

2009-2010

ATTENDANCE POLICY OF THE WILSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Introduction

The Wilson County Board of Education believes that attendance is a key factor in student achievement. The Board encourages every positive and innovative means that will contribute to students' regular attendance, recognizing that school personnel, parents, the community, and the students themselves share in the responsibility. Students are expected to be present and punctual each day that school is in session. Also, under the federal guidelines of "No Child Left Behind" attendance is considered a key accountability factor.

Perfect Attendance

Perfect attendance means a child is present every day school is in session during the school year. The child must be present for each class; therefore, a child cannot have any tardies or early dismissals to have perfect attendance. A certificate of perfect attendance will be presented at the end of the school year.

Excused Absences*

Written documentation supporting reasons for absences must be submitted to school level principals within three (3) school days. Even though a parent may phone the school, a written notice must also be sent to the school. Written documentation shall include the reason for absence, date, parent signature, and phone number. **After that time period has elapsed, the absences will become permanently unexcused.**

**The student is excused for the day or days of absences, not the material covered in his/her classes. Therefore, it is the student's responsibility, and not the teacher's, for make-up work in all subject matter covered during his/her absence.*

1. Personal Illness – A doctor's note is accepted anytime a student is sick. The school may accept a written note from a parent or guardian verifying a student's illness (without a doctor's visit) for up to a total of five (5) accumulated days during the semester. The school principal, with proper notice and documentation, is allowed to make exceptions for students with childhood diseases, chronic health problems, or special needs and circumstances.

If an illness or hospitalization is to exceed ten (10) consecutive days, the parent or guardian should apply for homebound instruction after the first five (5) days of consecutive absences.

2. Illness of immediate family (mother, father, grandparents, brother or sister) members – Parents or guardians should contact the principal before the absence when possible, to arrange a suitable time of absence as determined by the emergency circumstances. The principal may require written verification.
3. Death
 - a. In the immediate (mother, father, grandparents, brother or sister) family – Three (3) days will be excused. Additional days will be at the discretion of the principal.
 - b. Of others – The principal may approve as an excused absence with appropriate documentation.
4. Religious holidays regularly observed by persons of the student's faith because of the observance of a day set aside as sacred by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member or adherent, where such religion calls for special observances of such day. The principal may require a statement from the minister or other person recognized by the given religious group.
5. Required court appearance – A student may be excused for required court appearance that is **not related to truancy or the student's misdeeds**. Verification from authorities must be provided. Final decision determined by the principal of each school.

6. Approved school-related activities that are school sponsored and school supervised. (Prior approval is required.) Local, county or state activities that are closely aligned with school organizations may also be considered as school related.
7. Unscheduled disasters – Example: destruction of a home, flood, tornado, or other extreme weather conditions.
8. Principal Discretion – Circumstances, with appropriate documentation, which, in the judgment of the principal, constitutes a good and sufficient cause of absences from school. Maximum of five (5) days allowed per year.
9. A one (1) day excused absence is provided for students when their parent or custodian is deployed into active military service. A one (1) day excused absence is also provided for students when the parent or custodian returns from active military service. Students shall be permitted to make up school work missed during the excused absence.

Unexcused Absences

1. Students who are absent for reasons not covered in the provisions as described under “Excused Absences” are considered “Unexcused.” While daily class work may not be made up for a grade, the student may make up **tests or project assignments** upon request. The request must be made on the day of return from the absence. A grade of no higher than 84 (C) shall be used for credit purposes on an unexcused make-up test.
2. The name of each child who is absent without excuse for five (5) days during the school year must be reported to the director of schools or his/her designated representative, as required by T.C.A. 49-6-3007. This refers to a total of five (5) days, and does not necessarily mean five (5) consecutive days. The director of schools will then serve, or cause to be served, on the parent or guardian a written notice that attendance is required. If the parent or guardian does not assure attendance of the pupil within three (3) days, the director of schools shall follow legal procedure to ensure compliance with the attendance law.

3. **Out of school** suspension is an unexcused absence, **but is not a chargeable offense for truancy in Juvenile Court.**

Late Arrival / Early Dismissals

Being on time to school and class is essential for optimum teaching and learning. When a student is tardy, or leaves early he/she disrupts the process for others and loses important learning time for himself/herself. School bus transportation is provided free of charge to students of Wilson County. For this reason, tardies and early dismissals related to car problems, traffic, oversleeping, etc., are not valid reasons for tardiness. To receive an excused tardy when late to school or leaving early, the student must have either:

- A. A doctor's statement
- B. An official court notice that is not related to truancy or a student's misdeeds.
- C. A parent conference or a parent's telephone call and approval by administration.

