
ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

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 and students is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

Regular attendance at school is an indicator of responsible student behavior. Prolonged or repeated absences from school or from class deprive the student of the classroom activities deemed essential to learning and may result in failure to meet academic requirements and loss of credit toward the high school diploma. Any student who is absent from any given class more than thirteen times will be subject to administrative review and/or committee review. An intervention program, intended to improve attendance, will be implemented for students who accumulate more than thirteen absences. This program may include disciplinary action or removal from class and loss of credit.

A. Daily Notification by Parents/Guardians

Parents are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a student will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence. Such notification is necessary to ensure the safety of students; it does not replace or limit the responsibility of parents to maintain records and documentation of absences in the event that such becomes necessary for an administrative or committee review.

B. Notification by School Personnel

With the exception of long term illnesses requiring home instruction, all absences will accumulate, regardless of their nature. After seven, a school official will notify the parent in writing.

C. Administrative Review of Absences

After Seven Cumulative Absences

If, after notification of seven absences, the parent believes that certain absences qualify as excused, s/he may schedule an appointment with the principal (or designee) to provide documentation of same. The principal may reduce the cumulative absences for the following reasons only based on this documentation.

1. Subpoenaed or court ordered attendance
2. Death in the immediate family
3. Religious observance of a day recognized by the commissioner of education

Cases which indicate the need for educational intervention may be referred at this time to the review committee or other appropriate school personnel.

After Thirteen Cumulative Absences

This same procedure will be repeated after thirteen absences from any given class. At this time, the principal may also consider and excuse absences due to illnesses when such illnesses are (1) documented as necessary by a family physician, (2) validated by the school physician, and (3) the cause of more than half of the thirteen absences (seven or more). Cases in which the thirteen absences remain unexcused will be referred to the review committee which will hold a hearing with the student and the parent/guardian to determine the appropriate response.

E. Review Committee

A review committee will be appointed by the principal and consist of representative staff, including pupil service personnel and classroom teachers. The purpose of the committee is to conduct hearings with students and their parents when absences accumulate to more than 13 in any given year. (Three for quarter courses such as Health). After the committee considers the reasons for excessive absences, they will recommend to the principal whether or not to grant additional excusal to any given absence(s).

When the review committee recommends such excusals, they shall consider the nature and causes of all absences. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the student and parent.

This committee shall recommend appropriate modification to the program of any student who does not qualify for excusals. In doing so, the committee shall consider the rights of students with educational disabilities and the responsibility of the school to provide an appropriate educational experience for students.

F. Modification to Program Due to Excessive Absenteeism

Students who regularly and intentionally absent themselves from class(s) for inappropriate reasons and fail to demonstrate academic achievement and/or effort in any given course may lose the privilege to complete a course. Removal for this reason shall result in a grade of withdrawn failing. The withdrawn/failure option will be applied only when failure for the course is imminent based on teacher report of student progress.

In situations where academic achievement are proven, but unexcused absences exceed 13, the review committee may require alternative efforts from students to correct excessive absenteeism. Possible responses may include alternative class sessions/ assignments, school or community service; in-school suspension; or attendance during off-school hours, including Saturdays, for counseling/tutoring. Failure of the student to

successfully complete the corrective plan will result in removal from the class and/or a failing grade for the course(s).

G. School Authorized Trips and Activities

Missed class(es) due to school sponsored trips and activities are not considered as absences for purposes of this policy. Students who miss class under these circumstances are responsible for making up work and for informing teachers of the reason for missing class.

H. Missed Time

Except for school authorized trips and activities, missing more than 15 minutes of a class period counts as an absence from class.

I. Truancy/Cutting of Class

The same procedures will apply to students who accumulate three or more absences due to truancy and/or individual class cuts. All students who illegally absent themselves from three classes will be granted a hearing before the review committee which may recommend the sanction of withdrawn failing or other appropriate responses.

The board will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of 16. Repeated infractions by enrolled students over the age of 16 may result in suspension or expulsion.

It is the policy of the board to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness of the educational program for those students who habitually and repeatedly absent themselves from their assigned classes and to refer such cases to the child study team for review.

Students who are truant or cut a class lose the privilege of making up tests or other class work given on the day of the illegal absence.

J. Administrative Procedures

The superintendent shall develop procedures for the attendance of students which ensure compliance with law and regulation, appropriately inform parents and students of attendance rules and procedures and reflect the intent of the policy of the board of education.

Legal References:

<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-14,-15	Religious holidays; absence of pupils on; effect...
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-24through -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. 18A:38-26</u>	Days when attendance required; exceptions
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27</u>	Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:38-31</u>	Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:38-32</u>	District and county vocational school attendance officers
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:40-7</u>	Exclusion of pupils who are ill
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:40-8</u>	Exclusion of pupils whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:40-10</u>	Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:40-11</u>	Exclusion of pupils having communicable tuberculosis
<u>N.J.S.A. 18A:46-16,-17</u>	Exclusion of pupils pending examination and classification...
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:8-4.2(d)2</u>	Promotion and graduation
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:8-6.2(B)4</u>	Evaluation and certification (pupil attendance element)
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:20-1.3</u>	School attendance
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:28-3.6(e)5v</u>	Individualized education program
<u>N.J.A.C. 6:28-4.1(f)</u>	General requirements

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

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