

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

In order for the board of education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education for each pupil, the complete cooperation of parents/guardians and pupils is required to maintain a high level of school attendance.

The frequent absence of pupils from classroom learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits the ability of pupils to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements successfully.

A pupil must be in attendance for 160 or more school days in order to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements of the grade/course to which he/she is assigned.

A waiver of these attendance requirements may be granted for good cause by the school principal upon recommendation of a review committee, appointed by him/her, and consisting of representative staff, including pupil service personnel and classroom teachers.

In recommending the granting of a waiver of this attendance requirement, the review committee shall consider the nature and causes of all absences rather than only those in excess of the 20 days. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the pupil and parent/guardian.

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school by 8:30 a.m. the day when a child will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence. The Superintendent shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

- A. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with the requirements of the rules of the state board;
- B. Identify potentially missing and/or abused pupils;
- C. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board at N.J.A.C 6A: 6-1.1 et seq, including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;

Truancy

A representative of the board will report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of pupils below the age of 16. Repeated infractions by enrolled pupils over the age of 16 may result in the suspension or expulsion of the pupil.

It shall be the policy of the board to consider the effectiveness and appropriateness to his/her needs of the educational program that is offered each pupil who is habitually and repeatedly absent from his/her assigned program and to consult with the child study team for its recommendations.

Excused Absences

The board considers the following as cause for excused absence:

Disabling illness

Recovery from accident

Required court attendance

Death in the family

Religious observance--In accordance with statute, no pupil absent for religious observance of a day recognized by the commissioner of education or this board of education shall be charged with an unexcused absence, deprived of an award or eligibility/opportunity to compete for an award, or of the right to take an alternate to a test or examination missed through such absence.

Such good cause as may be acceptable to the principal

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.

Regular Release of Pupils Before the End of the Normal School Day

There are varying situations which may justify release of certain pupils from school before the normal time for closing. Such situations are justifiable only if the release does not jeopardize the pupil's educational program and the reasons for such release can be shown to have positive benefits for the pupil.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a pupil be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day.

As agent responsible for the education of the children of this district, the board shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the pupil's parent/ guardian, which shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Justifiable reasons may include:

Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours;

Medical disability;

Family emergency;

Court appearance;

Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

No pupil in grades kindergarten through eight shall be permitted to leave the school before the close of the school day unless he/she is met in the school office by his/her parent/guardian or a person authorized by the parent/guardian to act in his/her behalf. No student will be released to anyone other than those stated on the emergency card unless parental contact (or a verifiable request) can be made with the parent.

Tardiness not covered by the causes listed shall be cumulative, and may affect course credit.

Legal Custody

A record shall be kept indicating the legal custodian of each pupil. Such custodian shall be responsible for informing the board of any change in the pupil's custodian. If one parent/ guardian has been awarded custody of the pupil in a divorce settlement, the other parent/ guardian shall present to the principal a letter authorizing him/her to accompany the child from school before the child may be released to him/her. The principal may take such steps as seem necessary to ensure that the child is

released only to proper custody.

Potentially Missing Children

If daily attendance records indicate a child is absent, and the parent/guardian has not called, a designated person shall attempt to contact them.

If no telephone contact can be made, the attendance office shall investigate.

If the attendance office cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the principal and inform the Police department.

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 superintendent 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 superintendent 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 superintendent 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 superintendent shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

- Ensure a school session which is in conformity with requirements of the rules of the state board;
- Identify potentially missing and/or abused pupils;
- Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with rules of the state board, including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- 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;
- 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;
- Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
- Vacation requests that are of educational value;
- Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
- Recognize exemplary attendance.

Date Reviewed: April 16, 2014, May 21, 2014

Date Adopted: June 18, 2014

Key Words: Pupil Attendance, Attendance, Absences and Excuses, Student Attendance

Legal References

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Monitored:

Indicator 5.1

Mandated:

N.J.S.A. 18A:36-25 requires written policy on potentially missing children.

Other Reasons:

N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.9 requires boards to adopt policies and procedures for promotion/ remediation. Attendance is a logical standard in considering possible need for remediation/ retention.

