

WALLINGTON BOARD OF EDUCATION

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

In order for the board of education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each pupil, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and pupils is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of pupils from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of pupils to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully.

A waiver of the attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon recommendation of a review committee, appointed by him/her, and consisting of representative staff, including pupil service personnel and classroom teachers.

In recommending the granting of a waiver of the attendance requirement, the review committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the pupil and parent/guardian.

A. General Attendance Procedures

1. Parents or guardians must call the attendance office on the day of the absence. This call will be recorded in lieu of a note.
2. A student absent for five or more consecutive days due to illness shall present a doctor's certificate or note to the nurse indicating that the student is fit to return to school.
3. Students not present prior to 9:18 a.m. or 1:45 p.m. will be marked absent for the a.m. and p.m. sessions respectively.

B. Attendance Requirements

1. Elementary & Jr./Sr. High School

Although credit acquisition is not a concern at the elementary school level (grades K-6) sufficient attendance is required if a student is to make adequate academic progress. The school year is 180 days with each marking period of approximately 45 days. Any student who exceeds 20 unexcused absences for the school year will be considered excessively absent and may be recommended for retention.

a) Cumulative Absences (Secondary School)

The concept of excused-unexcused absences has been revised to one of cumulative absences **in the jr./sr. high school.**

- 1) Students will be permitted up to **four (4)** cumulative absences per marking period and twenty (20) cumulative absences per year.
- 2) Students in excess of **four (4)** cumulative absences in a course for the marking period will be in violation and credit for the marking period will be withheld.

The cumulative absences acquired during a marking period will accumulate **over the course of the year.** A student in excess of 20 cumulative absences for the year will not have completed the prescribed course of study and shall not receive credit. He/She may be excluded from the course after notification of the right of appeal. The transcript will be marked "withdraw-failure".

- 3) Legitimate **Excused Absences** (absences considered non-cumulative)

- a) Medical - **An absence due to a disabling illness, or an illness accompanied/ followed by a doctor's note.**
- b) Religious Observance - **In accordance with statute, no pupil absent for religious observance of a day recognized by the Commissioner of Education or this board of education shall be charged with an unexcused absence, deprived of an award or eligibility/opportunity to compete for an award, or of the right to take an alternate to a test or exam missed through such absence.**
- c) Death - Absences attributed to the death of a close friend or family member and authorized by a parent or guardian.
- d) Court Attendance - Absences as a result of attending required court proceedings, and substantiated by a note or other legal document.
- e) Emergencies - Absences as a result of an emergency as determined by the principal or his/her designee.
- f) College Visits - Maximum of two per year.
- g) Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal.

Attendance need not always be within the school facilities. A pupil will be considered to be in attendance if he/she is present at any place where school is in session, **or at a school-approved trip or activity during a regularly scheduled school day**, by authority of the board.

The board shall consider each pupil assigned to a program of independent

study, with parent/guardian permission, to be in regular attendance for that program, provided that he/she is under the guidance of a staff member so assigned, reports daily or weekly, as prescribed, to such staff member the place in which he/she is conducting his/her study, and regularly demonstrates progress toward the objectives of his/her course of study.

b) Parent Notification of Cumulative Absences

- 1) After the third cumulative absence during a marking period **the school will make a reasonable effort to notify the student's parents of these absences prior to the start of the following day. An action plan to address the absences will be developed with the parent(s).**
- 2) **For between Four and Nine unexcused absences the school shall:**
 - a. **Make a reasonable effort to notify the student's parents of these unexcused absences prior to the start of the following day.**
 - b. **Reevaluate the action plan.**
 - c. **Refer the student to the building's Intervention and Referral Services Team.**
 - d. **Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies as appropriate.**
- 3) **For cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more the student is truant pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, and the school district shall:**

- a. **Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the NJ Administrative Office of the Courts.**
- b. **Make a reasonable effort to notify the student's parents of the referral.**
- c. **Continue to consult with parents and law enforcement.**
- d. **Proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, and other applicable State and Federal Statutes.**

- 4) **For students with disabilities the attendance plan and punitive and remedial procedures set forth therein shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the student's IEP.**

c) Absences and Co-Curricular Participation

- 1) In order to participate in an after-school activity a student must be present for both the a.m. and p.m. sessions. This requires that a student be in prior to 9:18 a.m. and complete the day.
- 2) A student who is present only for the p.m. session may attend the after-school activity as an observer only.
- 3) A student present for the a.m. session only may not attend any after-school activities, including practice sessions.
- 4) A student sent home by the school nurse may not participate in any after-school activities for that day.
- 5) A student who is absent on a Friday or a day prior to a vacation may be

permitted to participate in co-curricular activities over the weekend or the vacation period.

