

Board of Education Policy 4.2000
Administrative Procedure

ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

Catawba County Board of Education Policy 4.2000 states:

School attendance is central to educational achievement and school success. Attendance and participation in class (the amount of which is controlled by attendance) is an integral part of the teaching-learning process and thereby a part of the grade earned. Additionally, regular attendance develops patterns of behavior essential to success in later life, both personal and business. While there are times when students must be absent from school due to physical inability to attend, it must be understood that parents or legal guardians have the responsibility for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

It is critical that schools develop and maintain their own program and procedures to address student attendance. For these procedures to be effective, **there must be accountability on the part of all school personnel.** The procedures should include dissemination of clear information, incentives, required follow-up in compliance with the compulsory education law and BOE policy 4.2000, parent contacts, counseling, and referral to team and/or the school social worker as appropriate. The school social worker can assist the school in resolving difficulties which prevent a student from regular attendance.

Copies of the Compulsory Attendance Law, Attendance Position Statements, sample parent letters, and additional information about high school attendance are included for use by schools as they develop attendance programming and procedures.

Superintendent's Signature _____ Date _____

General Compulsory Attendance Law

Compulsory Attendance Ages

In accordance with G.S. 115C-378...every parent, guardian or other person in North Carolina having charge or control of a child between the ages of seven and 16 years shall cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session. Every parent, guardian or other person in North Carolina having charge or control of a child under age seven 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equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session unless the child has withdrawn from school. No person shall encourage, entice, or counsel any such child to be unlawfully absent from school. The term 'school' is defined to embrace all public schools and such non-public schools as have teachers and curricula that are approved by the State Board of Education. (G.S. 115C-378)

Duties of the Principal

The principal or his designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of his child's excessive absences after the child has accumulated three unexcused absences in a school year. After ten accumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the principal shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian by mail that he may be in violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under the established attendance policies of the State and local boards of education. Once the parents are notified, the school attendance counselor shall work with the child and his family to analyze the causes of the absences and determine steps, including adjustment of the school program or obtaining supplemental services, to eliminate the problem. (G.S. 115C-378)

Penalty for Law Violation

Any parent, guardian, or other person violating the provisions of the Compulsory Attendance Law is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor, and upon conviction, shall be fined not more than \$50 or imprisoned not more than 30 days, or both, at the discretion of the court. (G.S. 115C-380)

The law requires that the parent be notified after the child has accumulated 3 unexcused absences.

SAMPLE

To the Family of

Our records indicate that your daughter/son has accumulated three unexcused absences. We wanted to be sure you were aware of this because regular school attendance is important for academic success and the development of children into healthy, productive members of our community.

As the position statement on school attendance* which we asked parents to sign at the beginning of the year said, *research indicates that school truancy is a contributing factor to behaviors which lead to involvement in violence, substance abuse, and dropping out of school.* Because we want the best for your child, as we know you do, we try to actively focus on her/him if a tendency to be out, for whatever the reason, is observed. Poor attendance habits form early and usually continue into the work place, and this is not what we want for your child.

Please feel free to contact the school counselor or a teacher if there is a way they can help.

Sincerely,

Principal

*Use of the position statement is optional.

The law requires that the parent be notified in writing after the child has accumulated not more than 6 unexcused absences.

SAMPLE

To the Family of

At the beginning of the year you signed the school system's position statement on school attendance* indicating that you intended to support it by encouraging regular school attendance on your daughter's/son's part. For this reason we think that you may not be aware of the number of accumulated absences which your daughter/son has. Our records indicate that your daughter/son has accumulated six unexcused absences which causes us concern, since attendance is very important if she is to have a successful school experience.

We feel it is important that we work together to find a solution to this problem. Our school counselor or social worker will be happy to talk with you so that together you might analyze the causes of the absences and determine a solution.

You are reminded that absences, when a student is not at least 16 years old, may be in violation of the North Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law. Parents may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under the established attendance policies of the State and local Board of Education.

Please contact the school at _____ to set up a conference. Together we should be able to help your daughter/son improve her/his school attendance. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Principal

*Use of the position statement is optional.

The law requires that after 10 accumulated unexcused absences in the school year, the principal shall review and confer with the student and his/her parent/guardian if possible to see if s/he has received notification and made a good faith effort to comply with the law.

SAMPLE

To the Family of

In compliance with North Carolina G.S. 115-378, we are officially informing you of the ten unlawful absences your child has accumulated this school year. We regret that the problem of poor school attendance has not been resolved to this point.

Our school social worker will be in touch with you to arrange for a conference in another effort to resolve whatever the problem may be, since it is impacting your daughters/son's opportunities for school success and is not in compliance with the Compulsory Attendance Law. A copy of this law is attached along with the legal reference regarding the duties of the principal and penalty for non-compliance.

Please call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Principal

Enclosure

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Position Statement

The Catawba County Board of Education, administrative personnel, school principals, teachers and support personnel believe that regular school attendance is the **key** to academic success and development of children into healthy, productive members of our community. The members of our business community stress their need for employees who exhibit good attendance habits. It is crucial for parents to understand that these attendance habits are formed early in school.

Research indicates that school truancy is a contributing factor to behaviors which lead to involvement in violence, substance abuse, and dropping out of school.

For these reasons, the Catawba County School System will aggressively focus on students who are habitually truant or who have excessive absences in order to get them in school on a **daily** basis.

Signature: _____
(Superintendent)

Date: _____

As a parent of _____, I understand the position statement of the Catawba County School System, will support it, and encourage him/her to maintain **regular daily** attendance.

Signature: _____
(Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____

(Please return this to your student's teacher.)

