

## **Policy Code: 4400 Attendance**

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. Even with students over the age of 16, school employees must continue to encourage continuous attendance.

The board seeks full cooperation from parents and guardians in promoting good attendance and punctuality and strongly encourages that: when possible, medical and dental appointments be scheduled after school hours; and family vacations be taken during school vacation and recess periods. While the primary responsibility for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily rests with students and parents or guardians, school employees also have a responsibility to facilitate proper attendance by maintaining safe and inviting school environments. 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 accurate records of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. Teachers are expected to account for attendance in their classes and are responsible for documentation of student attendance. In high schools, attendance must be taken for each class period. The attendance office will complete absence reports for each student, maintain documentation of absences, and report this information to teachers, the school's social worker, the administration, and parents.

Students will be considered in attendance for the day if present at least half 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, 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.

### **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. Elementary and middle school students arriving late or requesting early departure must be accompanied by a parent or guardian or responsible adult designated in writing by a parent or guardian at the designated check-in/check-out location at the school. The administration will follow up with the parent or guardian if the expectation is not met. Each high school must establish protocols to address late arrivals and early departures. Late arrivals or early departures may be excused for any of the reasons listed below in Section C.

Patterns of unexcused late arrivals and early departures will be monitored and problem solved by the student support staff, including the school social worker.

### **C. 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 on the day the student returns after an absence. If a student fails to bring an excuse, the absence may be deemed unexcused. Absences due to extended illnesses or injury will be monitored by the school social worker and may also require a statement from a health care practitioner. When total absences for a student (excused and unexcused) exceeds 10 days per semester, further documentation may be required (health care practitioner's statement, court documentation, etc.). Requests for absences for an educational opportunity should be submitted, in writing, to the principal in advance of the opportunity. The request should include the learning objective of the opportunity and how the objective links to coursework or the educational development of the student.

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 by the State Board of Health;
3. death in the immediate family (immediate family includes, but is not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents, brothers, and sisters);
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. observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent or legal guardian (the principal must excuse at least two such absences each academic year; additional such absences require approval of the superintendent or designee);
7. with prior approval from the principal, participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel, service as a legislative or Governor's page, cultural exposure or experiences with clear alignment to course content standards, or college tours (juniors and seniors will be considered present for two post-secondary college visits; any additional college visits will be considered excused absences);
8. pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary; or
9. 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 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 (the principal must excuse at least two such absences each academic year).

#### **D. 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.

### **E. Excessive Absences Makeup Work**

#### **1. Elementary and Middle School Requirements**

The principal or designee may request a conference with a parent or guardian at any time to discuss an attendance problem.

Elementary and middle school students who are absent more than 20 days in a school year may be retained. Elementary and middle school students who are chronically absent (excused or unexcused) for more than 10% of the school year will be referred for academic and/or attendance interventions within a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). Continued absenteeism may result in the school system notifying the Department of Social Services, juvenile court or the district attorney that the parent or guardian is not cooperating with the school system in addressing the attendance problem.

Students arriving late or requesting early dismissal should be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Excessive tardiness or early dismissals shall be monitored at the school level and the student impacted may be referred for academic and/or attendance interventions within the MTSS.

#### **2. High School Requirements**

High school students who are chronically absent (excused or unexcused) for more than 10% of the school year will be referred for academic and/or attendance interventions within a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS).

The following procedure will be implemented each semester:

a. First and Second Absences: Make up work shall be assigned by the student's teacher as deemed appropriate. All make up work shall be completed within a reasonable amount of time as determined by the child's teacher.

b. Third- Tenth Absences: Make up work shall be assigned by the student's teacher as deemed appropriate. All make up work shall be completed within a reasonable amount of time as determined by the child's teacher. If absences are consecutive, more time may be allowed at the teacher's discretion. Parents will be notified after the third, sixth and tenth absences.

- c. Eleventh Absence: In grades 9-12, a student who misses more than 10 days in a semester, shall not be awarded course credit except by determination of the principal/designee upon careful review of the student records with a panel of individuals to include the student, parent(s)/guardian(s), teacher(s) of course(s), and other appropriate support staff (ie EC Chair, MTSS Coordinator). Make up work shall be assigned by the student's teacher as deemed appropriate. All make up work shall be completed within a reasonable amount of time as determined by the child's teacher.
- d. When total absences (lawful and unlawful) exceed 10 days per semester, further documentation will be required (doctor's statement, court documentation, etc.)
- e. Schools shall offer incentives to provide recognition of perfect attendance.

#### ~~1. Makeup Assignments (All Students)~~

~~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.~~

#### ~~2. Makeup Days (Students at Risk)~~

~~Students who are identified as at risk may be permitted to make up missed classes or days during non-school hours. Time must be made up on an hour-for-hour or day-for-day basis with participation limited to those students who fit the criteria for identification as a student at risk (see policy 3405, Students at Risk of Academic Failure).~~

### **F. Unexcused Absences**

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

### **G. 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 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.

### **H. 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. Once a secondary student has exceeded 10 absences, the student may lose the privilege of participating 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](#); [130A-440](#); [16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102](#), [-.0103](#), [.0106](#); State Board of Education Policies [ATND-000](#), [-003](#)

Cross References: Students at Risk of Academic Failure (policy 3405), 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)

Other Resources: NC DPI Multi-Tiered System of Support Implementation Guide, available at <https://www.livebinders.com/play/play/2052295?tabid=180c26e7-0236-1ff0-3f53-291910458e28#anchor>

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**New Hanover County Public Schools**