

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Policy Code:

4400

School attendance and class participation are critical to academic achievement and are integral to 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. Guilford County Schools is committed to supporting students and families in their efforts to attend school every day.

### 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. To be considered “in attendance,” a student must be present in school for at least one-half of the instructional day (one-half of the class periods for attendance in secondary schools) 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.

Students who are on an approved homebound placement based on medical recommendations will be considered in attendance.

### 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.

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 below in Section C.

No student may leave school after arrival on campus except with the permission of a designated school official and in accordance with the school’s established sign-out procedures.

Any disciplinary consequences for unexcused tardiness or unexcused early departures from school or class will be consistent with policy 4300, Student Discipline. The superintendent

or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range of consequences that may be imposed on a student for such offenses.

### C. **LAWFUL (EXCUSED) ABSENCES**

Parents and guardians are requested to contact school officials immediately when unanticipated absences occur. When a student must miss school, an explanation of the absence must be communicated, by any method reasonably designed to achieve notice (e.g. written note or email) to the student's teacher or attendance office official as soon as possible and within three days of the student's return. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a health care practitioner.

All anticipated periods of absence should be reported to school officials prior to the period of absence and must receive prior approval in advance from the school principal or designee in order to be considered an excused absence.

An absence may be lawful/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 or isolation or quarantine that is a required state or local control measure;
3. death in the immediate family (includes, but is not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents, brothers, and sisters);
4. medical or dental appointments;
5. participation as a party or under subpoena as a witness in a court or administrative tribunal proceeding, including a proceeding before the Guilford County Schools Board of Education;
6. for observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent(s) or legal guardian, students are entitled to up to two days each academic year;
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. child care: illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent;
9. a minimum of two days each academic year for 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 or inactive 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; or

~~9.10.~~ A maximum of one (1) hour per week for released time religious instruction offered by a private entity off campus during the school day, provided that the student makes up all missed work and the parent/guardian provides signed written consent and documentation for each absence on forms prescribed by the Superintendent or designee. Released time religious instruction is not permitted during state-required assessments. State or local funds may not be expended to facilitate a student attending released time religious instruction and private entities are prohibited from offering released time religious instruction on school property;

~~10.11.~~ any other reason as approved by the board in a board resolution.

#### **D. UNLAWFUL (UNEXCUSED) ABSENCES**

All absences for reasons other than those identified under Section B, Lawful (Excused) Absences, will be deemed unlawful.

Out-of-school suspension or expulsion will not be considered unlawful absence for purposes of the compulsory attendance law.

#### **E. 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 contests or other competition events that require early dismissal or absence 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 suspensions will not be counted as absent.

#### **F. MAKEUP WORK**

In the case of excused and unexcused absences, including, 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~~ their missed learning work. (See also policy 4110, Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission.) Assignments missed due to participation in school-related activities also are eligible for makeup by the student. Guidelines for making up work and demonstrating mastery within a reasonable time frame shall be outlined in administrative regulations issued by the Superintendent.

#### **G. 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.

Any school disciplinary consequences for unexcused absences will be consistent with policy 4300, Student Discipline. The superintendent or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range of consequences that may be imposed on a student for such offenses. Students shall not be suspended for violating attendance policies.

#### **H. CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

Guilford County Schools focuses on improving the academic success of every student, and that success begins with ensuring that students can attend school every day, ready and able to learn. 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 encouraged throughout the community.

Guilford County Schools defines chronic absenteeism as missing ten percent or more of school days due to absences for any reason, lawful/excused or unlawful/unexcused, for any student who is enrolled for at least 10 school days during the year. 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.

#### **I. 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. 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, Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities.

The Board authorizes the Superintendent to issue administrative regulations to implement this policy.

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, -407.12; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, .0103, .0106; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003

Other Resources: NC DPI Multi-Tiered System of Support Implementation Guide, available at <https://www.livebinders.com/play/play?id=2957986#anchor>

Cross References: Student Participation in Extracurricular Activities (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), Student Discipline (policy 4300)

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