(Elem.)

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For these reasons, the Catawba County School System will aggressively focus on students who are habitually truant or who have excessive absences in order to get them in school on a **daily** basis.

Signature: _____
(Superintendent)

Date: _____

As a parent of _____, I understand the position statement of the Catawba County School System, will support it, and encourage him/her to maintain **regular daily** attendance.

Signature: _____
(Parent/Guardian)

Date: _____

(MS/HS)

Procedure for High School Attendance

Students in grades 9-12 who are absent from a class more than 8 days during a semester/term shall not receive credit for the semester/term.* The maximum numerical grade recorded for such a student for the semester/term shall be sixty (60).

At the high school level, an attendance review committee shall advise the administration at the end of each semester/term whether circumstances for each student who has exceeded the 8 absences per course warrant waiver of the no-credit procedure. (A waiver is to be considered only if the student has a passing grade in the course.) Such hearings for each student shall be mandatory. The principal shall notify the student and his/her parents or guardians concerning the time/place of such hearings and indicate that their presence is required. The principal shall have authority to waive the no-credit provisions of the procedure before or after a hearing by the committee. (Legal Reference: G.S. 115C-378 to 383)

The procedure outlined here is based upon the philosophy that attendance is a factor in success. Further, it is also based upon the fact that all absences—whether excused, unexcused, or suspension—are negative factors impacting student success. Absences for purposes of this procedure do not include *tardies*.

Responsibilities for Facilitation of Procedures at High School Level

Classroom Teachers

Classroom teachers keep accurate daily attendance rosters and provide specific coding instructions for substitute teachers. Teachers are also responsible for notifying the dropout prevention coordination when students reach a school-prescribed number of absences. Even when students have accumulated ten unlawful absences as specified in the General Compulsory Attendance Law, the teacher is responsible for continuing to provide learning opportunities.

Dropout Prevention Coordinator

The coordinator should monitor student absences and aggressively encourage good attendance through individual counseling and coordination with assistance teams and classroom teachers.

The coordinator should facilitate a series of steps or intervals when parents are notified by the classroom teacher, dropout prevention coordinator, and school

administrator of the attendance situation, status of make-up work, and possible loss of academic credit. According to BOE Policy 4.2000, at least one letter of notification must be sent from the principal to the parent/guardian for documentation purposes and it must be after 6 absences. This letter should inform the parent/guardian of the seriousness of the student's status. The coordinator should facilitate this notification.

The coordinator should also maintain an accurate roster of students for whom the review process must be implemented.

Principal

The principal should monitor the establishment of the specific steps in the attendance procedures and provide focus for classroom teachers on legal rights of special needs (i.e., exceptional, 504, at risk, etc.). Teachers should be monitored to assure consistency and accuracy of student absence records. The law requires that the principal confer with the parent/guardian after ten accumulated unexcused absences. Finally, the principal should coordinate, and may participate in, the attendance review committee process at the end of each semester/term.

Attendance Review Committee Members

Committee members should follow system procedures and participate in committee review meetings at the conclusion of each semester/term. As much as is possible, case by case handling of students is encouraged.

Central Office

The central office has the responsibility for coordination of follow-up training for review committees. The central office is also a resource when schools have need of additional information or assistance.

*Note: Students who miss more than 8 but fewer than 14 days may choose to take advantage of make-up options available through their high schools.

SAMPLE

Date

To the Family of: _____

We need your help. At this point in time, your son/daughter has accumulated ____
_____absences. High school students who are absent from a class more than
8 days during a semester/term jeopardize their chances of earning credit for that
class. Please help us as we work with your son/daughter to prevent further
absences that could result in this outcome.

We believe that school attendance is central to educational achievement and
school success. We also believe that developing the habits of prompt and
regular attendance now will enable our students to become valued workers and
employees in the future. If you have questions about your son/daughter's status,
please contact the school.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE

Date

To the Family of _____

In compliance with the Catawba County School Administrative Procedure for High School Attendance, we are officially informing you that your son/daughter has accumulated 8 absences this school year. We regret that his/her attendance problem has not been resolved.

Our administrative procedure says that students in grade 9-12 who are absent from a class more than 8 days during a semester/term shall not receive credit for the semester/term. The maximum numerical grade recorded for such a student for the semester shall be sixty (60).

This procedure also says that if, at the end of the semester/term the student has a passing grade, an attendance review committee will meet to consider the factors behind the absences and the efforts taken by the student to make up work missed. The principal then has the authority to waive the no-credit provisions of the procedure before or after a hearing by the committee.

I will notify you at a later time as to the date and time of the hearing. Please call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Principal

High School Parent Attachment

Administrative Procedure for High School Attendance

Students in grades 9-12 who are absent from a class more than 8 days during a semester/term shall not receive credit for the semester/term. The maximum numerical grade recorded for such a student for the semester/term shall be sixty (60).

At the high school level, an attendance review committee shall advise the administration at the end of each semester/term whether circumstances for each student who has exceeded the 8 absences per course warrant waiver of the non-credit procedure. (A waive is to be considered only if the student has a passing grade in the course.) Such hearings for each student shall be mandatory. The principal shall notify the student and his/her parents or guardians concerning the time/place of such hearings and indicate that their presence is required. The principal shall have authority to waive the no-credit provisions of the procedure before or after a hearing by the committee. (Legal Reference: G.S. 1165C-378 to 383)

The procedure outlined here is based upon the philosophy that attendance is a factor in success. Further, it is also based upon the fact that all absences—whether excused, unexcused, or suspension—are negative factors impacting student success. Absences for purposes of this procedure do not include *tardies*.