**4400 Attendance**

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Attendance in school and participation in class are integral parts of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Through regular attendance, students develop patterns of behavior essential to professional and personal success in life. Regular attendance by every student is mandatory. The State of North Carolina requires that every child in the State between the ages of 7 (or younger if enrolled) and 16 attend school. Parents, legal guardians, or custodians have the responsibility for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

A. ATTENDANCE RECORDS

School officials shall keep accurate records of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. Attendance records will be used to enforce the Compulsory Attendance Law of North Carolina.

B. TARDINESS

Students shall be seated at their assigned station for work at the time appointed for the school day or class to begin or shall be recorded as tardy for that day or class. When a student is tardy, the student or parent, guardian or custodian must present the principal with a written excuse signed by a parent, guardian or custodian citing the reason for the tardiness. Tardiness shall be recorded as unexcused until the note is presented. The note should be presented within three days of the tardiness. The principal may require additional documentation deemed necessary to verify the reason for the tardiness. Students who are excessively tardy to school or class may be suspended for up to two days for such offenses.

C. EXCUSED ABSENCES

The principal, superintendent or a designee of the principal or superintendent is authorized to excuse a student temporarily from attendance due to sickness or another unavoidable reason that does not constitute unlawful absence as defined by the State Board of Education. An absence may be excused for the following reasons:

1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school;

2. isolation ordered by the local health officer or the State Board of Health;

3. death in the immediate family (for the purpose of this policy, immediate family includes, but is not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents and siblings);

4. medical or dental appointment;

5. participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding;

6. a minimum of two days each academic year for observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student’s parent(s) (not to exceed five days);

7. participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor’s page, with prior approval from the principal (generally hunting, fishing, visiting relatives, going to the beach, shopping, skiing, attending athletic events and taking subsequent trips to a destination already visited are not considered valid educational opportunities for the purpose of this policy);

8. absence due to pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary; or

9. visitation with the student’s parent or legal guardian, at the discretion of the superintendent or designee, if the parent or legal guardian (a) is an active duty member of the uniformed services as defined by policy 4050, Children of Military Families, and (b) has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting.

When a student misses school, the student or parent, guardian or custodian must present the principal with a written excuse signed by a parent, guardian or custodian citing the reason for the absence. Absences shall be recorded as unexcused until the note is presented. The note should be presented within three days of the student’s return to school. The principal may require additional documentation deemed necessary to verify the reason for the absence.

Students anticipating an absence due to participation in a valid educational opportunity must submit the Pender County School Educational Leave Form to the principal five days prior to the absence. Absences for three or more consecutive days due to an illness may require a statement from a physician to be presented to the principal. Absences due to medical or dental appointments require that a note from the doctor or dentist is presented to the principal. Absences due to participation in court proceedings require that a note from a court official or a copy of the subpoena is presented to the principal.

In the case of excused absences and short-term out-of-school suspensions, the student will be permitted to make up his or her work (see also policy 4351, Short-Term Suspension). The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

D. SCHOOL-RELATED ACTIVITIES

All classroom activities are important and difficult, if not impossible, to replace if missed. Principals shall ensure that classes missed by students due to school-related activities are kept to an absolute minimum. The following school-related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

1. field trips sponsored by the school;

2. job shadowing and other work-based learning opportunities, as described in G.S. 115C-47(34a);

3. school-initiated and -scheduled activities;

4. athletic events requiring early dismissal from school;

5. Career and Technical Education student organization activities approved in advance by the principal; and

6. in-school suspensions.

Assignments missed for these reasons are eligible for makeup by the student. The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period.

E. EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

Class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process and may be taken into account in assessing academic achievement.In addition, excessive absences may result in denial of an in-county transfer between schools.

The principal or the designee shall notify parents and take all other steps required by G.S. 115C-378 for excessive absences. Students may be suspended for up to two days for truancy. In addition, the following standards apply in regard to excessive absences.

1. Elementary and Middle School Requirements

The principal or designee may request a conference with a parent or guardian at any time to discuss an attendance problem.

Elementary and middle school students who are absent more than 20 days in a school year may be retained or referred for academic intervention. Continued absenteeism may result in the school system notifying the Department of Social Services, juvenile court or the district attorney that the parent or guardian is not cooperating with the school system in addressing the attendance problem.

Students arriving late or requesting early dismissal should be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Excessive tardiness or early dismissals shall be monitored at the school level.

2. High School Requirements

Students who miss more than a total of eight days (excused or unexcused) per course during a semester will not receive credit toward graduation unless one of the following conditions is met:

a. The student makes up the absences. The high school shall provide opportunities for students to make up time missed from classes. These opportunities may include after school, Saturday school, teacher workdays, summer school, etc. Students shall be required to make up time missed from classes within the established school make-up schedule and have the make-up time completed within four weeks after the semester in which the absences occurred. b. The principal grants a waiver. Students whose academic standing is adversely affected by this standard have the right to appeal for a waiver. The appeal must be submitted to the principal in writing along with any appropriate and/or required documentation. Waivers of absences may be granted by the principal only when extenuating circumstances exist.

Students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt from this policy.

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Legal References:

: G.S. 115C-47, -84.2, -288(a), -375.5, -378 through -383, -390.2(d), -390.5, -407.5; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, -.0103; State Board of Education Policies TCS-L-000 through -003

Cross References:

Education for Pregnant and Parenting Students (policy 4023), Children of Military Families (policy 4050), Short-Term Suspension (policy 4351)

Adopted:

June 30, 2011

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