

## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

### **General Requirements**

The New Hanover County Board of Education believes that regular and punctual attendance at school is imperative for educational success. Students are expected to be in school each day unless ill or unable to attend due to an unavoidable reason. The Board further believes that there is no substitute for the uninterrupted personal contact between teachers and students in the classroom environment where learning experiences are carefully planned and taught by teachers.

The primary responsibility for school attendance rests with students and parents. Schools, however, have the responsibility for properly recording absenteeism and tardiness, notifying parents when needed, and discouraging excessive absences in accordance with state law. G.S. 115C-307 (f)

The Board seeks the full cooperation from parents in promoting good attendance and punctuality. In particular;

1. Medical and dental appointments should be scheduled after school hours except in cases of emergency.
2. Family vacations should be taken during school vacation and recess periods.
3. Procedures when a student is absent: Parent/guardians should notify the school if the absence is expected to be more than one day.

No student will be excused from regular school work to take private lessons in music, art, dance, or any other area without prior approval of the superintendent's office.

### Objectives

The objectives of the New Hanover County Schools' attendance policy are

1. To encourage maximum class attendance.
2. To encourage students to apply seriously their time and attention toward obtaining the maximum benefits for their education.
3. To place the primary responsibility for school attendance upon students and parents.
4. To provide teachers, counselors, and administrators more time to accomplish their primary responsibilities as educators.
5. To eliminate excessive absenteeism.
6. To provide alternative consequences for excessive absences.
7. To reward good and perfect attendance.

### Lawful, Excused Absences

Pursuant to state law G.S. 115C-378 and the rules and regulations of the N. C. Department of Public Instruction, School Attendance and Student Accounting Manual, the following shall constitute a lawful excused absence, provided satisfactory evidence is given to the appropriate school official:

1. **Illness or injury:** An illness or injury which prevents the child from being physically able to attend school.
2. **Quarantine:** When isolation of the child is ordered by the local health officers or the State Board of Health.
3. **Death in the immediate family of the child:** Defined to include, but not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents, brothers, and sisters.
4. **Medical or dental appointments:** When approved by the appropriate school official in advance, except in the cases of an emergency.
5. **Court or administrative proceedings:** Attendance at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the child is party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.
6. **Religious observances:** When the tenets of a religion to which a child or his parents adhere require or suggest the observance of a religious event unless the religious observance or the cumulative effect of the religious observance is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the child.
7. **Immediate demands of the farm or home:** When it is demonstrated that the needs of the farm or home require the presence of the child to perform work and when it is demonstrated that assistance to meet this need is not otherwise available and cannot be secured.
8. **Educational opportunity:** When the absence clearly is to take advantage of a valid education opportunity, such as travel. Approval for such an absence must be granted prior to the absence by the principal.

### Unexcused Absences

Absences for reasons other than those listed above may be deemed unexcused. Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to, missing the bus, oversleeping, inclement weather, babysitting, working at a location other than the home or farm, etc. Schools shall develop specific consequences related to such absences.

### Notification of Excessive Absences For Elementary, Middle and High School

The principal and his staff shall take appropriate action to prevent excessive absences and/or provide counseling for students with a history of excessive absences. Parents must be notified of their child's excessive absences, and the teacher and/or counselor shall then work with the student and his family to analyze the causes and to determine the steps to eliminate the problem.

G.S. 115C-378 provides that “every parent, guardian, or other person in the state having charge or control of a child **between the ages of 7 and 16 years** shall cause such child to attend school continually for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session.” The law also purports that students under the age of seven who are already enrolled in public school must abide by the compulsory attendance law unless the parent withdraws the student from school. The school will notify parents of excessive absences under the following conditions:

1. After the **third** unexcused absence,
  - a. The principal or his designee shall notify the parent/guardian within a 24-hour period and shall request an immediate conference.
  - b. If unable to contact the parent/guardian, the principal shall refer the matter to a school social worker or his designee for immediate investigation.
2. After not more than **six** unlawful absences, the principal shall notify the parent/guardian of the student's excessive number of unexcused absences from school.
  - a. Notification of the parent shall be mailed and shall state that the parent of any student between the ages of 7 and 16 years of age may be prosecuted under the General Compulsory Attendance Law if these absences cannot be justified under established policies (see G.S. 115C-378).
  - b. A copy of the notice will be directed to the social worker or appropriate central office school personnel who will work with the student and family to remedy the problem (see G.S. 115C-378). If warranted, the social worker or principal may take legal action.
3. After ten accumulated unlawful absences in a school year, the principal must review any report or investigation prepared under G.S. 115C-381 and must confer with the student and his/her parent, guardian, or custodian, if possible, to determine whether the parent, guardian, or custodian has received notification and made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal determines that a parent, guardian, or custodian has not made a good faith effort to comply with the law, the principal shall notify the district attorney and the director of social services of the county where the child resides.

#### Elementary, Middle and High School Requirements

Research shows that there is a strong correlation between time on task and student achievement. Academic success demands regular school attendance. While the primary responsibility for school attendance rests with students and parents, schools have a continuing responsibility to make schools warm and inviting. The following requirements address these issues:

1. Individual School Improvement Plans shall include strategies to promote regular school attendance and provide appropriate attendance incentives.

2. Continued non-compliance shall result in the notification of the Department of Social Services, juvenile court, or the district attorney that the parent/guardian is not cooperating with the school system in addressing the attendance problem.
3. Each school will annually sponsor conferences, workshops, or other activities relating to school attendance.
4. Elementary and Middle Schools will require students arriving late or requesting early dismissal to be accompanied by a parent/guardian directly to the designated check-in check-out location in the school.

#### Additional High School Requirements

While school attendance is very important at all levels, it is of utmost concern in grades 9-12. Classroom projects, discussions, activities, and experiments require daily participation. Students absent from school will miss these experiences as well as the interactions which occur between the teacher and other students. Teachers utilize this daily classroom participation to more accurately assess the student. Even with students over the age of 16 the school will continue to encourage continuous attendance.

For all individual class absences, teacher class attendance records are official and will prevail. Students are responsible for arranging make-up work with teachers. All make-up work must be completed as soon as possible within the teachers' guidelines, but no later than the end of the grading period.

Every effort will be made by the administration and staffs of the high schools to work with the students individually and in groups in an effort to improve attendance.

In order to address individual class absences, after the third absence, the teacher shall attempt to notify the parent/guardian within a timely manner and document their efforts.

If the problem persists, or it is evident that the student is missing other classes as well, the teacher shall share their findings with the principal or his/her designee.

LEGAL REFS.: NCGS 115C-378 through 115C-383

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