

Attendance Policy (Grades 9-12)

Board Policy for High School (Grades 9-12) Attendance

The chief school administrator or his/her designee shall oversee the development of effective strategies that maximize student attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities and strive to:

1. Encourage good attendance;
2. Discourage unexcused absences;
3. Identify patterns of absence, tardiness and early departures from school; and
4. Intervene to prevent and correct problems with attendance.

Attendance

A day in session for purposes of attendance shall be a day on which the school is open and students are under the guidance and direction of a teacher or teachers engaged in the teaching process. Days on which school is closed for such reasons as holidays, teachers' professional development and inclement weather shall not be considered as days in session.

A school day shall consist of not less than four hours of actual instruction.

A student shall be recorded as absent in the school register when not in attendance at a session, except for the following reasons mandated by the State of New Jersey:

1. Religious observance as defined by law (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h));
2. A college visit (up to 3 days per school year, only for students in grades 11 and 12);
3. "Take Our Children to Work Day" (pursuant to the memo issued by the Commissioner to all districts on April 25, 2017) or other rule issued by the Commissioner;
4. Participation in observance of Veterans Day (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-13.2) or district board of election membership activities (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-33); or
5. The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.

An excused absence for any reason other than those listed above shall not be counted as a day of attendance in the school register.

The mere presence of a student at roll call shall not be regarded as sufficient attendance for compliance with law (N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3). A student must have attended school for at least 4 hours in a day to be marked present.

A student 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.

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 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.

Excused and Unexcused Absence

A. Excused Absences

For the purpose of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance the following absences are excused and not considered:

- Religious observance pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(h);
- A college visit (up to 3 days per school year, only for students in grades 11 and 12);
- “Take Our Children to Work Day” (pursuant to the memo issued by the Commissioner to all districts on April 25, 2017) or other rule issued by the Commissioner;
- Participation in observance of Veterans Day (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-13.2) or district board of election membership activities (N.J.S.A. 18A: 36-33);
- The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school.
- A student’s suspension from school;

B. Unexcused Absences

The following absences are unexcused. Unexcused absences are considered for the purpose of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance:

- A student's illness. The parent/guardian should provide a written letter from a licensed medical professional within 10 days of the student's return to school
- A student's required attendance in court (verified by court documentation);
- Family illness or death supported by a written letter from the parent/guardian upon the student's return to school, supported by notification to the school by the student's parent/guardian;
- Examination for a driver's license (verified by documentation);
- Necessary medical appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day supported by written documentation from the licensed medical professional;
- An absence for any other reason. Some examples include, but are not limited to: family travel, performance of household or babysitting duties, other daytime activities unrelated to the school program.

Procedures for Unexcused Absences

When a student fails to report to class or school accumulating up to four unexcused absences, the school shall:

1. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
2. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parents;
3. Identify in consultation with the student's parents needed action designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any, and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance;
4. Follow all procedures according to law and board policy on Child Abuse and Neglect if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected;
5. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Unexcused Absences for Students in Special Education

For students with disabilities, the length of the school day and the academic year of programs must be at least as long as that established for nondisabled students (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.1(c)). The attendance guidelines, discipline and remedial measures set forth in this policy shall apply to classified students where appropriate and in accordance with the student's:

- A. Individualized education program (IEP);
- B. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- C. Procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14;
- D. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities as required by law;
- E. Requirements of a student's individualized health care plan and individualized emergency healthcare plan.
- F. Accommodation plans, pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 794 and 705(20)

The IEP team may make a decision, based on the individual needs of the student, that the student is unable to attend school and should receive special education and related services in a different setting or manner, such as through home instruction, all or part of the time. The decision of the IEP team shall be included in the student's IEP. In such a case, the student should be marked as "present" in the Student Information System (SIS) when he or she is educated in the educational placement(s) set forth in his or her IEP. proceed in accordance with the sending district's board attendance policy and procedure.

Attendance and Instruction

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

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

All students are expected to be at school and class at the regularly scheduled time for all school days in session.

A student shall be considered absent from school for participation in less than 4 instructional hours during the school day.

