

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND EXCUSES

The Passaic Board of Education believes that the regular attendance of students in each class and in school in general is critical to its educational mission. The district shall endeavor to achieve the ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). Continuity of instruction is an essential element in student performance and allows students the greatest opportunity to succeed at meeting the state learning standards. The superintendent 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:

- A. Encourage good attendance;
- B. Discourage unexcused absences;
- C. Identify patterns of absence, tardiness and early departures from school; and
- D. Intervene to prevent and correct problems with attendance.

Attendance need not always be within the school facilities. A student 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 student 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.

Attendance

In order for the board of education 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. Absences of students may be identified as “excused” or “unexcused,” as identified in Regulation 5113.

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. The following rules shall apply for student absences:

- A. A student shall be considered absent from class for tardiness in excess of one half of the total class period;
- B. A student shall be considered absent from school for participation in less than 4 instructional hours during the school day.

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A student must be in attendance for 163 of the 181-day school 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 principal or his/her designee no later than one-hour after the start of school on the day when a child will be absent and for informing the principal or his/her designee of the reason for the absence. A written statement from the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students under 18 years of age will be required on the day the student returns to school. The written statement must be dated and signed by the parent/guardian, with the reason(s) for the absence(s). Students 18 years old or older may write their own note explaining the reason for absence from school. The absence of a student without proper notification or written excuse shall be sufficient reason for a home inquiry by an attendance officer. The Superintendent shall develop procedures for the attendance of students which:

1. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
2. Identify potentially missing and/or abused students; and
3. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1 et seq. including students serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons.

A student who has been absent for having, or being suspected of having a communicable disease must present a physician's note indicating that they are able to return to school.

A pattern of absences is persistent if there is an accumulation of five to nine unexcused absences in the course of the school year.

Eighteen (18) absences, excused or unexcused, will require a review by the attendance review committee to determine satisfactory completion of course requirements.

A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon recommendation of the attendance review committee, appointed by him/her, and comprised of the principal and/or his/her designee, the school guidance counselor, the school attendance officer, and one or more grade level teacher(s).

In recommending the granting of a waiver of this attendance requirement, the attendance review committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess of the 18 days. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian. The absence of documented parent/guardian notes, doctor's notes, and other records that verify that an absence was excused according to board policy shall be considered unexcused. Unexcused absences shall count toward truancy and may be subject to loss of grade or course credit toward promotion or graduation and disciplinary actions according to the code of student conduct. Notes from parents/guardians shall be considered but the district may require additional documentation such as doctor's notes or other official records to verify the note.

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Excused or unexcused, a student may be denied individual course credit when the number of absences exceed 18 in a specific course.

The school/district reserves the right to verify the stated reasons for all absences.

Discipline

All discipline regarding the attendance of students shall be consistent with the board policy 5131 Code of Student Conduct.

No student who is absent from school for observance of a religious holiday or other excused absence shall be disciplined and/or deprived of any award or of eligibility for or opportunity to compete for any award because of the absence.

Students, parents and guardians shall be notified of disciplinary actions for attendance including loss of credit and may appeal this determination through the procedure as set forth in board policy 5145.6 Student Grievance Procedure.

Truancy

For cumulative unexcused absences of ten (10) or more, the student between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) is truant, pursuant to law. The district shall:

- A. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
- 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, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School and other applicable state and federal statutes.

District Sending and Receiving Relationships

The receiving school shall report attendance problems to the sending district responsible for the student. Following five or more cumulative unexcused absences school officials shall proceed in accordance with the sending district's board attendance policy and procedure.

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

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

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)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 board policy 5131 Code of Student Conduct. Consequences for accumulated occurrences of tardiness may include detention, loss of credit and an unexcused school day absence.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a student be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day.

As the agent responsible for the education of the children of this district, the board shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the student's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal.

Late arrival or early dismissal due to student's illness, an emergency in the student's family, the observance of a religious holiday, a death in the student's family, or related to a school-led activity will be considered excused. All other instances will be considered unexcused.

