

Policy Code: 5110 Attendance

June 2023

I. Statement of Purpose. Continuity of instruction, communication of knowledge through well planned and well taught lessons, participation in classroom discussions, and social interaction with fellow students are vital elements of a student's education. While home study and make-up work certainly aid in continuing a student's instruction, they are not substitutes for these essential elements of education. Through regular attendance, students develop patterns of behavior essential to professional and personal success in life. With this basic principle in mind, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education adopts the following statements of policy on student attendance in compliance with the School Attendance and Student Accounting Manual: <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/district-operations/financial-and-business-services/student-accounting#SASAManual-1394>

II. Responsibility of Parents, Guardians, Custodians and Students. The primary responsibility for good school attendance lies with parents, guardians, custodians and students. Parents, guardians and custodians of students between the ages of seven (7) and sixteen (16) are legally responsible to cause their children to attend school. In addition, every parent, guardian or custodian having charge or control of a child under age seven (7) who is enrolled in a public school in grades kindergarten through two shall cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school is in session unless the child has withdrawn from school ([N.C.G.S. § 115C-378](#)). All students are expected to be in attendance every day throughout the school term unless temporarily excused by the Principals, Superintendent or a designee of the Principal or Superintendent due to sickness or other unavoidable causes not constituting unlawful absence as defined by the State Board of Education.

III. Responsibility of School Officials

A. It is the responsibility of school officials to provide a stimulating and challenging educational environment. It is also their responsibility to inform the public of the attendance rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Education and to enforce the compulsory attendance law ([N.C.G.S. § 115C-378](#)).

B. While school officials, parents, guardians, custodians and students each have their individual responsibilities with regards to school attendance, it is their cooperative effort which will have the greatest effect on fostering regular and continuous school attendance.

C. 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.

IV. Local Attendance Regulations. The Board of Education delegates to the Superintendent the authority and responsibility to establish attendance regulations for this school system which are consistent with State law, State Board of Education regulations, and this Policy, and which contain procedures designed to promote good attendance through positive reinforcement as well as corrective or remedial actions. The regulations shall include provisions to insure that:

A. Students shall meet minimum attendance standards;

- B. Parents, guardians and custodians shall receive early notification of their child's absences before they become excessive and a determining factor with respect to granting course credits;
- C. The School-Based Team shall be notified of students who are not attending school regularly and shall be involved in identifying the factors, i.e., social, educational, medical, emotional, and economic, which contribute to the student's absenteeism;
- D. "Make-up" procedures shall be established that will benefit the student and comply with instructional goals of the teacher and the school system;
- E. A careful appraisal of the student's overall performance shall be made before denying course credit due to excessive absenteeism and/or failure to make up work missed;
- F. Perfect, good, and improved attendance shall be recognized through positive reinforcement procedures;
- G. The number of daily absences at each school shall be monitored to encourage administrators to foster good attendance;
- H. Schools shall address any school-wide attendance issues in their School Improvement Plan;
- I. The use of Level I or Level II consequences and interventions, up to possible in-school suspensions (ISS), may be used for tardies, unexcused absences and skipping class. Multiple violations may warrant additional consequences but do not include out-of-school suspension (OSS). See the Code of Character, Conduct and Support for more details.

V. Attendance Status

A. On-Site Instruction Days. On-site, in person, 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.

B. Virtual Academy Instruction Days.

1. Virtual academy attendance takes place entirely in the virtual learning environment and includes attendance in live, real-time instruction through virtual academy.
2. 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.
3. Students are expected to be logged into synchronous MS Teams/Zoom instruction within 5 minutes of the start of class to be considered on time.
4. Students must be present for at least half the day (3 hours for elementary and 3 or more classes for middle school) to be counted present for the day. Students must be present for more than 50% of their day (3 or more classes for middle school) to be counted present for the day. ([N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-234](#))

C. 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. Remote instruction may be used when schools are unable to open due to severe weather, energy shortages, power failures or other emergency situations. The days may be scheduled prior to the anticipated event or after the fact. 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:

1. Student completes their daily assignments, **either** online or offline; **and/or** a student is present in synchronous (live, real-time) instruction.
2. 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 student contacts their homeroom teacher. In all other grade levels, student shall contact each course teacher as listed on student's schedule.

D. 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.

E. School officials shall communicate the attendance procedures to students and their families before the first day remote instruction begins.

