

## **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. School administrators shall communicate attendance expectations to parents and guardians and work with students and their families to overcome barriers to attendance.

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 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.

## **C. Late Arrivals and Early Departures**

Students are expected to be at school on time and to remain at school until dismissed. During the school day, students are expected to be present at the scheduled starting time for each class and to remain until the class ends.

When a student must be late to school or leave school early, a written excuse (print or digital) signed by a parent or guardian should be presented upon the student's arrival at school. Tardies or early departures may be excused for any of the reasons listed below in Section D.

## **D. Excused Absences**

When a student must miss school, a parent or guardian must submit a written excuse (print or digital) 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 licensed health care practitioner. 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 local health officer or the State Board of Health;
3. death in the immediate family; (including, but not necessarily limited to parents/guardians, siblings, and grandparents):
4. medical or dental appointment of the student;
5. attendance at the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal if the student is party to the action or under subpoena as a witness;

6. observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent(s)/guardians;
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 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 and attendance office in order for the absence to be excused.

## **E. School-Related Activities**

While recognizing the importance of classroom learning, the board also acknowledges that out-of-classroom, school-related activities can provide students with valuable experiences not available in the classroom setting. 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

In addition, students participating in disciplinary techniques categorized as in-school suspensions will not be counted as absent.

#### **F. Makeup Work**

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 missed work. Assignments missed due to participation in school-related activities also are eligible for makeup by the student. The teacher shall 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.

#### **G. Unexcused Absences**

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/guardians and take all other steps required by [G.S. 115C-378](#) for excessive, unexcused absences.

#### **H. Chronic Absenteeism**

Because class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process, any absences, whether excused or unexcused, can have a negative impact on a student's academic achievement. Regular attendance must be prioritized within each school and encouraged throughout the community. School administrators shall monitor and analyze attendance data to develop and implement strategies for reducing chronic absenteeism. Such strategies should involve engaging students and parents/guardians, recognizing good and improved attendance, providing early outreach to

families of students missing school, and identifying and addressing barriers to attendance.

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 appropriate interventions to improve the student's attendance including determining the best educational setting for the student (for example, in person or virtual).

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

## **I. Special Circumstances**

### **1. Students with Chronic Health Problems**

No penalties will be imposed for absences due to documented chronic health problems.

### **2. Attendance Requirements for Extracurricular Activities**

Absences may impact eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities. Principals shall inform students and parents or guardians of the applicable attendance standards for the various types of extracurricular activities, including interscholastic athletics.

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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