

Student Absences and Excuses

Philosophy

One criteria of a student's success in school is regular and punctual attendance. Frequent absences may lead to poor academic work, lack of social development, and possible academic failure. Regular attendance is of utmost importance for school interest, social adjustment, and scholastic achievement, particularly for closing the achievement gap.

Continuity in the learning process and social adaptation is seriously disrupted by excessive absences. In most situations, the work missed cannot be made up adequately. Students who have good attendance generally achieve higher grades, enjoy school more, and are more employable after leaving school. For at least these reasons, the Board believes that a student must satisfy two basic requirements in order to earn full class credit: (1) satisfy all academic requirements, and (2) exhibit good attendance habits as stated in this policy.

When developmentally appropriate, it is the responsibility of the student to attend school. Ultimately, however, the responsibility to ensure that the student has good attendance rests with the parent/guardian. According to state law, it is the obligation of every parent/guardian to ensure that every child under their care and supervision receives adequate education and training and, if of compulsory attendance age, attends school. Schools will inform the parents/guardians if a student's education is being jeopardized by poor attendance.

Each year the Board establishes the school attendance policy by adopting a school calendar. Students are required to have actual teacher-pupil instruction and contact time of 1,056 hours for secondary students and 968 hours for elementary students during each school year.

Attendance

Students are expected to enroll at the beginning of the school year, to attend regularly, and to be prompt in arriving at school and at each class during the day.

Excused absences

The building principal or their designee will grant excused absences with substantiated reason. The following will be considered:

1. A student who is temporarily ill or injured or whose absence is approved by the administrator of the school of attendance on a prearranged basis. Prearranged absences will be approved for appointments or circumstances of a *serious nature only* which cannot be taken care of outside of school hours.
2. A student who is absent for a prearranged extended period due to a physical, disability or a mental or behavioral health disorder.
3. A student who is pursuing a work-study program under the supervision of the school.
4. A student who is attending any school-sponsored activity or activities of an educational nature with advance approval by the administration.
5. A student who is suspended or expelled.

The following may be considered excused absences at the discretion of the principal or designee:

1. Serious illness or death in the family.
2. Family emergencies or hardship.
3. Family vacations. (While discouraged, such excuses should be prearranged with the school administration. If a student has poor attendance or poor academic performance, a principal may deny an excused absence for vacation purposes.)
4. Religious observances when requested by a parent or guardian.
5. Absence required by a legal body or social agency (court, juvenile authorities, public health department or police).
6. Military connected students whose parent or legal guardian has been called to duty, is on leave from, or immediately returned from deployment.

The district may require suitable proof regarding the above exceptions, including written statements from a health care provider.

If a student is in out-of-home placement (as that term is defined by C.R.S. 22-32-138 (1)(h)), absences due to court appearances and participation in court-ordered activities will be excused. The student's assigned social worker must verify the student's absence was for a court appearance or court-ordered activity.

Unexcused absences

An unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not covered by one of the foregoing exceptions. Each unexcused absence will be entered on the student's record. The parents or guardians of the student receiving unexcused absences will be notified orally or in writing by the district, district designee, or building staff.

Parents/guardians will be required to furnish an explanation for student absenteeism either in writing or orally. Absences not explained within two days after returning to school will be recorded as unexcused absences unless unusual or extenuating circumstances exist as determined by the building administrator.

In accordance with law, the district may impose academic penalties which relate directly to classes missed while unexcused. Students and parents/guardians may appeal to the area assistant superintendent or designee for exceptions to this policy or the accompanying regulations provided that no exception will be sustained if the student fails to abide by all requirements imposed as conditions for granting any such exception.

The minimum number of unexcused absences a student may incur before judicial proceedings are initiated to enforce compulsory attendance is four (4) days in one month or ten (10) days during any school year.

Chronic absenteeism

When a student has an excessive number of absences, these absences negatively impact the student's academic success. A student will be considered "chronically absent" if he or she has missed 10% or more of the days enrolled during the public school year, whether the absences are excused or unexcused. Absences due to suspension or expulsion will not be counted in the total number of absences considered for purposes of identifying a student as "chronically absent."

