

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 and legal guardians are responsible for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

The principal must assure adherence to attendance policies and regulations and notify parents of their responsibility under the Compulsory Attendance Law (G.S. 115C-378). Teachers must monitor and report student absences on a daily and class period basis and follow all rules and regulations concerning attendance.

The Ten Day Rule states that when a student accumulates more than ten consecutive days of unlawful absences, he/she is to be withdrawn from funded membership as of the first day following his/her last attendance. The absence of a student which results from the suspension or expulsion of that student for misconduct may not be used for compulsory attendance violation action. Absence caused by out of school suspensions are not a factor in the administration of the Ten Day Rule.

**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. ATTENDANCE COMMUNICATION**

Attendance concerns will be communicated in the following ways:

Local Requirements for 10% Notification

1. 3, 6, and 10 State Letters

When a student has missed 3, 6, or 10 days (unlawful) the state required notification will be mailed. School officials and/or designees in charge of attendance will check these reports and generate and mail this documentation each day for students reaching the 3, 6, and 10 day absence (unlawful) milestones.

2. 3, 6, and 10 Day Phone Calls and Emails

- a. At 3 days absent (and for high school, 3 class periods absent) – teachers will call and email to notify parents of the absence. The call will be logged and

the email will be saved for documentation purpose. Principals will require and check attendance logs regularly.

- b. At 6 days absent (and for high school, 6 periods absent) – school counselors will contact parents by phone and email. An attendance improvement plan will be created and put into place. The district truancy officer will also be provided with names of students reaching this attendance milestone. Waiver forms and processes will be provided at this time as appropriate (lawful absences only).
- c. At 10 days absent (and for high school, 10 periods absent) – principals will hold mandatory face to face meetings with parents and students along with relevant stakeholders (school counselor, truancy officer, teacher, etc.). If appropriate, waiver forms and processes will be provided (lawful absences only). The ability to be promoted (K-8) and/or the ability to receive credit for the course (9-12) part of this required meeting.

### C. LAWFUL ABSENCES

The following are lawful (excused) absences permitted by the North Carolina State Board of Education attendance rules:

- 1. personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school;
- 2. isolation ordered by the State Board of Health;
- 3. death in the immediate family;
- 4. medical or dental appointment;
- 5. participation under subpoena as a witness in a court proceeding;
- 6. observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent(s) or legal guardian that was previously communicated to the principal (the principal must authorize a minimum of two such absences for a student per academic year);
- 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;
- 8. pregnancy and related conditions or parenting, when medically necessary; or
- 9. visitation with the student's parent or legal guardian if the student is not identified as at risk of academic failure because of unexcused absences and the student's, 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 (the principal must authorize a minimum of two such absences for a student per academic year).

**D. UNLAWFUL ABSENCES**

Unlawful (unexcused) absences are defined as the student's willful absences from school without the knowledge of the parents or guardians, or the student's absences from school without justifiable causes with the knowledge of parents or guardians. All absences not classified above as lawful (excused) are deemed unlawful (unexcused). An absence also will be deemed unlawful unless the student's parent, guardian or custodian provides written documentation of the reason(s) for the absence to the principal or designee within three school days of the student's return to school.

**E. HOMEBOUND PLACEMENTS**

Homebound placements are based on medical or exceptional circumstances, and students are credited as in attendance when pre-approved by the appropriate official in the Thomasville City Schools.

**F. MAKE-UP WORK**

Whether absences are lawful, unlawful, including absences under G.S. 130A-440 (for failure to submit a school health assessment form within 30 days of entering school) or due to suspension, the student will be permitted to make up his or her work. Students are responsible for all work missed when absent from school. Immediately upon returning to school, students must make arrangements with their teacher(s) to make up all work (assignments, tests, projects, etc.) missed while absent. Work must be made up during the grading period in which it was assigned.

**G. ABSENCE DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENT**

All absences require a written note from the parent or guardian explaining the absence(s). The student should deliver the note to school authorities (teacher, attendance office official, etc.) as soon as possible upon his or her return to school. Failure to submit such notes within three school days after returning to school will result in an unlawful absence being recorded.

Parents and guardians are requested to contact school officials as soon as possible when unanticipated absences occur. All anticipated periods of absence should be reported to school officials prior to the period of absence. Such absences should receive prior approval by school officials. Prior approval is required for any student departing from campus once he or she has arrived; this approval is required throughout the school day. Students must follow a sign-in / sign-out procedure as established by the school.

For absences of more than 3 consecutive days for illness or for absences of 6 or more total days for illness (chronic illness), documentation from medical personnel will be required in order to excuse the absence.

