

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

The frequent absence of students from classroom learning experiences, whether an excused absence, a valid absence or truancy, disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of students to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully.

A student must be in attendance for 160 or more school days 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 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 160 days. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian.

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

Excused Absences:

The Commissioner annually prescribes a list of religious holidays on which it is mandatory to excuse students for religious observance upon the written request signed by the student's parent/guardian. Such absences shall be considered excused absences. No student shall be deprived of an award or eligibility/opportunity to compete for an award, or of the right to take an alternate to a test or examination missed through such absence.

Valid Absences

A valid absence is one for which there is a compelling reason for the absence as defined by District policy. If no compelling reason exists as defined by District policy, the student shall be considered truant.

The Board considers the following as cause for valid absence:

- A. Illness or accident;
- B. Required court attendance;
- C. Death in the family;
- D. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the Principal.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)Valid Absences (continued)

In order for an absence to be valid:

- A. The parent/guardian must notify the school early in the day that the student will be absent that day. Such notification must take place each day the student is absent from school.
- B. The parent/guardian must provide an excuse clearly stating the reason for the absence when the student returns to school.
- C. If a student is absent for five consecutive days or more due to illness, the parent/guardian must provide a written note from a doctor clearly stating the reason for the absence.

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.

Excused and valid absences are still absences and will:

- A. Be detailed on the report card;
- B. Not be considered as one of the required 160 days of attendance.

When a student is habitually and repeatedly absent from school, the Superintendent shall consider the effectiveness and appropriateness to the student's educational program needs of the program being offered him/her, consulting with those whom the Superintendent deems appropriate. The Superintendent may suspend a student from a particular class or from school if sincere efforts by the staff and parents/ guardians cannot rectify the pattern of attendance.

Truancy

A student will be considered truant if he/she is absent without a valid reason as defined above in Excused Absences or Valid Absences. Such absence will be considered truancy. The Board will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of 16. The Superintendent shall develop regulations that provide a graduated series of District actions dependent on the number of unexcused absences.

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.

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 later arrival or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- B. Medical disability;

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)Late Arrival and Early Dismissal (continued)

- C. Family emergency;
- D. Court appearance;
- E. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

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.

Tardiness

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed under Later Arrival and Early dismissal shall be cumulative, and may incur penalties.

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 custodial arrangements. If one parent/guardian has been awarded custody of the student in a divorce settlement, the other parent/guardian shall present to the Principal a letter authorizing him/her to accompany the child from school before the child may be released to him/her. The Principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the child is released only to proper custody.

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.
- 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;

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)Regulations (continued)

- C. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the State Board, including students serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- D. 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;
- E. 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;
- F. Address tardiness and school/class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
- G. Ensure that students absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
- H. Recognize exemplary 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
	<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:46-16, -17	Exclusion of students pending examination and classification ...
	<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 <i>et seq.</i>	Programs to support student development.
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:30-1.1 <i>et seq.</i>	Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-8.1 <i>et seq.</i>	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

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Legal References: (continued)

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)

<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.

Key Words

Student Attendance, Attendance, Absences and Excuses, Student Attendance

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