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Introduction

Pupils who are absent from school cannot benefit from important teacher directed instructional activities. The loss of such valuable instruction can prevent a pupil from realizing maximum competence or skill. Excessive absence almost certainly will reduce competency below tolerable minimum levels.

The Board of Education cannot condone or permit excessive and unnecessary absence from school and hereby establishes the following policy to establish attendance requirements and to deny credits to pupils who do not meet those attendance requirements.

This is not intended as a permissive procedure, which licenses a given number of absences. A separate procedure will deal with absences growing out of truancy, class cutting, lateness to class or school, and other violations of statutes and/or school rules. Absences due to such violations shall be considered unexcused and shall toll toward a “no credit” status.

School mandated exclusion such as punitive out-of-school suspension dates might not toll toward a “no credit” status in accordance with rulings of the New Jersey Commissioner of Education.

Mitigating Circumstances

Absence for the following verified reason will not toll in the maximums listed.

1. Illness which is documented by a physician’s written certification, received within five school days after the pupil’s return from that absence;
2. Illness or disability, which requires assignment of home instruction by the Guidance Department and/or Child Study Team;
3. Absence which is excused in advance to meet religious obligations permitted by statute;
4. Legitimate school activity approved in advance by the school Principal or his/her designee;
5. Death in the family;
6. College/university visits, interviews with documentation from the college/university admissions office or other official notification;
7. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the Principal. This includes reasonable written notification from a parent/guardian regarding the pupil’s absence from school. Verbal notification will not be accepted for consideration of absences under the terms of the attendance policy.



Family Vacations

Family vacations with prior notification to the appropriate Vice Principal or the Principal will not be considered truancy but may not be approved/excused absences in terms of the attendance policy.

Physician's Certification

Any pupil who is absent five or more consecutive school days due to illness shall be required to furnish a physician's certification that he/she is free of contagion as a condition for returning to class.

Parent's or Guardian's Notes

Notes from parents or guardians are required to explain pupil absence:

1. Pupils are to submit such notes to their homeroom teachers, who in turn will send them to the Vice Principal's office.
2. Such notes shall be on file in the Vice Principal's office.
3. Legitimate, verified notes from parents, which explain pupil illness, may be considered in determining if a "no credit" status shall be assigned. Unless unusual circumstances exist, no more than fifteen days per year shall be affected by "mitigating" circumstances.
4. Absences not explained by parental or adult pupil notes within three school days after the pupil returns to school, may not be considered in the appeal process.
5. Telephone calls from parent(s) or guardian(s) advising school officials of pupil absence shall be encouraged; however, such telephone calls will not be considered in lieu of required written notes to be entered into the pupils' record.

Tardiness

Lateness to class and lateness to school should be treated according to provisions of procedure 5600 – Pupil Discipline; however, if tardiness to school overlaps into instructional class periods, pupils shall be assessed 1/3 absence for each ten minutes (or majority fraction thereof) of lateness up to a maximum of one full absence per class period. Rules relating to tolling of absence also shall apply to tardiness.

1. Lateness to school is defined as arriving in the building beyond the allotted homeroom period. If a pupil is late to school two times in any given semester, that pupil must serve an after school detention. A detention will be assigned for any subsequent lateness to school for the duration of that semester. Or if a pupil is late to homeroom three times in any given semester, the homeroom teacher will refer that pupil to the appropriate Vice Principal. A detention will then be assigned. Additional detentions will be assigned after each additional three latenesses to homeroom.
2. The Principals shall communicate this policy and practice to parents/guardians, and pupils at the start of each year.



3. Pupils may be permitted to telephone home to notify parents/guardians of the detention. Parents/guardians may contact the Vice Principal to discuss unique and unusual circumstances and make arrangements for an alternate detention date.
4. Extreme and/or persistent lateness to school/class may be grounds for placing the pupil on administrative probation for a prescribed period of time in accordance with existing policy. Pupils on probation are barred from participation in any school sponsored/sanctioned co-curricular, athletic, or social programs/activities/events home or away.

