

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

In order for the board of education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each pupil, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and pupils is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of pupils from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of pupils to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully.

A pupil must be in attendance for every day school is in session. A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal.

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.

Significant number of absences may result in contacting the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) in order to insure compliance with compulsory education laws.

Truancy

The Chief School Administrator or designee will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of pupils below the age of 16. Repeated infractions by enrolled pupils over the age of 16 may result in the suspension or expulsion of the pupil.

It shall be the policy of the board to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness to his/her needs of the educational program that is offered each pupil who is habitually and repeatedly absent from his/her assigned program and to consult with the child study team for its recommendations.

Excused Absences

The board considers the following as cause for excused absence:

- A. Disabling illness
- B. Recovery from accident
- C. Required court attendance
- D. Death in the family

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- E. Religious observance--In accordance with statute, no pupil absent for religious observance of a day recognized by the commissioner of education or this board of education shall be charged with an unexcused absence, 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.
- F. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal

Attendance need not always be within the school facilities. A pupil 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. The board shall consider each pupil assigned to a program of independent study, with parent/guardian permission, to be in regular attendance for that program, provided that he/she is under the guidance of a staff member so assigned, reports daily or weekly, as prescribed, to such staff member the place in which he/she is conducting his/her study, and regularly demonstrates progress toward the objectives of his/her course of study.

Regular Release of Pupils Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations, which may justify release of certain pupils from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the pupil's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the pupil.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a pupil 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 pupil's parent/guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;
- B. Medical disability;
- C. Motor vehicle driver's test;
- D. Interview for college entrance or employment;
- E. Family emergency;
- F. Court appearance;
- G. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the building principal.

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No pupil 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 not covered by the causes listed shall be cumulative, and may affect course credit.

Significant number of absences may result in contacting the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) in order to insure compliance with compulsory education laws.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each pupil from an appropriate court of law. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the board of any change in the pupil's custodian. If one parent/guardian has been awarded custody of the pupil in a divorce settlement, the other parent/guardian shall present to the principal a letter from an appropriate court of law 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 over the course of three consecutive days, the attendance officer shall investigate. If the attendance officer cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the principal, who shall inform the Chief School Administrator and appropriate local authorities.

Marking Missing Child's School Record

Whenever the chief school administrator 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 chief school administrator 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 pupil records (see policy 5125 Pupil Records). After the chief school administrator 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 chief school administrator shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

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- 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 pupils;
- C. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board, including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- D. Impose on truant pupils such disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations, but no such penalty may have an irredeemable negative effect on the pupil'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 class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
- G. Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
- H. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Legal References:	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:35-4.9	Pupil promotion and remediation; policies and procedures
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-14, -15, -16	Religious holidays; absence of pupils on;
	<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 pupils who are ill
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-8	Exclusion of pupils 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

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<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-10	Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease
<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-11	Exclusion of pupils 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 pupils 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> 6:3-9.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Attendance and Pupil Accounting
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6:8-3.1	Pupil attendance
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:8-5.1	Graduation requirements
<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:30-1.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts

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

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)

Manual for the Evaluation of Local School Districts (August 2000)

Cross

References:

5020	Role of parents/guardians
5111	Admission
5114	Suspension and expulsion
5124	Reporting to parents/guardians
5125	Pupil records
5141.2	Illness
5141.4	Child abuse and neglect
5142	Pupil 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

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Legal References (Continued)

Key Words

Pupil Attendance, Attendance, Absences and Excuses, Student Attendance

Date: First Reading – August 22, 2006
Second Reading and Final Adoption – September 26, 2006

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