

Section J:

Knox County Board of Education

Students

Descriptor Term:

Attendance

Descriptor Code:

J-120

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2/19

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4/19

1
2 The Board recognizes that good attendance at school is basic to student learning. Attendance is a key
3 factor in student achievement; therefore, students are expected to be present each day that school is in
4 session. Parents have both a legal obligation and a moral responsibility to see that children are present
5 every day that school is in session.

6
7 The Director of Schools shall establish and maintain an attendance program designed to ensure all school-
8 age children attend school and that alternative program options are available for students who do not meet
9 minimum attendance requirements. This program shall be designed to address and adhere to all statutory
10 and regulatory requirements established by the State of Tennessee. School administrators and faculties
11 are expected to develop programs and practices to achieve or exceed student attendance goals established
12 by the State Board of Education. For these reasons, the Knox County Board of Education has adopted
13 the following policy regarding student absences.

14
15 The attendance supervisor/designee shall oversee the entire attendance program which shall include the
16 following:¹

- 17
18 1. Adhering to all accounting and reporting procedures and their dissemination;
19
20 2. Providing alternative program options for students who severely fail to meet minimum attendance
21 requirements;
22
23 3. Ensuring that all school-age children attend school;
24
25 4. Providing documentation of enrollment status upon request for students applying for new or
26 reinstatement of driver's permit or license; and
27
28 5. Notifying the Department of Safety whenever a student with a driver's permit or license
29 withdraws from school.²

30
31 Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as other student records. Only
32 authorized school officials with legitimate educational purposes may have access to student information
33 without the consent of the student or parent(s)/guardians(s).³

34
35 Absences shall be classified as either excused or unexcused as determined by the school leader or his/her
36 designee. Excused absences shall include:⁴

- 37
38 1. Personal illness;
39
40 2. Illness of immediate family member;
41
42 3. Death in the family;

- 1
- 2 4. Extreme weather conditions;
- 3
- 4 5. Religious observances;⁵
- 5
- 6 6. College visits;
- 7
- 8 7. Pregnancy;
- 9
- 10 8. School sponsored or school endorsed activities;⁶
- 11
- 12 9. Military active duty/deployment (as outlined below);⁷
- 13
 - 14 a) An excused absence for one (1) day when the member is deployed;
 - 15 b) An excused absence for one (1) day when the service member returns from deployment; and
 - 16 c) Excused absences for up to ten (10) days for visitation when the member is granted rest and
 - 17 recuperation leave and is stationed out of the country.
- 18
- 19 10. Summons, subpoena, or court order; or
- 20
- 21 11. Circumstances which in the judgment of the school leader create emergencies over which the
- 22 student has no control.
- 23

24 Any absence not complying with the above reasons for excused absences will be considered as unexcused.
 25 Examples of unexcused absences are (a) family vacations taken during the school year and (b) Senior
 26 Skip Day.

27
 28 The principal or designee shall be responsible for ensuring that:⁸

- 29
- 30 1. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class;
- 31
- 32 2. Daily absentee sheets contain sign-in/sign-out sheets and indicate students present or absent for
- 33 the majority of the day;
- 34
- 35 3. All student absences are verified;
- 36
- 37 4. Written excuses are submitted for absences and tardiness;
- 38
- 39 5. If necessary, verification is required from an official or other source to justify absences;
- 40
- 41 6. System-wide procedures for accounting and reporting are to be followed;
- 42
- 43 7. Out-of-school suspensions (OSS) are not reported as an unexcused absence and are not a
- 44 chargeable offense for truancy in Juvenile Court; and
- 45
- 46 8. Students in a homebound program are not marked absent from school. Attendance for homebound
- 47 students is recorded by the homebound teacher.
- 48
- 49
- 50

GRADES K-12

Annually, the Director of Schools/designee will provide written notice to parent(s)/guardian(s) that attendance at school is required. Students shall be present at least fifty percent (50%) of the scheduled school day in order to be counted present. Students may attend part-time days, alternating days, or for a specific amount of time as indicated in their Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan and shall be considered present for school attendance purposes.⁹ If a student is required to participate in a remedial instruction program outside of the regular school day where there is no cost to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school system provides transportation, unexcused absences from these programs shall be reported in the same manner.¹⁰

Excuses for absences must be made in writing to the principal or administrative designee by a parent or guardian and must be submitted within five (5) days of the student's return to school. All absences, and/or corrections to absences must be recorded within the respective 20-day attendance reporting period or no later than ten (10) days following the end of each 20-day attendance reporting period.

APPEAL PROCESS¹¹

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student with excessive (more than five (5) unexcused absences) or those in danger of credit/promotion denial shall have the opportunity to appeal absences. Whenever possible attendance issues should be resolved at the school level. Parents/guardians who wish to appeal a student's excessive (more than five (5) absences), shall communicate their appeal to the school principal. At the appeal, the principal will provide the parent/guardian written notice of the unexcused absences and the parent/guardian will have the opportunity to be heard. The burden of proof rests on the student or the parent/guardian. The parent will receive written notification of any action taken regarding the excessive unexcused absences.

The appeal shall be heard no later than ten (10) school days after the request for appeal is received.

Within five (5) school days of the Director of Schools/designee rendering a decision, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) may request a hearing by the Board, and the Board shall review the record. Following the review, the Board may affirm or overturn the decision of the Director of Schools/designee. The action of the Board shall be final.

The Director of Schools/designee shall ensure that this policy is posted in each school building and disseminated to all students, parents, teachers, and administrative staff.

