

## **Polk County Board of Education Policy Manual**

### **4400 Student Attendance**

Attendance in school and participation in class are integral parts of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Classroom experiences are essential components of the learning process, time lost from class is irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instruction interaction; therefore, each student should attend school every day. 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.

#### **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**

All non school related absences are considered unexcused until the school receives written explanation from the parent/guardian. When a student must miss school, a parent or guardian must provide documentation regarding reasons for the absences upon the student's return to school. Documentation must be turned in within five business days of the absence, documentation will not be accepted after five days without approval from a school administrator. The principal and attendance team has the authority to determine whether or not an absence is excused. Absences due to illness may also require a statement from a physician.

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;
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 **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.

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. (See also policies [4110](#), Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission, and [4351](#), Short-Term Suspension.) The classroom teacher(s) will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for asking what assignments are due and completing the assignments within the specified time period.

### C. 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 above in Section B.

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. Guardians of students with excessive tardies/early dismissals may also be required to meet with the principal and/or attendance team in order to determine methods of intervention to assist with consistent full day attendance. Such strategies should involve engaging students and parents, creating attendance improvement plans, providing early outreach to families of students missing school, and identifying and addressing barriers to attendance including referrals to community support resources.

### D. SCHOOL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

All classroom activities are important and difficult, if not impossible, to replace when 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 classroom teacher(s) will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for asking what assignments are due and completing the assignments within the specified time period.

## E. EXCESSIVE/CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

In accordance with the NC State Board of Education a student is considered to be chronically absent when enrolled in a North Carolina public school for at least 10 days at any time during the school year, and whose total number of absences – excused or unexcused – is equal to or greater than 10 percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year

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. School administrators and the attendance team shall monitor and analyze attendance data to develop and implement strategies for reducing chronic absenteeism. Such strategies should involve engaging students and parents, creating attendance improvement plans, providing early outreach to families of students missing school, and identifying and addressing barriers to attendance including referrals to community support resources.

Students are expected to be at school on time and to be present at the scheduled starting time for each class. A plan to address excessive/chronic absences will take into consideration the instruction, curriculum, environment and student specific behaviors when developing support and/or interventions. Attendance interventions may include additional instruction and support services designed to improve school engagement. Referrals to the legal system may be made if unexcused absences continue to be a concern after interventions are in place.

The principal shall notify parents and take all other steps required by [G.S. 115C-378](#) for excessive absences

## F. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

### 1. Students with Chronic Health Problems

No penalties will be imposed for absences due to documented chronic health problems. Absences due to chronic health problems will require a statement from a physician.

## 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

Excessive/chronic 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.

## 4. Out-of-district/inter-county transfers

The Superintendent/District approved admission of an out-of-district student or inter-county transfer school transfer/admission may be revoked due to excessive absences, tardies and/or early dismissals. Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will be informed in writing of this and allowed adequate time to enroll in their home district school.

## 5. Make Up Work

If a student is absent from school for five or more days in a semester, the principal or attendance team 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. The attendance team may recommend to the principal and the principal may make any of the following determinations:

1. the student will not receive a passing grade for the semester;
2. the student's grade will be reduced;
3. the student will receive the grade otherwise earned; or
4. the student will be given additional time to complete the missed work before a determination of the appropriate grade is made.

6. Occasionally, unique or unusual situations arise which are not specifically addressed by this policy. The Superintendent may authorize alternatives to the policy in order to achieve fairness to the students without weakening the effect of the policy.

Legal References: [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 [TCS-L-000](#), [-002](#), [-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](#)), Short-Term Suspension (policy [4351](#))

Adopted: September 10, 1990

Revision: January 7, 1993; January 14, 1997; November 20, 2000 (recodified from policy 8210); December 10, 2010; February 11, 2002, July 22, 2002; August 9, 2004; September 11, 2006; September 12, 2011; May 9, 2016