#### **H. TARDIES/EARLY SIGN-OUTS**

When a student has no lawful excuse for not being in the required, scheduled location at the appropriate time as determined by school start times and bell schedules, a student is considered tardy (unlawful/unexcused).

Six (6) or more tardies/early releases in a semester will lead to mandatory meeting with relevant stakeholders (principal, school counselor, teacher, parent/guardian, student, etc.) to create an attendance improvement plan.

#### **I. DEFINITION OF BEING “IN ATTENDANCE”**

To be considered “in attendance,” a student must be present in the school for at least one-half of the school day.

For high school students, this also includes being in attendance for two-thirds of the class period (that would be 60 minutes of a 90-minute block) to be counted “in attendance” for that class period.

Students may, with the approval of the school principal or designees, attend an authorized school activity and be considered “in attendance.” Such activities include, but may not be limited to, job shadowing and other work based learning activities, field trips, athletic contests or other competitions, student conventions, music festivals, concerts or similar activities approved by the school.

#### **J. UNLAWFUL ABSENCE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS**

Unlawful absences will result in conferences with parents or guardians. Unlawful absence and/or truancy may lead to disciplinary action to include court proceedings involving parents and/or students if the student is under 16 years of age. G.S. 115C-378 requires attendance until age 16.

#### **K. ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND EXCESSIVE ABSENCES**

The goal of Thomasville City Schools is to have at least 95% attendance. Schools seek to have partnerships with parents to improve attendance and ask that parents commit to this goal.

1. Elementary School and Middle School: Students in grades K-8 who are absent from school more than 10% of days (for example: 18 days in a 180-day calendar) for any reason may potentially receive no credit for the year of study and may be retained in the same grade for the succeeding year, except by a determination of the

principal upon review of the student's record and waiver requests. Absences cannot be a sole reason for retention.

2. High School: If a student is absent from school for nine or more days (10% or more) in a semester course, the student may lose the opportunity to receive credit for the course. He or she may receive a grade of FF along with the comment "grade due to excessive absences" unless his or her average is lower, in which case the actual grade earned will be assigned.

At the high school level, cumulative absences above six (6) in a block/semester course (twelve (12) in a full-year course) are excessive. These will serve as a trigger to the school to begin intervention.

After three (3) days of accumulated absences in one or more block courses, (six (6) in a full-year course) there will be school determined, expectation-based intervention to help the student improve his/her attendance. The intervention will involve parents.

After six (6) days of accumulated absences in a block course (twelve (12) in a full-year course) and failure to meet previously-determined expectations, the student will be subject to the following possible actions if absences exceed 10% of days (9 days/periods in a semester course, 18 days/periods in a year-long course):

- a. the student may not receive a passing grade for the semester (FF – no credit awarded);
- b. the student may receive the grade otherwise earned; or
- c. the student may be given additional time to complete the missed work before a determination of the appropriate grade is made.

Students with excused absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt from this policy. In addition, for students experiencing homelessness (see board policy 4125, Homeless Students), school officials must consider issues related to the student's homelessness, such as a change of caregivers or nighttime residence, before taking disciplinary action or imposing other barriers to school attendance based on excessive absences or tardies.

The waiver process established by the district will be followed.

Absences cannot be the sole factor determining the denial of credit for the course.

At any level, promotion decisions affecting a child in the Exceptional Children's program will include recommendations of the IEP team.

Excessive absences may impact eligibility for participation in interscholastic athletics. See policy 3620, Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations.

## L. WAIVERS

Each school's principal will be responsible for waivers in order to address the needs of students whose academic standings are in question because of attendance. Students absent from school more than 10% of days (9 per semester or 18 per year) must make up all missed schoolwork in order to receive credit toward promotion/graduation. 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 or required documentation. Principal decisions may be appealed to the superintendent. Waivers of absences may be granted by the principal only when extenuating circumstances exist. Students with lawful absences due to documented chronic health problems are exempt from this policy. Waivers may only be granted for excused/lawful absences.

Legal References: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 11431, et seq.; G.S. 115C-47, -84.2, -288(a), -375.5, -378 through -383, -390.2(d), -390.2(l), -390.5, -407.5; 130A-440; 16 N.C.A.C. 6E .0102, -.0103; State Board of Education Policies ATND-000, -003, NCAC-007TCS-L-000 through -003

Cross References: Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations (policy 3620), Education for Pregnant and Parenting Students (policy 4023), Children of Military Families (policy 4050), Immunization and Health Requirements for School Admission (policy 4110), Homeless Students (policy 4125), Short-Term Suspension (policy 4351)

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