If a student is identified as "chronically absent," the principal or designee will develop a plan to improve the student's attendance. The plan will include best practices and research-based strategies to address the reasons for the student's chronic absenteeism, including but not limited to:

- Individual Case Management
- Creation of Attendance Plans
- Home Visits
- Cafecitos: Coffee Talks to increase family-community engagement
- School and district-level attendance groups
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for students
- Collaboration with community partners to provide supports
- Basic need assistance via Family Outreach Liaisons
- Expelled & At-Risk Student Services program
- "Ecredit" support
- Truancy Review Team Meetings

When practicable, the student's parent/guardian will participate in the development of the plan.

Nothing herein will require the principal or designee to identify a student as "chronically absent" prior to declaring the student as a "habitual truant" and pursuing court proceedings against the student and his or her parents/guardians to compel the student's attendance in accordance with state law.

Make-up work

Make-up work will be provided for any class in which a student has an excused absence unless otherwise determined by the building administrator or unless the absence is due to the student's expulsion from school. It is the responsibility of the student to pick up any make-up assignments permitted on the day returning to class. A reasonable amount of time to complete make-up work will be given, generally two (2) days for each day absent.

Make-up work will be allowed following an unexcused absence or following a student's suspension from school with the goal of providing the student an opportunity to keep up with the class and an incentive to attend school. This work may receive full or partial credit to the extent possible as determined by the building administrator.

Unless otherwise permitted by the building administrator, make-up work will not be provided during a student's expulsion. Rather, the district will offer alternative education services to the expelled student in accordance with state law. The district will determine the amount of credit the expelled student will receive for work completed during any alternative education program.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as the appearance of a student without proper excuse after the scheduled time that a class begins. Because of the disruptive nature of tardiness and the detrimental effect upon the rights of the non-tardy student to uninterrupted learning, penalties shall be imposed for excessive tardiness. Students who accumulate 3 unexcused tardies shall be issued one-half day unexcused absence. Parents/guardians shall be notified of all penalties regarding tardiness.

Teachers shall be responsible for addressing tardiness as a classroom management issue. Excessive tardiness may be referred to the administration for consideration as an attendance problem.

In an unavoidable situation, a student detained by another teacher or administrator shall not be considered tardy provided that the teacher or administrator gives the student a pass to enter the next class. Teachers will honor passes presented in accordance with this policy.

The provisions of this policy are applicable to all students in the district, including those above and below the age for compulsory attendance as required by law.

Attendance officer

The superintendent or designee shall appoint an attendance officer to assist school administrators in the enforcement of this policy and to assist in identifying the reasons for and causes of nonattendance and excessive absences.

The provisions of this policy shall be applicable to all students in the district, including those above and below the age for compulsory attendance as required by law.

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LEGAL REFS.: C.R.S. 22-14-101 *et seq.* (dropout prevention and student re-engagement)
C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1)(n) (length of school year, instruction & contact time)
C.R.S. 22-32-109.1 (2)(a) (conduct and discipline code)
C.R.S. 22-32-138 (6) (excused absence requirements for students in out-of-home placements)
C.R.S. 22-33-101 *et seq.* (School Attendance Law of 1963)
C.R.S. 22-33-105 (3)(d)(III) (opportunity to make up work during suspension)
C.R.S. 22-33-108 (judicial proceedings to enforce school attendance laws)
C.R.S. 22-33-203 (educational alternatives for expelled students and determination of credit)
1 CCR 301-78 Rules 1.00 *et seq.* (standardized calculation for counting student attendance and truancy)

CROSS REFS.: EBCE, School Closings and Cancellations
IC/ICA, School Year/School Calendar/Instruction Time
JEA, Compulsory Attendance Ages
JFABE*, Students in Foster Care
JFC, Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts
JHB, Truancy
JK, Student Discipline
JKD/JKE, Suspension/Expulsion of Students (and Other Disciplinary Interventions)
JLIB, Student Dismissal Precautions

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