

**CODIFICATION REFERENCE NUMBER:** M 5200

**DATE:** August 31, 2009

**ACADEMIC ATTENDANCE/AWARD OF CREDIT**

**RESPONSIBILITY:**

The Principal or his/her designee will be responsible for the implementation of these procedures addressing student academic attendance.

**PROCEDURES:**

A. Definitions

1. "Attendance" is a pupil's presence in school and in the classroom to which he or she is assigned at the times scheduled for instruction or other school activities.
  - a. A pupil will be considered to have attended school for a full day if he or she has been present at least four (4) hours during the school day.
  - b. A pupil will be considered to have attended school for a half day if he or she has been present at least two (2) hours during the school day.
  - c. A pupil will be considered absent from school if he or she has been present for less than two (2) hours during the school day.
  - d. A pupil not present in school because of his or her participation in an approved school activity, such as a field trip, meeting, cooperative education assignment or athletic competition, will be considered to be in attendance.
2. "Excused Absence" is a pupil's absence from school for a full day or a portion of a day for one or more of the following reasons:
  - a. Exclusion from school of all persons with uncovered weeping lesions-whether or not the person has been screened for HIV;
  - b. The pupil's illness;
  - c. A death or critical illness in the pupil's immediate family;
  - d. Quarantine;
  - e. Observation of the pupil's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education;

- f. The pupil's required attendance in court;
  - g. Interviews with a prospective employer or with an admissions officer or an institution of higher education required and restricted by it to a specific date;
  - h. Examination for a driver's license;
  - i. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day; and
  - j. Written parental permission.
3. "Truancy" is a pupil's absence from all or part of the school day without the knowledge of the pupil's parent. A pupil will also be considered truant if he or she:
- a. Leaves school at lunch time without a pass;
  - b. Leaves school without permission when school is still in session;
  - c. Leaves class because of illness and does not report to the school nurse as directed; or
  - d. Is present in school but is absent from class without approval. Such truancy from class is a "class cut."
4. "Unexcused Absence" is a pupil's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed in paragraph A2 above. Truancy is considered an unexcused absence.
5. Extended Period of Absence

In the event a parent submits written permission for absence of 10 or more consecutive school days, the parent may be required to withdraw the student from the school register and re-enroll them upon the student's return.

#### B. Notice To School of a Pupil's Absence

- 1. A parent/guardian is requested to call the school office before school begins on the morning of the pupil's absence.
- 2. A parent/guardian of a pupil who anticipates a future absence or anticipates that an absence will be prolonged should notify the school nurse. If the absence is to be short-term (less than two weeks), the pupil's teacher will provide home assignments. If the absence is to be a long-term absence (two weeks or more), the policy on Home Instruction will be followed.

### C. Readmission to School After an Absence

1. A pupil returning from an absence of any length must present to the nurse or designee a written statement, dated and signed by the parent of the reasons for the absence. A telephone/email contact with the parent/guardian may be accepted in lieu of a note.
2. A pupil who has been absent by reason of having or being suspected of having a communicable disease must present to the nurse written evidence of being free of communicable disease in accordance with Policy No. 8451.

### D. Instruction

1. Teachers are expected to cooperate in the preparation of home assignments for pupils who anticipate an excused absence of three days' duration. The parent must request such home assignments.
2. A pupil who anticipates an excused absence of more than two weeks' duration may be eligible for home instruction in accordance with Policy No. 2412. The parent must request home instruction.
3. Pupils absent for any reason are expected to make up the work missed. In grade 1 and above, the pupil/parent is responsible for requesting missed assignments and any assistance required. Teachers will provide make-up assignments as necessary.
4. In general, pupils will be allowed one day to make up missed work for each one day of absence. Teachers shall make reasonable accommodations to extend time for pupils.
5. A pupil who missed a test because of an absence shall be offered an opportunity to take the test or an alternate test; in no case will a pupil who missed a test because of his or her observation of a religious holiday be denied an opportunity to make up the test.

### E. Denial of Course Credit/Retention

#### **Elementary Schools**

An elementary pupil may be retained at grade level, in accordance with Policy No. 5410, when he or she has accumulated 30 or more absences during a school year. Exceptions to this rule may be made for students who have demonstrated through completion of home assignments and/or home instruction that they have mastered the proficiencies established for the assigned courses of study.

#### **Middle School**

1. A middle school pupil may be retained at grade level, in accordance with Policy No. 5410, when he or she has accumulated 30 or more absences during a school year.

2. In the Middle School, a student may not receive a passing grade in a course after his/her total excused and unexcused absences exceed the following limits:

Full Year Course	24 absences
Semester Course	12 absences
Quarter Course	7 absences
Physical Education Course	18 absences

3. Exceptions to this rule may be made for students who have demonstrated through completion of home assignments and/or home instruction that they have mastered the proficiencies established for the assigned courses of study.

### **High School**

1. Secondary students who exceed the stated limits in semester and full-year courses may lose credit for a course. The Attendance Appeals Board meets to review cases involving loss of credit due to excessive absences or tardies to class. After a review, the students will be required to appear before the Attendance Appeals Board to determine loss of course credit when the following limits have been reached:

Full Year Course	More than 18 absences
Semester Course	More than 9 absences
Quarter Course	More than 4 absences
Physical Education	More than 13 absences

2. Class cutting is a serious offense. Loss of course credit may result when the following limits have been reached:

Full Year Course	4 cuts
Semester Course	3 cuts
Quarter Course	2 cuts
Physical Education	3 cuts

### **F. Notice to Pupils and Parents**

1. When a pupil has been absent 10 days in any one school year, the principal/assistant principal will notify the pupil's parent in writing of the number of dates of the absences and possible adverse academic consequences. A copy of the notice will be sent to the District attendance officer.
2. When a pupil has been absent 20 days in any one school year, the principal/assistant principal will send written notice to the pupil's parent warning of possible adverse academic consequences and requiring a parent conference which the parent(s), student, principal, and guidance counselor. A copy of the notice will be sent to the District attendance officer.