- 6) If the aforementioned absence (item #5) was for 3 or more days a medical release will be necessary for participation.
- 7) Administration approval for participation may be granted by the principal or his designee only for legitimate reasons such as family emergencies, medical appointments, college visits, funerals, driver's tests, etc.

C. Tardiness

1. Jr./Sr. High School (A specific policy for tardiness is in effect. This clause simply relates tardiness to absences).
 - a) Tardiness
 - 1) Students who are more than fifteen (15) minutes late for a class shall be considered as absent from the class when the tardy is unexcused.
 - 2) Tardiness to school resulting in absences from course or late arrival to course shall be considered cumulative absence for that class unless it is the result of:
 - a. Physician's or dentist's appointment.
 - b. Driver's test appointment
 - c. Fulfillment of a religious obligation as permitted by law
 - d. Required attendance in court
 - e. Family emergency

- f. Any other just cause as determined by the administration

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed shall be cumulative and may affect course credit.

2. Elementary School

Students who are tardy must report to the main office. If the school cannot be notified in advance a written note or a parent must accompany the child when reporting. Justifiable reasons include:

- a) Medical/Dental appointment
- b) Family emergency
- c) Court appearance
- d) Any other just cause as determined by the administration

Any tardiness not justified will result in detention.

D. Early Dismissal

The school must be notified in advance, in writing, of requests for early dismissal. The date, time and reason for the request must be listed.

No pupil in grades kindergarten through eight shall be permitted to leave the school before the close of the school day unless he/she is met in the school office by his/her parent/guardian or a person authorized by the parent/guardian to act in his/her behalf.

E. Truancy

The board will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of pupils below the age of 16. Repeated infractions

by enrolled pupils over the age of 16 may result in the suspension or expulsion of the pupil.

It shall be the policy of the board to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness to his/her needs of the educational program that is offered each pupil who is habitually and repeatedly absent from his/her assigned program and to consult with the child study team for its recommendations.

F. Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each pupil. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the board of any change in the pupil's custodian. If one parent/guardian has been awarded custody of the pupil in a divorce settlement, the other parent/guardian shall present to the principal a letter authorizing him/her to accompany the child from school before the child may be released to him/her. The principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the child is released only to proper custody.

G. Potentially Missing Children

1. If daily attendance records indicate a child is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact them.
2. If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance officer shall investigate.
3. If the attendance officer cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the appropriate local authorities.
4. If a child who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

H. Make-Up Work Provision

For each cumulative absence, the student is permitted the minimum of two days in which work can be completed.

I. Appeals

Appeals of decisions resulting in loss of credit for excessive absenteeism or any other items pursuant to these regulations shall be made in accordance with the policy and regulations regarding student grievances.

J. Regulations

The chief school administrator shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

1. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
2. Identify potentially missing and/or abused pupils;
3. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board, including pupils serving in or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
4. Impose on truant pupils such disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations, but no such penalty may have an irredeemable negative effect on the pupil's record of achievement beyond that which naturally follows his/her absence from school activities;
5. Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of his/her behavior, and consider modification of his/her educational program to meet his/her particular needs and interests;
6. Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;

7. Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
8. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Legal References:

<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1	General mandatory power and duties
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:35-4.9	Pupil promotion and remediation; policies and procedures
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-14,-15,-16	Religious holidays' absence of pupils on; effect
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-19a	Newly enrolled students; records and identification
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-24 through 26	Missing children; legislative findings and declarations
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-25	Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-26	Days when attendance required; exceptions
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-27	Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-31	Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-32	District and county vocational school attendance officers
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-7	Exclusion of pupils who are ill

<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-8	Exclusion of pupils whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-10	Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-11	Exclusion of pupils having communicable tuberculosis
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:46-16,-17	Exclusion of pupils pending examination and classification
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:8-4.7	Pupil behavior
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:8-7.1(d)2	Promotion and high school graduation requirements and procedures
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:20-1.1 <u>et. seq.</u>	Attendance and pupil accounting
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:28-3.6(d)5iv, 5vi,	Individualized education program
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:28-4.1(e)	General requirements

New Jersey State Board of Education Resolution, May 2, 1984, requires local boards to adopt policy on academic eligibility for extracurricular activities. Must address grade point average, attendance requirements and course failure rate.

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794

Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851

C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)

Manual for the Evaluation of Local School Districts (June 1993)

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