N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14, -15 and -16 govern pupil absences for religious observance; prohibit counting absence as unexcused if a proper written excuse is presented; prohibit depriving pupil of award or eligibility/opportunity to compete for an award, or of the right to take an alternate to a test or examination missed through such absence.

N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1(a)(2) says that boards must include student attendance requirements as one of the requirements for receiving a state-endorsed high school diploma.

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.8 has detailed requirements for staff responses to unauthorized absences by students, in the context of regulations on "Programs to support student development."

Recommendation:

A policy to:

- Establish pupil attendance requirements appropriate to each secondary educational program, including special education;

- Provide for review of pupil achievement in appeals of promotion/graduation credit decisions;

- Cite acceptable excuses;

- Address absence for religious observance specifically;

- Address late arrival, early departure. Particular attention should be paid to the possibility of a missing child or a child being kept out of school to care for others. Also address to whom child may be released;

- Indicate parent/guardian role in accounting for absences;

- Require and provide for making up missed work;

- Address tardiness and truancy;

- Address absences caused by suspension;

- Refer to exclusions;

- Direct development of procedures including recording of attendance in conformity with code.

In light of commissioner decisions, the board should be careful not to impose double penalties for absences, and to impose only reasonable academic penalties for unexcused absences.

While legal requirements apparently apply only to secondary schools, boards may appropriately set standards for elementary grades

NOTE CONCERNING POLICY ON ADMISSION OF PUPILS INFECTED WITH HIV/AIDS:

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.4(a)(8) explicitly states that individual with the HIV/AIDS infection may not be excluded in an education facility, or eligibility for educational transportation. Exceptional conditions and reference to a medical advisory panel that had been acceptable prior to 1992 were eliminated by Department of Health regulations in 1991, but were still in evidence in district policies and regulations in 1994-95.

Therefore, when reviewing this and related policies, be very sure that your policy does not bar school attendance based on incontinence, drooling or a documented history of biting or harming others. These conditions were found to be scientifically invalid, because of evidence that urine, feces and saliva are not significant vehicles of HIV transmission and because biting is not a significant method by which HIV can be transmitted.

Legal	N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
References:		
	N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.9	Pupil promotion and remediation; policies and procedures
	N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14, -15, -16	Religious holidays; absence of pupils on; effect ...
	N.J.S.A. 18A:36-19a	Newly enrolled students; records and identification
	N.J.S.A. 18A:36-24 through -26	Missing children; legislative findings and declarations ...
	N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25	Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions
	N.J.S.A. 18A:38-26	Days when attendance required; exceptions
	N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27	Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined
	N.J.S.A. 18A:38-31	Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties
	N.J.S.A. 18A:38-32	District and county vocational school attendance officers
	N.J.S.A. 18A:40-7	Exclusion of pupils who are ill
	N.J.S.A. 18A:40-8	Exclusion of pupils whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness
	<u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:40-9	Failure of parent to remove cause for exclusion; penalty
	N.J.S.A. 18A:40-10	Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease
	N.J.S.A. 18A:40-11	Exclusion of pupils having communicable tuberculosis
	N.J.S.A. 18A:46-16, -17	Exclusion of pupils pending examination and classification ...
	N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
	N.J.S.A. 52:17B-9.8a through -9.8c	Marking of missing child's school record
	N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1	Graduation requirements
	N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1 et seq.	Programs to support student development.
	<u>N.J.A.C.6A:30-1.1 et seq</u>	Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-8.1 <u>et seq.</u>	Student Attendance and Accounting
	<u>N.J.A.C.</u> 6A:32-8.3	Student attendance

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794

Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851

C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)

Manual for the Evaluation of Local School Districts

Possible Cross References:

*5020	Role of parents/guardians
*5111	Admission
*5114	Suspension and expulsion
*5124	Reporting to parents/guardians
*5125	Pupil records
*5141.2	Illness
*5141.4	Child abuse and neglect
*5142	Pupil safety
*6146	Graduation requirements
*6146.2	Promotion/retention
*6147	Standards of proficiency
*6147.1	Evaluation of individual student performance
*6154	Homework/makeup work
*6171.4	Special education
*6173	Home instruction