A student must be in attendance for 144 or more school days in an academic year in order to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which he/she is assigned.

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a child will be absent and for informing the school in writing of the reason for the absence.

Families can track their child's overall attendance and credit status via the attendance report distributed on DeansList every week.

Appeals:

Any student who has lost credit due to excessive unexcused absences may file an appeal with the Appeals Committee. A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause upon recommendation of an Appeals Committee. Any appeal has firm filing deadlines. In order to properly file an appeal the student must complete the necessary appeals request form and have it submitted to the school's main office by the deadline. The form is available in the school's main office. The deadline for filing an appeal in any given year is:

Length of course	Appeals Filing Deadline
Full year	By June 7th of the academic year (except for 12th graders who must file by May 31st of the academic year)
Semester for first half of academic year	By February 16th of the academic year
Semester for second half of academic year	By June 7th of the academic year (except for 12th graders who must file by May 31st of the academic year)

The academic year is from July 1 to June 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

The Appeals Committee shall consist, at minimum, of campus and regional representative staff, including the School Leader, Head of Schools, Teaching and Learning Staff Member, Operations Staff Member, and a staff member from the Special Education department (if applicable).

In recommending the granting of a waiver of this attendance requirement, the review committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess of the allowable unexcused days. Completion of make-up work/assessments, documentation of the reasons of the unexcused absences, as well as mastery of the subject matter are some of the factors that are used in assessing an appeal. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the pupil and parent/guardian. The absence of documented parent/guardian notes, doctor's notes, and other records that verify an absence according to policy, may count negatively towards the student. Notes from parents/guardians shall be considered but the school may require additional documentation such as doctor's notes or other official records to verify the note.

Procedures for Persistent Absence and Early Warning Systems

For up to four cumulative undocumented absences the school shall

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parent of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parent;
- C. Identify, in consultation with the student's parents, needed action 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.9:6-1et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-10, if a potentially missing or abused child situation is detected; and
- E. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

If the pattern of absences continues and five to nine undocumented absences are accumulated the school shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to determine the cause of the unexcused absence, including through contact with the student's parents/guardians to address patterns of unexcused absences previously;

- C. Evaluate the appropriateness of action taken as identified in consultation with the student's parents/guardians;
- D. Develop an action plan to establish outcomes based upon the student's patterns of unexcused absences and to specify the interventions for supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance, which may include any or all of the following:
 1. Refer or consult with the building's intervention and referral services team;
 2. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
 3. Consider an alternate educational placement;
 4. Make a referral to or coordinate with a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
 5. Refer to the court or a court program as follows:
 - a. When the unexcused absences are determined to be violations of the compulsory education law and board policy;
 - b. When there is evidence of a juvenile-family crisis the student may be referred to Superior Court, Chancery Division, Family Part. "Juvenile-family crisis" pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-22(g) means behavior, conduct or a condition of a juvenile, parent or guardian or other family member which presents or results in a threat to wellbeing and safety of the juvenile, serious conflict regarding the juvenile's conduct, unauthorized absence from home, pattern of unauthorized absence from school, or human trafficking
 6. The implementation of all required procedures for potential abuse, neglect or missing child including cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
 7. Engage the student's family.

For cumulative undocumented absences of 10 or more, the student between the ages of six and 16 is truant, pursuant to law. The school shall:

- A. Make a determination regarding the need for a court referral for the truancy;
- B. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of the mandatory referral;
- C. Continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
- D. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
- E. Follow all procedures required by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Compelling Attendance at School and other applicable state and federal statutes.

Tardiness

The orderly conduct of class activity depends upon the prompt and precise beginning of the program. Tardiness hinders the proper conduct of school activity. Students are expected to arrive to school and class on time. A student who is tardy to any class will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the student code of conduct. Consequences for accumulated occurrences of tardiness may include detention, loss of credit and an unexcused school day absence.

Regular Release of Pupils Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations which may justify release of certain pupils from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the pupil's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the pupil.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each pupil. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the school of any change in the pupil's custodian.

Adopted: 8/21/2023