VI. Late Arrivals and Early Departures. Students are expected to be at school on time daily and to remain at school until dismissed. During the school day, students are expected to be present at the scheduled start time for each class and to remain until the end of class. When a student must be tardy to school or leave early, a written excuse (print or digital) signed by a parent or guardian should be presented upon the student's return to school. Tardies may be excused for any of the lawful reasons listed below in section VII. For students who have been in attendance for at least one half of the school day, they will be counted as present. Upon the request of a parent, guardian or custodian, preferably made in writing and in a reasonable period of time (24 hours) in advance, the principal or the principal's designee may permit a student to depart before the end of the instructional day for a good and substantial cause. Every effort should be made by the parent, legal guardian, or caretaker to schedule appointments outside of school hours.

VII. Lawful (Excused) Absences. Failure to submit a written excuse will result in the absence being coded unexcused. The school principal determines whether a submitted medical statement is sufficient to excuse a student's absence. An absence may be excused for any of the following reasons:

- A. Illness or Injury** - Personal illness or injury that makes the student physically unable to attend school.
- B. Quarantine** - Isolation ordered by the local health officer or the State Board of Health.

C. Death in the Immediate Family – Includes, but not necessarily limited to, parents/guardians, siblings, and grandparents.

D. Medical or Dental Appointments - When the absence results from a medical or dental appointment of the student.

E. Court or Administrative Proceedings - Attendance at the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal if the student is party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.

F. Religious Observance - Observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parent(s)/guardians.

G. Educational Opportunity - When it is demonstrated that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity, such as travel. This would include, but is not limited to, a student serving as a legislative page or a governor's page.

H. Local School Board Policy - Temporary or occasional absences for reasons in accordance with local school board policies, provided that the student has been in attendance for at least one-half of a school day during the current school year.

I. Absence Related to Deployment Activities - 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.

J. Child Care - Absences due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent are to be coded as excused (lawful).

K. Natural Disaster - A student has experienced a natural disaster or catastrophic event (e.g., flood, house fire, etc.) that prevents them from attending.

VIII. School-Related Activities. While recognizing the importance of classroom learning, the Board also understands that out-of-classroom, school-related activities can provide students with valuable educational experiences not available in the classroom setting. The following school-related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

A. field trips sponsored by the school;

B. job shadows and other work-based learning opportunities, as described in [G.S. §115C-47\(34a\)](#);

C. school-initiated and scheduled activities;

D. athletic events that require early dismissal from school;

E. Career and Technical Education student organization activities approved in advance by the principal; and

F. Students participating in disciplinary interventions categorized as in-school suspensions will not be counted as absent.

IX. Makeup Work. In the case of excused absences, short-term out-of-school suspensions, and absences under [N.C. Gen. Stat. §130A-440](#) (for failure to submit a school health assessment form within 30 days of entering school), as well as unexcused absences, 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, however the student/caregiver is responsible for finding out what assignments are due and completing them within the specified time period as set forth by the teacher and/or principal. For excessive absences, students may be assigned to an after-school or weekend program within the school. If the student fails to successfully complete the study program the student may be subject to failing the class.

X. 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 [N. C. Gen. Stat. §115C-378](#) for excessive, unexcused absences.

XI. Chronic Absenteeism.

A. "Student Chronic Absentee" is a student who is enrolled in a North Carolina public school for at least 10 school days at any time during the school year, and whose total number of absences is equal to or greater than 10 percent of the total number of days that such student has been enrolled at such school during such school year.

B. Class attendance and participation are critical elements of the educational process. Any absences, whether excused or unexcused, can have a detrimental impact on a student's academic achievement and success later in life. Regular attendance must be prioritized within each school, each family, and encouraged and supported throughout the community. School administrators and school teams shall monitor and analyze attendance data to develop and implement strategies and interventions 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. Strategies and interventions may include both in-school interventions and community-based interventions.

C. 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. This can be either written, oral or electronic notification. 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 in accordance with [N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-381](#).

D. Excused and unexcused absences that are equal to 10 % or more of the school year are considered excessive. Students who exceed 10% or more days during the year will be referred to the school-based team. In reviewing the excessive absences for a student participating in a school's virtual academy, the school-based 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 team decisions regarding excessive absences.

XII. Special Circumstances.

A. Students with chronic health problems: No penalties will be imposed for absences due to documented chronic health problems.

B. 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.

Adopted: September 1979

Revised: June 1990; May 1993 by combining with and replacing Policy 5113 that was adopted in January 1964; June 1993; June 1999; May 2009; October 2009; June 2023.

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools