

**Regulations**

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ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND EXCUSES

Definitions

- A. "Attendance" is a student'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 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.
- B. "At-Risk based on attendance" means one or more of the following:
1. A student has been identified as truant (see policy 5113);
  2. A student has persistent absences (see below); and
  3. A student with eighteen (18) or more absences, excused or unexcused.
- C. "Late arrival" means the arrival of a student after the beginning of the student's school day for an excused purpose.
- D. "Early dismissal" means the release of a student from school prior to the end of the school day for an excused purpose, and includes the release of student for a period of time during the school day.
- E. "Dismissal from class" means a student's brief absence from an assigned class for a reason that has been approved in advance. A "dismissal from class" is not a "class cut" and may be designated as an excused absence in the attendance record.
- F. "Tardiness" means the student arrives to his/her assigned homeroom/class period after the bell rings without approval.
- G. "Truancy" is a student's absence from all or part of the school day without the knowledge of the student's parent.
- H. An absence shall be considered an "excused absence" 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 student conduct for attendance, for the following reasons:
1. The student's illness;
  2. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan;
  3. A death or critical illness in the student's immediate family, or others with permission of principal;
  4. Quarantine;
  5. Observance of the student's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education;

6. Religious holiday;
  7. The student's suspension from school;
  8. Requirements of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP);
  9. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
  10. The student's required attendance in court;
  11. Interviews with an admissions officer of an educational institution;
  12. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day;
  13. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal.
- I. An "unexcused absence" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed as excused in "H" above. An unexcused absence may be counted toward retention, truancy, loss of course credit, ineligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of student conduct for attendance. Absence is expressly not excused for any of the following reasons (this list is intended to be illustrative and is not inclusive):
1. Family travel;
  2. Performance of household or babysitting duties;
  3. Other daytime activities unrelated to the school program;
  4. Leaving school without permission when school is still in session; and
  5. Being present in school but absent from class without approval. Such an absence from class is identified as a "class cut".

### 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. 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.

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.

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.

A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon recommendation of a review committee, appointed by him/her, and consisting of representative staff, including student service personnel and classroom teachers.

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 18 days. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian.

Unexcused Absences

When a student fails to report to class or school accumulating up to four unexcused absences, the principal or his/her designee shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence the day of the unexcused absence;
- B. Attempt to contact the parents/guardians by telephone, email and/or cellular phone to determine the cause of the unexcused absence;
- C. Develop an action plan to assist the student to return to school and maintain regular attendance; and
- D. Consult and cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies as appropriate.

If contact through these means is unsuccessful the principal or his/her designee will follow-up with another attempt to contact the parents/guardians, send a letter reporting the unexcused absence(s) and requesting the parent/guardian to contact the school. In addition, the principal or his/her designee will initiate a home inquiry by the school attendance officer.

If at any time it is suspected that there is a potential of abuse, neglect and/or a student is potentially missing the district shall implement all procedures required by law including reporting protocols, notification of parents/guardians and cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Persistent Absences

If the pattern of unexcused absences continues and five to nine unexcused absences are accumulated the district shall:

- A. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence the day of the unexcused absence;

- B. Attempt to contact the parents/guardians by telephone, email and/or cellular phone to determine the cause of the unexcused absence;
- C. If contact through these means is unsuccessful the principal or his/her designee will follow-up with another attempt to contact the parents/guardians, send a letter reporting the unexcused absence(s) and requesting the parent/guardian to contact the school.
- D. The principal or his/her designee will initiate a home inquiry by the school attendance officer.
- E. Conduct a follow-up investigation by contacting the student's parents/guardians in writing to determine the cause of each unexcused absence;
- F. The principal or his or her designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian and the student. The purpose of this meeting shall be to evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan to assist the student to return to school and maintain regular attendance. The plan shall be reviewed and revised in coordination with the parent/guardian and may include the participation of the classroom teacher, school nurse, guidance counselor, principal or other appropriate staff. The plan shall establish outcomes based upon the student's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes and supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance. That plan may include any or all of the following:
  - 1. Referral or consultation with the building's Intervention and Referral Services team;
  - 2. Testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
  - 3. The consideration of an alternate educational placement;
  - 4. Referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
  - 5. Referral to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
  - 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.

Class Cuts

Students that are present in school but absent from class without approval will have the absence marked as a class cut. Consequences for accumulated occurrences of class cuts may include:

- A. Loss of eligibility to participate in co-curricular activities, including athletics, clubs, field trips, and/or graduation activities;
- B. Loss of credit for the course (18 cuts);
- C. Mandatory conference with the parent/guardian;
- D. Follow all regulations related to unexcused and persistent absences as outlined above.

Unexcused Absences for Students in Special Education

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. Procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14;
- C. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities as required by law;
- D. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan.

Discipline

All discipline regarding the attendance of students shall be consistent with the board policy 5131 Code of Student Conduct. Consequences for absences may include:

- A. Students may be denied participation in co-curricular activities if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
- B. Students may be denied participation in athletic competition if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
- C. Loss of partial or total course credit;
- D. Detention or suspension.

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, in writing, 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.

Tardiness

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 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. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- B. Requirements of a student's individual health care plan;
- C. Requirements of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP);
- D. Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
- E. Medical disability;
- F. Motor vehicle driver's test;
- G. Interview for college entrance or employment;
- H. Family emergency;
- I. Court appearance;
- J. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

A student may be released early for illness or injury that occurs during the course of the school day. If the school nurse determines that a student should be sent home, the student's parent/guardian will be contacted to pick up the student.

A student may be released early for a family emergency at the discretion of the principal. Such a request must be accompanied by a written request by the parent/guardian.

No student under the age of 18 shall be released from school before the end of the school day except in the presence of the student's parent/guardian or identified agent of the parent.

For release to an agent of the parent, the principal shall verify the identity of the agent to whom the pupil released by examination of documents or by verification of characteristics supplied by the parent/guardian.

If the principal believes that a genuine emergency may exist but cannot verify the identity of the person who requests release of the student, the principal shall contact the appropriate authorities to transport the student directly to the custody of the parent/guardian.

Student Make-Up Work

Students shall be provided the opportunity to complete classwork, homework, and exams during their absence. The amount of time to make up that classwork shall be decided at the teacher's discretion, and at minimum must be the same amount of time provided to the entire class. Teachers have the right to distinguish the amount of time provided based on excused and unexcused absences.

Attendance Review Committee

Each school shall convene an Attendance Review Committee, 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). The Committee shall convene a minimum of twice per year to review students identified as at-risk based on their attendance. The Attendance Review Committee shall make recommendations to the school principal regarding the student attendance.

Exemplary Attendance

Students with fewer than 3 absences in a school year will be recognized for having exemplary attendance at the discretion of the school principal.

Attendance Records

All attendance records shall be maintained at the school and completed in a timely fashion. Teachers are to submit classroom attendance within the first 15 minutes of the school day and/or each class. The attendance records must be kept in accordance with rules of the state board at N.J.A.C 6A:16-1.1 et seq.

Schools Not Meeting 90% Requirement

The district shall endeavor to achieve the ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). Schools that fail to do so will be required to develop and submit an attendance improvement plan.

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

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

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Key Words

Student Attendance, Attendance, Absences and Excuses, Student Attendance

<b><u>Legal References:</u></b> <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
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:38-31	Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties
<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 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

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794

Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851

C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)

Student Attendance Policies and Procedures Compliance Checklist, New Jersey  
Department of Education

**Possible**

<b><u>Cross References:</u></b>	*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.