3. When a pupil has been absent 30 or more school days in any one school year, the principal will notify the pupil's parent in writing that the pupil may be retained at his/her grade level.

#### G. Discipline

1. Pupils may be denied participation in co-curricular activities if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth in Policy No. 2430.
2. Pupils may be denied participation in athletic competition if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth in Policy No. 2431.
3. No pupil who is absent from school for observance of a religious holiday may be deprived of any award, or of eligibility for, or opportunity to compete for any award because of the absence.
4. Truancies will be handled as follows:
  - a. First instance: the principal will confer with the pupil about the unexcused absence and will notify the pupil and the parent that continued truancies may result in serious discipline.
  - b. Second instance: the principal will request the parent to attend a conference with the teacher and the pupil to discuss the cause of the truancies. The student may be placed on in-school suspension.
5. The absence of a pupil missing from school for unexplained reasons will be handled in accordance with Policy No. 8464.

#### H. Recording Attendance

1. A parent must call the school as soon as possible before the start of school to report the pupil's absence. If the school is not notified, the school will call home/place of work to determine the reason for the absence. If the pupil's whereabouts are still undetermined after nurse's attempts to reach home and the workplace, the police may be notified.
2. Teachers must electronically record the pupils present, tardy, and absent each day in each session or class. Attendance records must also record pupils' attendance at out-of-school curricular events such as field trips. The nurse or designee will determine if the absence is excused or unexcused.
3. Each absence must be classified and recorded as excused, unexcused, or truant.
4. A report card will show the number of times the pupil was absent and tardy in each marking period.

5. A pupil's absence for observance of a religious holiday will not be recorded as such on any transcript or application for employment form. It will be noted internally as a state excused day.

#### I. Appeal

1. A pupil who has been suspended or expelled for truancies may appeal that action in accordance with Policy Nos. 5610 and 5620.
2. A pupil who has been retained at grade level for excessive absences may appeal that action in accordance with Policy No. 5410.

#### J. Attendance Improvement Plan

1. The Central Office will collect attendance data from each of the schools in the District and calculate the average daily attendance rate for the District and for each school. The attendance rate shall be calculated by dividing the total number of pupil days present for all pupils by the total possible number of pupil days present for all pupils and multiplying the result by one hundred.
2. When the average daily attendance rate is below 90% for the District or below 85% in any one school, the following attendance improvement plan shall be implemented, District-wide or in the affected school, as appropriate.
  - a. The District Attendance Officer is responsible for implementing the attendance improvement plan District-wide. The principal is responsible for implementing the attendance improvement plan in any school.
  - b. The procedures for notifying parents and disciplining pupils, set forth in paragraphs F and G, shall be strictly followed.
  - c. Classroom teachers will identify and report to the principal/assistant principal the pupils for whom tardiness is a problem. The principal/assistant principal will confer with the parent of each identified pupil by telephone or in person to determine the causes of the pupil's poor attendance and to impress upon the parent the District's attendance expectations. Every reasonable effort shall be made to determine whether the pupil's absenteeism is caused by an inappropriate educational program; if necessary, the pupil's instructional program will be modified.
  - d. The District Attendance Officer will analyze attendance data to determine any patterns of absence that may occur District-wide, in individual schools, and in pupil population groups. The results of the analysis will be reported to the Superintendent.

## K. School District Response To Unexcused Absences During the School Year

1. For up to four cumulative unexcused absences, the Building Principal or designee shall:
  - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
  - b. Conduct an investigation of the cause of each unexcused absence, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian;
  - c. Develop an action plan in consultation with the pupil's parent or legal guardian designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any, and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance;
  - d. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or abused child abuse situation is detected; and
  - e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
  
2. For between five and nine cumulative unexcused absences, the Building Principal or designee shall:
  - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
  - b. Conduct a follow-up investigation, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian, to determine the cause of each unexcused absence;
  - c. Evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan developed pursuant to the I&RS Committee;
  - d. Revise the action plan, as needed, to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based upon the pupil's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes, supporting the pupil's return to school and regular attendance that may include any or all of the following:
    - (1) Refer or consult with the building's Intervention and Referral Services Team, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8;
    - (2) Conduct testing, assessments, or evaluations of the pupil's academic, behavioral, and health needs;

- (3) Consider an alternate educational placement;
    - (4) Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
    - (5) Refer to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts; and
    - (6) Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or child abuse situation is detected.
  - e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
3. For cumulative unexcused absences of ten or more, the pupil between the ages of six and sixteen is truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, and the Building Principal or designee shall:
- a. Make a mandatory referral to the voluntary court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts (Family Crisis Intervention Unit);
  - b. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of the mandatory referral;
  - c. Continue to consult with the parent or legal guardian and the involved agencies to support the pupil's return to school and regular attendance;
  - d. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and
  - e. Proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required, including the reporting of the absence to the Municipal Court as a disorderly person's offense.
4. For pupils with disabilities, the attendance plan and punitive and remedial procedures of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.8 and Policy and Regulation 5200 shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the pupil's Individualized Education Programs, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq.; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act; the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14; accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. §§794 and 705(20); and individualized health care plans, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3.

5. All receiving schools pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-7.1(a) shall act in accordance with F.1. above for each pupil with up to four cumulative unexcused absences.
  - a. For each pupil attending a receiving school with five or more cumulative unexcused absences, the absences shall be reported to the sending district by the receiving school.
    - (1) The sending school district shall proceed in accordance with the district Board of Education policies and procedures pursuant to F. above, as appropriate.