

The Watauga County School System is committed to the philosophy that every student should attend every class every day. Regular school attendance and promptness are expected and are essential for school success. Learning through participation in group discussions, developing an appreciation for the views and abilities of others, and forming the habit of regular attendance are legitimate objectives for school attendance. Learning that is lost because of absences can never be adequately replaced. The promotion of regular school attendance is the responsibility of every parent, student, and educator.

1. Each school shall address student attendance issues in its school improvement plan each year.
2. Each principal or designee/s shall review attendance problems with appropriate staff.
3. Absences, tardies, and early dismissals shall be termed excused for the following reasons:
 - a. Illness or injury which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school.
 - b. Lice infestation and/or nits and egg casings closer than ½ inch to the scalp for up to 2 days only.
 - c. The local health officer or the State Board of Health orders the isolation of the student.
 - d. The student is absent because of a death affecting the family.
 - e. The student has a medical or dental appointment.
 - f. The student is a party to or is under subpoena as a witness in the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal.
 - g. The student obtains prior approval by the principal to be absent because of the observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parents.
 - h. The student obtains prior approval to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity.
 - i. A student whose parent or legal guardian (a) is an active duty member of the uniformed services as defined by policy 5.02.50, Student Assignments, 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 will be granted additional excused absences at the discretion of the

superintendent or designee to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian.

- j. A student whose residence is located on a road that has been defined by the Watauga County Transportation Director as a limited bus route and who resides in the particular school district where the student attends school and who furnishes a written excuse from parent or guardian citing dangerous road conditions within the third day of attendance following the absence.

Students are responsible for completing assignments or responding appropriately to any information given in the class(es) missed. Students failing to complete assignments and meet other conditions for travel set by the teacher and principal will have their absences marked unexcused.

******Note: Excused absences related to Paragraphs 3(g) and 3(h) may not have a combined total of more than ten (10) cumulative days in a school year. Any absences in excess of 10 days will be marked unexcused.**

4. For school related activities a student shall be considered released from school rather than absent and shall be allowed to make-up work.
5. An absence not termed excused under the reasons listed above shall be deemed unexcused.
6. A student absent from school shall on returning to school furnish a written excuse from parent, guardian, or doctor stating the dates and a specific reason for the absence (s). The note shall be coded excused or unexcused by the proper school authorities. *If a written excuse is not submitted by the third day of attendance following the absence, the absence shall be considered unexcused.* Additional circumstances may require additional time.
7. A letter of concern from the principal shall be sent to the parent/guardian when a student has accumulated three (3) unexcused absences. Each time a letter is mailed, notification shall be sent to the student services director or designee and to the teacher. After five (5) unexcused absences, the principal shall notify the parent/guardian by mail that he/she may be in violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under established attendance policies of the State and Watauga County Board of Education. Once the parent/guardian is notified, the principal/designee shall work with the child and his family to analyze the cause of the absences and determine appropriate steps to eliminate the problem. If the parent/guardian refuses to meet with the principal/designee, the principal/designee may notify the Department of Social Services and the District Attorney that the parent/guardian is not cooperating with the school system. The classroom/homeroom teacher shall be responsible for notifying the student data management system coordinator of such absences.

Each time a letter is mailed, notification shall be sent to the student services director/designee, the teacher, and the school social worker.

8. After ten (10) accumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the principal /designee shall notify the parent/guardian/custodian by mail. The principal /designee shall confer with the student and parent/guardian/custodian if possible to determine whether the parent/guardian/custodian has received notification pursuant to this policy and has made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal/designee determines that the parent/guardian or custodian has not made a good faith effort to comply with the law, he/she shall notify the District Attorney and the Director of Social Services of the county where the child resides. If the principal/designee determines that the parent/guardian/custodian has made a good faith effort to comply, he may file a complaint with the juvenile intake counselor under G.S. 7A-561 that the child is habitually absent from school without a valid excuse.
9. A letter of concern from the principal may be sent after ten (10) accumulated absences. After 15 accumulated absences, the parent/guardian shall be notified. Notification shall also be sent to the student services director or designee, the school social worker, and the teacher. The principal/designee shall review the reasons for the absences.
10. A student shall be considered tardy if he/she has not reported to the homeroom/classroom by the school starting time set by the Watauga County Board of Education. An early dismissal shall be considered any checkout from school prior to the designated dismissal time set by the Watauga County Board of Education. After fifteen (15) accumulated tardies, the parent/guardian shall be notified. Notification shall also be sent to the student services director/designee, the principal, and the teacher. The principal may request a meeting with the parent/guardian/custodian.
11. The principal/designee may require that a doctor's note for illness be presented at any time during the school year to excuse future absences. All notes submitted are subject to verification for authenticity.

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