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Policy

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCES, AND EXCUSES

The board of education believes that the regular attendance of students in each class and in school in general is critical to its educational mission. The district shall endeavor to achieve the ninety percent (90%) attendance rate required by the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC). Continuity of instruction is an essential element in student performance and allows students the greatest opportunity to succeed at meeting the state learning standards in the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The chief school administrator shall oversee the development of effective strategies that maximize student attendance at all scheduled periods of actual instruction or supervised study activities and strive to:

1. Encourage good attendance;
2. Discourage unexcused absences;
3. Identify patterns of absence, tardiness and early departures from school; and
4. Intervene to prevent and correct problems with attendance.

Definitions

"Attendance" is a student's presence in school and in the classroom to which he or she is assigned at the times scheduled for instruction or other school activities. A school day shall consist of not less than four hours of actual instruction. An approved kindergarten school day shall consist of one continuous session of at least 2 1/2 hours may be considered as a full day.

The mere presence of a student at roll call shall not be regarded as sufficient to be considered in attendance for a school day. A student shall be present at least one hour during both the forenoon and the afternoon in order to be recorded as present for the full day. In a school which is in session during either the forenoon or the afternoon, a student shall be present at least two hours in the session in order to be recorded as present for the full day.

A student not present in school because of his or her participation in an approved school activity, such as a field trip, meeting, cooperative education assignment, or athletic competition will be considered to be in attendance.

"Excused absence" is a student's absence from school for a full day or a portion of a day for one or more of the following reasons:

1. The student's illness;
2. *Requirements of a student's individual health care plan;
3. A death or critical illness in the student's immediate family, or others with permission of principal;
4. Quarantine;
5. *Observance of the student's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education;
6. The student's suspension from school;
7. *Requirements of the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP);
8. *Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
9. The student's required attendance in court;
10. Interviews with an admissions officer of an educational institution;
11. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day;
12. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal.

*Mandated

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.

"Unexcused absence" is a student's absence for all or part of a school day for any reason other than those listed in paragraph "Excused Absences" above. Absence is expressly not excused for any of the following purposes (this list is intended to be illustrative and is not inclusive):

If at any time it is suspected that there is a potential of abuse, neglect and/or a student is potentially missing the district shall implement all procedures required by law including reporting protocols, notification of parents/guardians and cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Persistent Absences

If the pattern of unexcused absences continues and five to nine unexcused absences are accumulated the district shall:

1. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of each unexcused absence the day of the unexcused absence;
2. Attempt to contact the parents/guardians by telephone, email and/or cellular phone to determine the cause of the unexcused absence;
3. Conduct a follow-up investigation by contacting the student's parents/guardians in writing to determine the cause of each unexcused absence;
4. The principal or his or her designee shall schedule a meeting with the parent/guardian and the student.

The purpose of this meeting shall be to evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan to assist the student to return to school and maintain regular attendance. The plan shall be reviewed and revised in coordination with the parent/guardian and may include the participation of the classroom teacher, school nurse, guidance counselor, principal or other appropriate staff. The plan shall establish outcomes based upon the student's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes and supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance. That plan may include any or all of the following:

1. Referral or consultation with the building's Intervention and Referral Services team;
2. Testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
3. The consideration of an alternate educational placement;
4. Referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
5. Referral to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
6. The implementation of all required procedures for potential abuse, neglect or missing child including cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.

Discipline

All discipline regarding the attendance of students shall be consistent with the board policy 5131 Conduct and Discipline and the code of student conduct. Consequences for absences may include:

1. Students may be denied participation in co-curricular activities if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
2. Students may be denied participation in athletic competition if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth herein;
3. Loss of partial or total course credit;
4. Detention or suspension.

No student who is absent from school for observance of a religious holiday or other excused absence shall be disciplined and/or deprived of any award or of eligibility for or opportunity to compete for any award because of the absence.

Students, parents and guardians shall be notified of disciplinary actions for attendance including loss of credit and may appeal this determination through the procedure as set forth in board policy 5145.6 Student Grievance Procedure.

Tuancy

For cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more, the student between the ages of six and 16 is truant, pursuant to law. The district shall:

1. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
2. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of the mandatory referral;
3. Continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
4. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
5. Follow all procedures required by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31. Article 3B. Compelling Attendance at School and other applicable state and federal statutes.

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 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:

1. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
2. Identify potentially missing and/or abused pupils;
3. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board at N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1 et seq., including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
4. 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;
5. 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;
6. Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
7. Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
8. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Dissemination and Implementation

The chief school administrator shall take all necessary steps to publicize this policy and may include these rules in district handbooks and/or on the district website. Parents/Guardians and students shall be notified annually of the attendance policy.

The chief school administrator shall ensure that the rules for this policy are applied consistently and uniformly, and that all disciplinary sanctions are carried out with necessary due process.

The board shall review the attendance policy on a regular basis.

Revised Date: June 8, 2011