

Student Absences and Excuses

One criterion of a student's success in school is regular and punctual attendance. Frequent absences may lead to poor academic work, lack of social development and possible academic failure. Regular attendance is of utmost importance for school interest, social adjustment and scholastic achievement. No single factor may interfere with a student's progress more quickly than frequent tardiness or absence.

According to state law, it is the obligation of every parent to ensure that every child under his/her care and supervision receives adequate education and training and, if of compulsory attendance age, attends school.

Continuity in the learning process and social adaptation is seriously disrupted by excessive absences. In most situations, the work missed cannot be made up adequately. Students who have good attendance generally achieve higher grades, enjoy school more and are more employable after leaving school. For at least these reasons, the Board believes that a student must satisfy two basic requirements in order to earn full class credit: (1) satisfy all academic requirements and (2) exhibit good attendance habits as stated in this policy.

Exempted absences

An absence from school as verified by the principal or principal designee, which does NOT count toward chronic absenteeism is considered an exempted absence. Exempted absences include:

- a. working at an official election
- b. court appearances and court-ordered activities
- c. service in the National Guard
- d. serving as a page for the General Assembly
- e. suspensions, either in-school or out-of-school
- f. funeral of an immediate family member

School excused absences

An absence for an activity that is sponsored by the school, in which the student is a participant, is considered school excused. School absences will be determined by the school administration.

Excused absences

The following shall be considered excused absences:

1. A student who is temporarily ill or injured or whose absence is approved by the administrator of the school of attendance on a prearranged basis. Prearranged absences shall be approved for appointments or circumstances of a *serious nature only*, which cannot be taken care of outside of school hours.
2. A student who is absent for an extended period due to a physical, mental or emotional disability.

As applicable, the district may require suitable proof regarding the above exceptions, including written statements from medical sources.

If a student is in out-of-home placement (as that term is defined by C.R.S. [22-32-138 \(1\)\(e\)](#)), absences due to court appearances and participation in court-ordered activities shall be excused. The student's assigned social worker shall verify the student's absence was for a court appearance or court-ordered activity.

Unexcused absences

An unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not covered by one of the foregoing exceptions. Each unexcused absence shall be entered on the student's record. The parents of the student receiving an unexcused absence shall be notified orally or in writing of the unexcused absence.

In accordance with law, the district may impose appropriate penalties that relate directly to classes missed while unexcused. Penalties may include a warning, school detention or in-school suspension. Academic penalties, out-of-school suspensions, or expulsion shall not be imposed for any unexcused absence.

The administration shall develop procedures to implement appropriate penalties. The school administration shall consider the correlation between course failure, truancy and a student dropping out of school in developing these procedures and shall implement research-based strategies to re-engage students with a high number of unexcused absences.

Students and parents may petition the Board of Education for exceptions to this policy provided that no exception shall be sustained if the student fails to abide by all requirements imposed by the Board as conditions for granting any such exception.

The minimum number of unexcused absences a student may incur before judicial proceedings are initiated to enforce compulsory attendance is 9 days during any one semester or 18 days during any one calendar year and/or school year.

NOTE: The following section on "chronic absenteeism" is optional. C.R.S. 22-33-104 (4)(b.5) (boards are "encouraged" to establish procedures for identifying students who are chronically absent). If the school district initiates a court proceeding to compel a student's compliance with the state's compulsory attendance law, the district must submit evidence to the court regarding the district's efforts, strategies, etc. to encourage the student to attend school, including "evidence regarding whether the student was identified as 'chronically absent' and if so, the strategies used to address the student's chronic absences." C.R.S. 22-33-108 (5)(d)(II). Thus, it may prove helpful to the district in a truancy court proceeding to have a policy or procedure regarding chronic absenteeism. We recommend the board consult with district administrators to determine how to approach this issue.

Chronic absenteeism

When a student has an excessive number of absences, these absences negatively impact the student's academic success. For this reason, a student who has 9 days during any one semester or 18 days during any one calendar year or school year, whether the absences are excused or unexcused, may be identified as "chronically absent" by the principal or designee. Absences due to suspension or expulsion, shall not be counted in the total number of absences considered for purposes of identifying a student as "chronically absent."

NOTE: Research indicates that an absenteeism rate of 10 percent results in an increased likelihood that the student will struggle academically and potentially drop out of school. Accordingly, the board may choose to set the "chronic absenteeism" rate at 10 percent, or 18 days total (i.e. 10 percent of 168 days, per C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1)(n)(l)).

If a student is identified as "chronically absent," the principal or designee shall develop a plan to improve the student's attendance. The plan shall include best practices and research-based strategies to address the reasons for the student's chronic absenteeism, including but not limited to:

The principal or designee will notify all students and/or their parents who were determined to be "chronically absent" the prior year, (more than 18 absences for the year) and meet with the student and/or parents to put a plan in place for the school year. They will also notify all teachers/stakeholders who have these students in a class of the plan and ask for assistance in building a relationship to keep them in class.

If a student has four (4) non-exempt absences in a semester in a given class period, the school will communicate with a parent/guardian if there is no formal documentation supporting those absences. This communication will notify parents and student of the potential consequences for future absences and will be documented by the school.