(Personal illness would be excused **up to 5 days per semester for illness without a doctor's note**)

The name of any student who has been truant due to late arrivals and/or early dismissals may also be referred to the attendance supervisor. The school principal will pursue available means to facilitate and persuade the student's return to regular attendance. If the student's attendance does not improve significantly, both the student and parent(s) or guardian(s) may be subject to court action. Upon consultation with the principal, the attendance supervisor may file charges against the parent/guardian and/or student if tardies/early dismissals are excessive.

Positive Incentives for Good Attendance

Grades K-12

Individual schools are encouraged to provide positive incentives for regular attendance.

All high school students will take final exams for all courses.

Attendance Supervision

The attendance supervisor shall oversee the entire attendance program, which shall include:

- A. All system-wide accounting and reporting procedures;
- B. Ensuring that all school age children attend school;
- C. Observing and enforcing all county attendance policies and state attendance laws; and
- D. Notifying the Department of Safety whenever a student with a driver's permit or license is revoked due to grades and/or attendance.

Principal

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- A. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class;
- B. Daily absentee sheets contain sign in/sign out sheets and indicate students present or absent for the majority of the day;
- C. All student absences are followed up;
- D. Determination is made if an absence is excused or unexcused, based on criteria approved by the Wilson County Board of Education;
- E. System-wide procedures for individual accounting and reporting are followed;
- F. An attempt is made to contact, individually by telephone or electronically, each day the parent / guardian of each student who is absent (principal or his/her designee K-12);
- G. An attempt is made to contact parents/guardians, individually by telephone, of all K-12 students who have missed five (5) unexcused days or more prior to ten (10) unexcused days (principal or his/her designee);
- H. Each student receives a copy of the attendance policy; and

- I. Said policy is explained in a homeroom or assembly meeting.

Confidentiality

Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as student records. Authorized school officials for legitimate educational purposes only may have access to student information without the consent of the student or parent/guardian (T.C.A. 10-7-504; U.S.C.A. 20-1232g).

Eighteen-Year Old Absenteeism (Unexcused)

A student who is eighteen (18) years of age and has missed five (5) unexcused days will be referred to the principal. After meeting with the student, the principal will send a letter to the student's parent or guardian informing him/her of the consequences of nonattendance. (Said letter shall advise parents of the possible transfer to the Adult High School if student misses ten (10) or more unexcused days.)

After the student has missed ten (10) or more unexcused absences, he/she may be dropped from the roll of the school.

Change of Address

Parents are reminded to notify the school when there is a change of address, telephone number, custody, etc.

Tennessee Compulsory Attendance Laws

(Compulsory School Age is 6 Years to the 18th Birthday)

T.C.A. 49-6-3001 - School Age – (c) (1) Every parent, guardian or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between six (6) years of age and seventeen (17) years of age, both inclusive, shall cause such child or children to attend public or non-public school, and in event of failure to do so, shall be subject to the penalties hereinafter provided. *(The courts have ruled that the word "inclusive" requires a child to attend school until the day before his/her eighteenth birthday.)*

T.C.A. 49-6-3007- Attendance and truancy reports – (e) (1) It is the duty of the principal or teacher of every public, private or parochial school to report promptly to the director of school, or to the director of school's designated representative, the names of all children who have

withdrawn from school, or who have been absent five (5) days (this means an aggregate of five (5) days during the school year and not necessarily five (5) consecutive days) without adequate excuse. Each successive accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences by a student shall also be reported.

T.C.A. 49-6-3009 – Penalty for Violations – (a) Any parent, guardian or other person who has control of a child, or children, and who violates the provisions of this part commits a Class C misdemeanor.

(b) Each day's unlawful absence constitutes a separate offense.

T.C.A. 40-35-111 – Terms of Imprisonment or Fines – (3) Class C misdemeanor, not greater than thirty (30) days or a fine not to exceed fifty dollars (\$ 50.00), or both, unless otherwise provided by statute.

Driver's License Revocation

Any student fifteen (15) years of age or older who becomes academically deficient or deficient in attendance shall be reported to the Department of Safety for driver's license revocation.

A student shall be deemed academically deficient if he/she has not received passing grades in at least two (2) full unit subjects on the block schedule or their equivalency at the conclusion of any subsequent grading period.

A student shall be deemed deficient in attendance when he/she drops out of school or has more than (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) days total in unexcused absences during a single semester. Suspensions shall be considered unexcused absences.