-school hours. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a physician. When cumulative absences exceed ten (10) days, a statement from a physician is required to excuse an illness. However, students with documented chronic or serious acute health problems will be exempt from this requirement for excused absences resulting from the health problems. Failure to submit a written excuse will result in the absence being coded unexcused.

   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 Cleveland County Health Department or State Board of Health;
   3. death in the immediate family (The immediate family of a student includes but is not necessarily limited to grandparents, parents, and siblings);
   4. medical or dental appointment;
   5. participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding;
   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(s);
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; or

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, 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.

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 work. (Also see policies related to Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission and Short-Term Suspension.) The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student or parent is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

C. 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;

6. in-school suspensions; and

7. unique post-secondary experiences with prior approval by the principal.

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.
D. **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.

The principal or designee shall notify parents and take all other steps required by G.S. 115C-378 for excessive absences as follows:

1. After three (3) unexcused absences in the school year, the principal or designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian by mail that these absences are unlawful.

2. The principal or designee shall send a written notice by mail to the parent, guardian, or custodian when a child has six (6) unexcused absences and may be in violation of the North Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified as excused under the standards stated in the section entitled “Excused Absences” above. A copy of the notice also will be directed to the social worker, school attendance counselor, or other appropriate school personnel, who will work with the student and family to improve attendance.

3. After ten (10) accumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the principal or designee shall notify the parent/guardian or custodian by certified mail of the student’s excessive number of unexcused absences. The principal also shall review any reports or investigation prepared pursuant to G.S. 115C-381 and shall, if possible, confer with the student and the student’s parent/guardian or custodian to determine whether the parent/guardian or custodian received notification pursuant to the requirements of this policy and the Compulsory Attendance Law and made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal determines that the parent/guardian or custodian has not made a good faith effort to comply with the law, the principal shall notify the district attorney and/or Cleveland County Director of Social Services. Where the parent/guardian or custodian has made a good faith effort, the principal may file a complaint with the juvenile court counselor pursuant to Ch. 7B of the General Statutes that the child is habitually absent from school without valid excuse.

For students experiencing homelessness, 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.


Adopted: February 11, 2019

Replaces: Board policy 4000, Attendance