PROGRESSIVE TRUANCY INTERVENTION PLAN¹²

Parent or guardian shall be notified each time a student has five (5) days (aggregate) of unexcused absences and that attendance at school is required. Additional notices shall be sent after each successive accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences.¹³

If a parent does not provide documentation within five (5) days of the student's return to school excusing those absences, or request an appeal hearing with the principal, then the Director of Schools shall implement the progressive truancy intervention plan described below prior to referral to juvenile court.

Students with ten (10) unexcused absences shall be subject to the Progressive Truancy Intervention framework outlined below:

Tier I

Tier I of the progressive truancy intervention plan shall include the following:

1. A conference between school officials, the student, and the student's parent/guardian;
2. An attendance contract, signed by the student, the parent/guardian, and social worker. The contract shall include the following:
 - a. A specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student;
 - b. The period for which the contract is in effect;
 - c. Penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court; and
3. Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings to discuss the student's progress.

Tier II

If a student accumulates additional unexcused absences in violation of the attendance contract in Tier I, the student will be subject to Tier II.

1. A school employee shall conduct an individualized assessment detailing the reasons a student has been absent from school and, if necessary, referral of the child to counseling, community-based services, or other in-school or out-of-school services aimed at addressing the student's attendance problems.

Tier III

Tier III shall be implemented if the truancy interventions under Tier II are unsuccessful.

Referral to an off-campus conference between school officials, the student, and the student's parent/guardian in an external truancy review or problem-solving process.

PROMOTING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Faculties shall encourage student attendance and completion of classroom assignments according to the following guidelines:

1. **Assuring quality classroom experience.** Maximum effort shall be made in all classroom settings to provide a quality learning experience for each individual and to ensure that each day's class time is important.
2. **Emphasizing regular attendance.** Teachers shall inform students that time on task is essential to learning, that instruction loses context with lapse of time, and that, if students are absent from class, work that has to be made up outside of the regular classroom environment does not provide the same opportunity for learning as the regular class time.

1 3. **Making-up assignments.** If a student must be absent from school for any reason, excused or
 2 unexcused up to ten (10) days, upon returning to school, he/she shall be given the opportunity to
 3 make up any and all assignments that were missed during the student's absence. The student must
 4 request make-up assignments within **three (3) days** after returning. Teachers shall set a reasonable
 5 time for the completion of the work. Failure of a student to initiate a request for make-up work
 6 within three (3) days will result in lost opportunity for credit for that assignment.
 7

8 Students who are suspended or expelled from school for more than ten (10) days shall be offered
 9 placement in the Alternative School Program for the duration of the suspension or expulsion, unless the
 10 student is considered to be a danger to the school community.
 11

12 Students who refuse Alternative School placement, or are dismissed from the Alternative School Program
 13 early for any reason, or have been considered a danger to the school community shall not be given the
 14 opportunity to request make-up assignments.
 15

16 Students who are denied the opportunity to receive make-up assignments may appeal to the School
 17 Attendance Review Committee, then to the Director of Schools and Board. The Director of Schools will
 18 establish an administrative procedure to govern this appeal process.
 19

20 **PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

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 22 In order to be counted present on any and all accounting attendance records, students in grade Pre-K shall
 23 attend school for a time period of at least 50% of their scheduled day. Students who attend less than 50%
 24 of their scheduled school day shall be recorded and reported as absent on any and all attendance records.
 25

26 **STATE-MANDATED ASSESSMENT**

27
 28 Students who have an excused absence the day of scheduled End of Course (EOC) exams will be allowed
 29 to take a make-up exam. Excused students will receive an incomplete in the course until they have taken
 30 the EOC exam.
 31

32 Students who have an unexcused absence shall receive a failing grade on the EOC exam which shall be
 33 averaged into their final grade.
 34

35 **CREDIT/PROMOTION DENIAL**

36
 37 Credit/promotion denial determinations may include student attendance; however, student attendance
 38 may not be the sole criterion.¹⁴ If attendance is a factor prior to credit/promotion denial, the following
 39 shall occur:
 40

- 41 1. The student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be advised if the student is in danger of
 42 credit/promotion denial due to excessive absenteeism.
 43
- 44 2. Procedures in due processes are available to the student when credit or promotion is denied.
 45

46 **DRIVER'S LICENSE REVOCATION¹⁵**

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 48 More than ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) reported unexcused absences by a student during any
 49 semester renders a student ineligible to retain a driver's permit or license or to obtain such if of age.
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In order to qualify for reclaiming a driver’s permit or license, the student must make a passing grade in at least three (3) full unit subjects or their equivalency at the conclusion of a subsequent grading period.

Legal References:

1. TRR/MS 0520-01-03-.08(1)(a); T.C.A. § 49-1-3006.
2. T.C.A. § 49-6-3017(c).
3. T.C.A. § 10-7-504; 20 U.S.C. § 1232g.
4. TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17(1)(c).
5. TRR/MS 0520-01-03-.03(15); T.C.A. § 49-6-2904(b)(5).
6. T.C.A. § 49-6-3019.
7. T.C.A. § 49-6-3007; T.C.A. § 49-6-3009.
8. TN Department of Education, Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual (2017).
9. TN Department of Education, Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual (2017); T.C.A. § 49-6-3007, T.C.A. § 49-6-3009.
10. TN Department of Education, Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual (2017).
11. TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17.
12. T.C.A. § 49-6-3201.
13. T.C.A. § 49-6-3007.
14. T.C.A. § 49-2-203(b)(7).
15. T.C.A. § 49-6-3017(c).

Approved as to Legal Form 2/27/2019
By Knox County Law Director
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