Make-Up Work

Pupils returning to school shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to make-up missed work. Policies on summer school and truancy contain provisions governing make-up work, which apply in those situations.

Matters Of Law – School Staff Responses For Unexcused Absences

1. For up to four cumulative, unexcused absences, the school district shall:
 - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day. This will be accomplished either through a direct phone call or the computer driven automatic calling system or letter mailed to the home address on record.
 - b. Conduct an investigation to determine the cause of each unexcused absence, including contact with the pupil's parents/guardians.
 - c. Develop an action plan in consultation with the pupil's parents/guardians 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. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected; and
 - e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies as appropriate.
2. For between five and nine cumulative, unexcused absences, the school district shall:
 - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day. This will be accomplished either through a direct phone call or the computer driven automatic calling system or letter mailed to the home address on record.
 - b. Conduct an investigation to determine the cause of each unexcused absence, including contact with the pupil's parents/guardians.
 - c. Evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan developed pursuant to 1.c. above.



- d. Revise the action plan, as needed, to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based upon the pupil's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes, supporting the pupil's return to school and regular attendance that may include any or all of the following:
 - i. Refer or consult with the building's Intervention & Referral Services Team, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8;
 - ii. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the pupil's academic, behavioral and health needs;
 - iii. Consider alternate educational placement;
 - iv. Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
 - v. Refer to the court program designated by the NJ Administrative Office of the Courts; and
 - vi. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected; and
 - vii. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies as appropriate.
3. For cumulative, unexcused absences of ten or more, the pupil between the ages of six and sixteen is truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, and the school district shall:
 - a. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the NJ Administrative Office of the Courts;
 - b. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parents of the mandatory referral via letter mailed to the home address on record;
 - c. Continue to consult with the parent/guardian and the involved agency(ies) to support the pupil's return to school and regular attendance;
 - d. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and
 - e. Proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required.



4. Pupils Age 16 and Older

If the procedures noted above are unsuccessful in achieving pupil attendance, parent(s) or guardian(s) of pupils who are age sixteen or older and adult pupils, shall be presented with another notice requiring the pupil to attend school within five days or be dropped from the attendance roll. If this notice is unsuccessful, the pupil shall be dropped from the roll.

- a. Parent(s), guardian(s), or adult pupils may appeal to the Principal for readmission.
- b. Attendance at summer school shall not be permitted for such pupils.
- c. A withdrawal/failure shall be entered on the permanent record for each course taken at the time the pupil was dropped.

5. For pupils with disabilities, the attendance plan and punitive and remedial procedures set forth therein shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the pupil's Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act: the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14; accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. 794 and 705 (20); and individualized health care plans, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:2.3(b)2ix.

6. The Chief School Administrator shall submit annually a report to the Commissioner of Education containing information on pupil attendance, including, but not limited to, the district Board of Education's implementation of each of the requirements pursuant to 6A:16-7.8 Attendance.

Excessive Absence Appearance

Any pupil who is absent more than thirty days from a full-year course, (or more than twenty-three days from a three-quarter course, or more than fifteen days from a semester course, or more than eight days from a quarter course), whether excused or unexcused, may be required to appear before the Principal with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s).

1. After the thirtieth day of absence from school or a class, the Vice Principal shall notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the final violation of the attendance policy which may require a formal conference with the Principal.
2. If the Principal is completely aware of the absence circumstances because of communication with the family and the absences are justified, he/she may waive the appearance.
3. The expected outcome of an appearance before the Principal is to determine which courses that "no credit" designation will apply and to establish a number of additional days of absence, if any, which will be allowed before the opportunity of summer credit completion will be denied by the Principal.



4. Any pupil absent more than thirty days from a full-year course (more than twenty-three days for a three-quarter course, more than fifteen days from a semester course, or more than eight days from a quarter course) will not be permitted to attend the credit completion program unless the Principal rules otherwise.

Credit Completion Program

The purpose of the credit completion program is to make pupils accountable for the class time they missed. This program is open only to pupils who earn a passing grade during the school year, despite excessive absence.

