

**BUNCOMBE COUNTY SCHOOLS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

The Buncombe County Board of Education believes that regular school attendance is of crucial importance for educational achievement, that learning experiences that occur in the classroom are essential components of its learning process, that time lost from class tends to be irretrievable in terms of opportunity for instructional interaction, and, therefore, that each student should attend school every day. Further, the Board affirms that the primary responsibility for regular attendance resides with the parents/guardians and the individual student.

The Buncombe County Board of Education shall adhere to North Carolina State Laws pertaining to student attendance except to the extent this policy imposes stricter regulations. Furthermore, the Board is committed to the implementation of a student attendance policy that is nondiscriminatory, discourages dropouts, and encourages regular attendance.

I. In order for an absence to be excused it must, upon a showing of satisfactory evidence, be a lawful absence.

A. Lawful Absences, Tardies, and Early Dismissals:

Students are expected to be in attendance for each day of the regular school year, which normally consists of 180 school days. Basis for excusable absences permitted by the N. C. State Board of Education Attendance Rule are:

1. Illness or injury prevents the student from being physically able to attend school.
2. The local health officer or the State Board of Health orders the isolation of the student.
3. The student is absent due to the death of a member of the immediate family.
4. The student has an emergency medical or dental appointment or such an appointment which has been approved in advance by the principal.

5. The student is a party to or is under subpoena as a witness in the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal.
6. The student has obtained prior approval by the principal to be absent due to the observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parents.
7. The student obtains prior approval to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity, such as travel.

B. Unlawful Absences, Tardies and Early Dismissals:

1. Unexcusable absences include all reasons not covered above.
2. Truancies are any unexcused absences with or without the knowledge or approval of the parent/guardian.

II. Each school will establish a school attendance team to monitor school-wide attendance and design interventions to reduce individual student absences. Schools will collect and review data regularly to make decisions about individual interventions, targeted group interventions, and school-wide incentives for improved attendance.

Interventions could include: 1) parent education/counseling sessions; 2) individual/student counseling; 3) referral to appropriate community agencies; 4) positive behavior supports for students and parents.

III. Once a student has been absent for any lawful or unlawful reason six cumulative days, the principal or designee shall notify the student's parents that an individual attendance intervention plan will be developed.

IV. To be counted present for the day, a student must be in attendance one-half of the day.

V. Notes from home are required upon the student returning to school following an absence. Absences are listed as unexcused until notes are received within three days of the student's return to school. Doctors' notes may be required for multiple health-related absences or a history of absences.

- VI. A student is considered present in the school when in attendance at the following places:
- A. School sponsored field trips.
 - B. Other activities initiated by and scheduled by the school.
 - C. Special school events which may require early dismissal from school.
 - D. Assignment to in-school suspension.
- VII. As soon as a parent anticipates a student's extended absence because of a severe, prolonged, or chronic illness under a physician's care, the parent shall notify the principal. The principal shall make arrangements for homebound/hospital-bound, or other appropriate instruction following procedures outlined by Special Services homebound guidelines.
- VIII. The Attendance School make-up program for Elementary Schools will operate under the following options:
- 1. Summer Sessions
 - 2. Saturday Sessions prior to the end of the school year
 - 3. After school/evening sessions.
- Number of sessions and times will be decided by the principal. The cost for the attendance program will be \$50.00 paid in advance.
- A student who attends less than 166 days will be required to attend attendance summer school.
- In the event a student is unable to afford the summer school, the student's parents may request a waiver of a portion of the fee by filing a statement of financial assets and liabilities. The statement must be filed with the Principal's office and a determination of whether the waiver is granted shall be made within 10 days.
- IX. During the summer school sessions, absence, tardiness, or disruptive behavior will result in dismissal from the summer school program. This may result in a grade level retention. The principal has the authority to waive this policy for cause. Appeals should be made to the school principal in writing.
- X. A copy of this policy shall be distributed to all students at the beginning of the school year. Students transferring from another administrative unit will be provided a copy of this policy prior to enrollment, and will be allowed to have absences prorated based on the number of school days remaining in the school year.

- XI. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain in school the full day. Tardies and early dismissals cause students to miss important information and are strongly discouraged. Five unexcused tardies or five unexcused early dismissals, or any combination of five unexcused tardies or unexcused early dismissals will be equated to one day of absence for the purpose of this policy. The school principal is expected to deal appropriately with those students who are chronically tardy or who leave early. (Lawful tardies and lawful early dismissals will be for the same reasons as listed under Section I-A.)
- XII. The Board approved transfer of an out-of-district student who is habitually late or who habitually signs out early is subject to revocation, if recommended by the principal. (Ref.: Policy #410, Section IV. D.)