If a student is absent six (6) days within a semester, a parent/guardian and the student may be required to develop an attendance improvement plan with the school administration. Documentation of this plan is required. The goal of this plan will be increased student attendance and improved communication between home and school. Formal documentation may be required for excused absence for the remainder of the semester. Written statements from medical sources and pre-approved absences are examples of suitable proof for excused absences.

Every absence in the same class period counts toward the nine (9) allowable absences per semester or the accumulated class periods equivalent to 9 days per semester, excluding exempted absences and school excused absences.

Consequences for more than 9 absences per semester are as follows:

- 1) The Attendance Review Site Council, composed of an administrator, counselor, and at least one teacher, may meet with the student and their parent/guardian based on attendance limits being reached throughout the school year. The Attendance Review Site Council will make a determination on whether excused absences will count towards the 9 allowable absences.
- 2) The Attendance Review Site Council may revoke credit for the semester regardless of status in the class.
- 3) A student may be removed to ISS for the remainder of the semester to complete the existing course or an alternative course.
- 4) A student may be required to make up time outside of school hours.

If the parents are not satisfied with the Attendance Review Site Council's decision, they may appeal in writing to the Superintendent within five school days of the notification of the consequence.

An absence will be defined as missing more than fifteen (15) minutes of class without a pass authorizing the absence. At the elementary schools or schools taking attendance in the AM and PM only, students will be considered absent if they miss more than 45 minutes.

When practicable, the student's parent shall participate in the development of the plan.

Nothing herein shall require the principal or designee to identify a student as "chronically absent" prior to declaring the student as a "habitual truant" and pursuing court proceedings against the student and his or her parents to compel the student's attendance in accordance with state law.

Make-up work

Make-up work shall be provided for any class in which a student has an excused absence unless otherwise determined by the building administrator or unless the absence is due to the student's expulsion from school. It is the responsibility of the student to pick up any make-up assignments permitted on the day returning to class. There shall be 2 days allowed for make-up work for each day of absence. In cases where an assignment is given with a due date of 4 days or more in advance, and the student has been properly communicated to about the date due, it is the responsibility of the student to get the assignment in on time. If the assignment is not turned in on time, the class policy for late work may be enforced. If there is a test or quiz scheduled four days in advance and the student is absent on the day of the test, they will be responsible to complete the test or quiz upon returning to class.

Make-up work shall be allowed following an unexcused absence or following a student's suspension from school with the goal of providing the student an opportunity to keep up with the class and an incentive to attend school. This work **may** receive full or partial credit to the extent possible as determined by the building administrator.

Unless otherwise permitted by the building administrator, make-up work shall not be provided during a student's expulsion. Rather, the district shall offer alternative education services to the expelled student in accordance with state law. The district shall determine the amount of credit the expelled student will receive for work completed during any alternative education program.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as the appearance of a student without proper excuse after the scheduled time that a class begins. Because of the disruptive nature of tardiness and the detrimental effect upon the rights of the non-tardy student to uninterrupted learning, appropriate penalties may be imposed for excessive tardiness. Four tardies will be equated to one absence. Parents shall be notified of all penalties regarding tardiness.

In an unavoidable situation, a student detained by another teacher or administrator shall not be considered tardy provided that the teacher or administrator gives the student a pass to enter the next class. Teachers shall honor passes presented in accordance with this policy. The provisions of this policy shall be applicable to all students in the district, including those above and below the age for compulsory attendance as required by law.

Field Trips

Field trips are considered an essential part of a student's educational experience. However, a student's attendance, behavior, and classroom performance may affect a student's ability to participate in a field trip. Proper student conduct is expected and all DCSD school rules apply. Parental permission slips must be signed and returned to the appropriate staff member. Participation in a field trip is voluntary, but an alternative assignment may be given.

Adoption date: July 18, 2019

LEGAL REFS.: C.R.S. 22-14-101 *et seq.* (dropout prevention and student re-engagement)
 C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1)(n) (length of school year, instruction & contact time)
 C.R.S. 22-32-109.1 (2)(a) (conduct and discipline code)
 C.R.S. 22-32-138 (6) (excused absence requirements for students in out-of-home placements)
 C.R.S. 22-33-101 *et seq.* (School Attendance Law of 1963)
 C.R.S. 22-33-105 (3)(d)(III) (opportunity to make up work during suspension)
 C.R.S. 22-33-108 (judicial proceedings to enforce school attendance laws)

C.R.S. 22-33-203 (*educational alternatives for expelled students and determination of credit*)
1 CCR 301-78 Rules 1.00 *et seq.* (*standardized calculation for counting student attendance and truancy*)

CROSS REFS.: IC/ICA, School Year/School Calendar/Instruction Time

IEA, Compulsory Attendance Ages

IFABE*, Students in Foster Care

IFC, Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts

IHB, Truancy

IK, Student Discipline

IKD/IKE, Suspension/Expulsion of Students (and Other Disciplinary Interventions)

LIB, Student Dismissal Precautions