Credit completion should occur during the summer immediately following the school year in which the attendance policy excesses occurred unless the pupil is required to attend the regular summer school for two courses, in which case the Principal may approve a one-summer delay. Delays in fulfilling credit completion obligations may be granted by the Principal in unique and/or unusual circumstances. Credit completion obligations granted a delay must be completed no later than one-year beyond the immediate requirement.

A Credit Completion program will consist of a written packet of work, which is related to the content of the school year courses. This work must be accomplished during the days assigned and must be acceptable in quality.

1. Pupils will not be permitted to be absent from the Credit Completion program. Any absence will result in dismissal from the credit completion program and no credit will be awarded.
2. Family emergencies, which parent(s) or guardian(s) believe should prevent a pupil from attending the Credit Completion program, must be discussed with the appropriate Vice Principal in advance.
3. Any pupil excluded from the program for disciplinary reasons will not be given credit for the courses involved.
4. Failure to complete the program will result in a “withdraw/failing” designation on the permanent record.
5. Appeals from any of the actions described in this section should be taken directly to the Principal of the school attended by the pupil during the regular school year.
6. The Credit Completion program will require the pupil to attend thirty minutes for each course in which a “no credit” status has been assigned. Hours can run concurrently for the same course. A maximum of eight courses can be completed in this manner each summer. The number of days, which must be attended, is determined according to the following charts:



REGULATION

BLACK HORSE PIKE REGIONAL BOARD OF EDUCATION

Pupils
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ATTENDANCE (M)

Full Year Courses:

No. of Unexcused Days Absent	16-20	21-30
No. of Required Make Up Days	12	15

Three-Quarter Courses:

No. of Unexcused Days Absent	13-16	17-23
No. of Required Make Up Days	9	11

Semester Courses:

No. of Unexcused Days Absent	9-11	12-15
No. of Required Make Up Days	6	8

Quarter Courses:

No. of Unexcused Days Absent	5-6	7-8
No. of Required Make Up Days	3	5

Procedure

Teachers are responsible for classroom attendance records and the determination of when a pupil has reached levels of excessive absence.

1. Warning Notices

Within five school days after the pupil has been absent eight times from a full-year or five times from a semester course, the Vice Principal shall mail an "Excessive Absence Form" to the parent(s) or guardian(s). For quarter-courses (3) and three-quarter course (7) "Excessive Absence Forms" shall be mailed in accordance with the guidelines developed at the local department level and approved by the Principal.

2. No Credit Assignment

Within five school days after a pupil has exceeded the maximum absence level permitted by this policy, the Vice Principal shall mail a "No Credit" status notice to the parent(s) or guardian(s) and forward a copy to the pupils' guidance counselor. Prior to sending the notice:



- a. The Vice Principal shall examine the pupil record to determine if the level of absence warrants consideration of a “no credit” status.
- b. If the record reveals no mitigating circumstances, the Vice Principal shall require the pupil and parent(s) or guardian(s) to come to a conference where the consequences and implications of a “no credit” status shall be explained and the pupil’s attendance records will be reviewed to determine if a “no credit” status is appropriate. During the conference, the Vice Principal may agree to permit additional absence to accrue before assigning a “no credit” status, if circumstances warrant.
- c. If the pupil record reveals a number of verified, justifiable absences, the Vice Principal need not require a conference. In such cases, however, the Vice Principal shall communicate a concern over the excess absence to parent(s), guardian(s), or to adult pupils and shall designate the number of additional days of absence which will be permitted to accrue before a “no credit” status will be considered.

Appeal Process

To preserve the doctrines of fairness and due process, pupils and/or parents/guardians shall have the following appeal rights:

1. Request to meet with the Principal and others to explain any mitigating circumstances. The Principal may grant or deny the appeal, but if granted, the Principal shall establish the number of days which have been considered “mitigating”. Additional absences exceeding that number will result in reassignment to the “no credit” status.
2. Appeals to the Superintendent must be made in writing within ten calendar days following the decision by the Principal.
3. Appeals beyond the Principal and Superintendent may be made according to existing policies regarding pupil rights to appeal and due process.

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