No student in grades kindergarten through eight shall be permitted to leave the school before the close of the school day unless he/she is met in the school office by his/her parent/guardian or a person authorized by the parent/guardian to act in his/her behalf.

An early dismissal will count as an absence if the student is present for less for 4 hours of the instructional day.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each student. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the board of any change in the student's custodian. The principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the child is released only to the proper legal custodian.

Potentially Missing Children

- A. If daily attendance records indicate a child is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact them;
- B. If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance officer shall investigate;
- C. If the attendance officer cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the appropriate local authorities;

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D. If a child who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

Marking Missing Child's School Record

Whenever the superintendent receives notice from the Missing Persons Unit that a child has been reported missing, he/she shall mark the child's records in such a way that whenever a copy of or information regarding the record is requested, district personnel will be aware that the record is that of a missing child. If a copy of a marked school record is requested, the superintendent shall supply the record to the requestor without alerting him/her to the fact that the record has been marked, according to provisions in code and statute on accessing student records (see policy 5125 Student Records). After the superintendent has complied with the request for copies of records or information, he/she shall immediately report the inquiry or any knowledge as to the whereabouts of the missing child to the Missing Persons Unit.

Regulations

The superintendent shall develop procedures for the attendance of students which:

- A. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
- B. Identify potentially missing and/or abused students;
- C. Include the establishment of the Attendance Review Committee at each school site;
- D. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1 et seq., including students serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- E. Impose on truant students such disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations, but no such penalty may have an irredeemable negative effect on the student's record of achievement beyond that which naturally follows his/her absence from school activities;
- F. Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of his/her behavior, and consider modification of his/her educational program to meet his/her particular needs and interests;
- G. Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
- H. Ensure that students absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
- I. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Dissemination and Implementation

The superintendent shall take all necessary steps to publicize this policy and may include these rules in district handbooks and/or on the district website. Parents/Guardians and students shall be notified annually of the attendance policy.

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The superintendent shall ensure that the rules for this policy are applied consistently and uniformly, and that all disciplinary sanctions are carried out with necessary due process.

The board shall review the attendance policy on a regular basis.

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Key Words

Student Attendance, Attendance, Absences and Excuses, Student Attendance

<u>Legal References:</u>	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:35-4.9	Student promotion and remediation; policies and procedures
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-14, -15, -16	Religious holidays; absence of students on; effect ...
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-19a	Newly enrolled students; records and identification
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-24 through -26	Missing children; legislative findings and declarations ...
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-25	Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-26	Days when attendance required; exceptions
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-27	Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined
penalties	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-31	Violations of article by parents or guardians;
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-32	District and county vocational school attendance officers
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-7	Exclusion of students who are ill
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-8	Exclusion of students whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-9	Failure of parent to remove cause for exclusion; penalty
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-10	Exclusion of teachers and students exposed to disease
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-11	Exclusion of students having communicable

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		tuberculosis
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-12	Closing schools during epidemic
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 52:17B-9.8a	
	through -9.8c	Marking of missing child's school record
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:8-5.1	Graduation requirements
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:16-1 <u>et seq.</u>	Programs to support student development
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:30-1.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-8.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Student Attendance and
Accounting		
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-8.3	Student attendance
	<u>Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington</u> , 1978 <u>S.L.D.</u> 794	
	<u>Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington</u> , 1974 <u>S.L.D.</u> 851	
	<u>C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District</u> , 1988 <u>S.L.D.</u> (June 22)	
	Student Attendance Policies and Procedures Compliance Checklist, New Jersey Department of Education	

Possible

<u>Cross References:</u>	*5020	Role of parents/guardians
	*5111	Admission
	*5114	Suspension and expulsion
	*5124	Reporting to parents/guardians
	*5125	Student records
	*5141.2	Illness
	*5141.4	Child abuse and neglect
	*5142	Student safety
	*6146	Graduation requirements
	*6146.2	Promotion/retention
	*6147	Standards of proficiency
	*6147.1	Evaluation of individual student performance
	*6154	Homework/makeup work
	*6171.4	Special education
	*6173	Home instruction

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.