

Policy Code: 4400 Attendance

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.

Attendance must be taken each day of the school year for on-site and remote instruction days.

A. Attendance Status

1) On-site Instruction Days

On-site instruction days take place with students attending class at a physical school building.

To be counted present during on-site instruction days a student must be in attendance at least one-half of the student school day. This shall include attendance at official school activities at a place other than school with the approval of the principal. A student shall be in his/her assigned area at the beginning of the school day and the beginning of each class or be recorded as tardy.

2) Virtual Academy Instruction Days

Virtual academy attendance takes place entirely in the virtual learning environment and includes attendance in live, real-time instruction through virtual academy.

Attendance in virtual academy is intended to mirror attendance at on-site instruction and is separate from remote instruction days under the circumstances set forth below. The Superintendent or designee will develop additional guidelines regarding attendance for virtual academy.

To be counted present a student must be in attendance at least one-half of the student school day. This will include attendance at official school activities at a place other than school with the approval of the principal. A student will be **logged in, present, and responsive** in his/her/their assigned **virtual space area** at the beginning of the school day and the beginning of each class or be recorded as tardy. Not having a camera on, by itself, is not enough to mark a student absent.

3) Remote Instruction Days

Remote instruction days shall only occur when required by law or when the superintendent directs schools, in full or in part, to conduct classes remotely in the limited circumstances described in Policy 3102 Online Instruction:

When warranted by an emergency situation and where authorized by law, the superintendent may temporarily direct schools, in full or in part, to conduct classes remotely, with the understanding that ongoing remote instruction requires Board approval.

For purposes of this policy, an “emergency situation” includes a natural disaster, inclement weather, public health emergency, or other situation that threatens the health and safety of employees, students, or the community.

Remote instruction days take place entirely in the virtual learning environment and may or may not include attendance in live, real-time instruction.

To be counted present during remote instruction days, **either of the following two statements must be true:**

- a. student completes their daily assignments, **either** online or offline; **and/or** a student is present in synchronous (live, real-time) instruction.
- b. student has a daily check-in or a two-way communication in a manner acceptable to the school with the appropriate teacher(s) as follows:
 - In grades PreK-5, the homeroom teacher.
 - In all other grade levels, each course teacher as listed on a student’s schedule.

A student’s failure to log into a particular online program or lesson on a given remote instruction day shall not be grounds to mark the student absent for the day so long as the student meets one of the other attendance requirements described above. A teacher may subsequently change a student’s attendance status from absent to present based on evidence of student engagement submitted on a later date.

B. 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. Detailed laws, regulations and policies concerning compulsory school attendance are found in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction School Attendance and Student Accounting Manual.

C. Excused Absences

When a student must miss school, a [parent or guardian must submit a written excuse \(print or digital\) signed by a parent or guardian must be presented](#) to the student's teacher or attendance office within two days of the student's return after an absence. Absences due to extended illnesses may also require a statement from a physician. Failure to submit a written excuse will result in the absence being coded unexcused.

An absence may be excused for any of the following reasons:

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; (including, but not necessarily limited to parents, siblings, and grandparents);
4. medical or dental appointment of the student;
5. participation as a party or 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); ~~a minimum of two days each academic year~~
7. participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page **or college visit**, 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, 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.

10. for students in Virtual Academy or during a Remote Instruction day, a temporary technology issue that prevents the student from logging on and/or accessing instruction. In addition to providing a written excuse following the return from absence,
 - a) If a student has an issue with his/her/their technological device that prevents the student from accessing instruction, the student's parent or guardian must submit a ticket to the WCPSS Help Desk and/or contact the student's teacher or attendance office within 48 hours of the absence in order for the absence to be excused.
 - b) If a student is temporarily unable to access the internet, the student's parent or guardian must communicate that information within 48 hours to the student's teacher or attendance office in order for the absence to be excused.

In the case of excused absences, short-term out-of-school suspensions, and absences under [G.S. 130A-440](#) (for failure to submit a school health assessment form within 30 days of entering school) the student will be permitted to make up his or her work. (See policy 4300 Due Process.) The teacher will determine when work is to be made up. The student or parent 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 shadows and other work-based learning opportunities, as described in [G.S. 115C-47\(34a\)](#);
3. school-initiated and -scheduled activities;
4. athletic events that require 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. Students are expected to be at school on time and to be present at the scheduled starting time for each class.

All schools will establish a school-based attendance team and develop a plan to improve attendance. As part of this plan, each school will establish procedures to develop and implement interventions for excessive absences and a process for dealing with students who fail to meet previously-determined expectations. The interventions will involve parents/guardians.

The principal shall notify parents and take all other steps required by [G.S. 115C-378](#) for excessive absences.

After three (3) unexcused absences in the school year, the principal or his/her designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian that these absences are unlawful.

The principal shall send a written notice by mail to the parent, guardian, or custodian when a child has six (6) unexcused absences.

After ten (10) accumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the principal shall review any report or investigation prepared by the school social worker/student assistance program in accordance with [G.S. 115C-381](#).

Excused and unexcused absences above 20 are excessive. Students who exceed 20 absences during the year will be referred to the school-based attendance team. In reviewing the excessive absences for a student participating in a school's virtual academy, the school-based attendance team will consider whether to recommend to the principal that the student be returned to in-person instruction as a measure to address the absences.

The principal shall have the authority to waive the school-based attendance team decisions regarding excessive absences.

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

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

Legal References: [G.S. 115C-47](#), [-84.2](#), [-288\(a\)](#), [-375.5](#), [-378 to -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 [TCS-L-000](#), [-002](#), [-003](#)

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Wake County Board of Education