

SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Springfield, New Jersey 07081

POLICY: ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

The administration acknowledges the importance of regular attendance at school as fundamental to effective instruction and learning. To this end, it will observe and enforce the laws requiring attendance of all children between the ages of six and sixteen, and establish rules for the attendance of all students enrolled in the schools of the district.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the schools during the days and hours that the school is in session unless it is shown to the satisfaction of the building principal that an acceptable cause exists to justify the students' absence. In accordance with statute, the principal shall require from the parent of each child who has been absent from school a written statement of the reason for such absence.

The administration considers the following to constitute excused absences:

- a. Student health
- b. Death in family
- c. Court appearance
- d. Family emergency
- e. Observation of religious holiday
- f. Administrative suspension
- g. Medical or dental appointments

All other absences are to be considered unexcused absences, and principals may impose on truant student such disciplinary measures as may be appropriate for infractions of school regulations.

The administration discourages absences for family reasons for vacation periods beyond those regularly scheduled in the school calendar. It further realizes the deleterious effect that such absence has on the continuity and effectiveness of classroom instruction and that independent assignments are not a suitable substitute for classroom participation. However, recognizing that the school has an obligation to provide regular instruction to pupils, the administration will seek to ensure that teachers prepare independent assignments for students who will be absent for periods of two days or more. It is recognized that the teacher is the best judge of the appropriateness of assignment (independent practice v. developmental work), and that it will be his/her determination as to the type of assignment given when advance notice

of the absence is provided by the parent (requirements for advance notice may be waived in the event of an emergency).

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 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. Documentation of the nature and causes of these absences shall be the responsibility of the pupil and parent/guardian.

Potentially Missing Students

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school early in the day when a child will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence. If daily 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 principal shall investigate the student's absence. If the principal cannot locate the child, he/she shall inform the appropriate local authorities. If a child who was present in the morning is absent after lunch, the same procedure shall be followed.

Truancy

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:

- A. Disabling illness
- B. Recovery from accident
- C. Required court attendance
- D. Death in the family
- E. 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.
- F. 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. This shall include pupils assigned to approved and supervised independent study programs.

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:

- A. Medical or dental appointments which cannot be scheduled outside of school hours
- B. Medical disability
- C. Motor vehicle driver's test;
- D. Interview for college entrance or employment
- E. Family emergency
- F. Court appearance
- G. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the administration.

No pupil in grades pre- kindergarten through twelve 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.

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.

Marking Missing Child's School Record

Whenever the Chief School Administrator 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 Chief School Administrator 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 Chief School Administrator 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 Chief School Administrator shall develop procedures for the attendance of pupils which:

- A. Ensure a school session which is in conformity with 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, including pupils serving in- or out-of-school suspensions, or excluded for health and cleanliness reasons;
- D. 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;
- E. 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;
 - F. Address tardiness and class cutting in terms of the intent of this policy;
 - G. Ensure that pupils absent for any reason have an opportunity to make up work they missed;
 - H. Recognize exemplary attendance.

Legal References:

- N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties
- 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
- N.J.S.A. 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:40-12 Closing schools during epidemic
- 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.
- N.J.A.C. 6A:30-1.1 et seq. Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts
- N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.1 et seq. Student Attendance and Accounting
- N.J.A.C. 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)

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

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