

**BUNCOMBE COUNTY SCHOOLS
HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY
GRADES 9–12**

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:

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:

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. To obtain credit in a given class, a student must be in attendance for a minimum of 85 days. A student must be in class for at least two-thirds of the class period to be counted present.

III. 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.
- E. Post secondary visits as approved by the principal.

IV. 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.

- V. 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.

The teacher shall notify the principal or designee and the parent when absences from an individual class reach more than five (5). The principal or designee shall in turn initiate interventions, based upon the school-developed attendance plan, to help improve the attendance of the student. Interventions will be expectations-based and involve parents. Teachers shall notify the principal or designee when absences reach ten in any course. At this point, the school plan for dealing with accumulated absences will be initiated for each student.

Absences of five or more must be made up by attending tutoring sessions (90 minute class-1 hour make up session). Attendance may be made up for course credit; however, the official attendance on transcripts will reflect actual student absences.

- A. Make-up tutoring session may be made up directly with each teacher immediately following the absence or,
- B. Students may attend school-wide tutoring sessions,
- C. Participate in after-school course recovery sessions, summer school sessions, or,
- D. Other make-up requirements as identified by the attendance teams.

All schools must offer at least three (3) school-wide make-up tutoring sessions each semester during which students complete make-up assignments from his/her teachers. Make-up work must be completed to get credit for the absence. Students missing more than five days and passing the course, a grade of U will be assigned until all absences exceeding five have been made up. The student's earned grade will be recorded in the teacher comments section of the report card. The U will convert to 65 (F) if absences over five are not made up by June 30 of the current school year.

- VI. 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.

VII. Summer school to gain attendance credit will be held as deemed necessary. Students attending must pay \$50 per course for the first two courses and \$25 per course for each additional course. This fee will be used to employ necessary personnel and to furnish materials for students.

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 and a determination of whether the waiver is granted shall be made within 10 days.

During summer school, tutoring, course recovery, or other make-up sessions as determined by the attendance teams, absences, tardiness, or disruptive behavior will result in dismissal from the program and no credit will be given.

VIII. Any student who attends less than 75 days in a course will not receive credit for the course; however, the student may appeal to the principal to be allowed to obtain credit for the course by attending the summer sessions. Such appeal must be supported by medical or other compelling reasons.

IX. Principals shall have the discretion to offer Saturday make-up classes in four hour increments of classroom instruction or work. A fee not to exceed \$15 per Saturday session will be charged. Saturday sessions shall be self-supporting.

X. Occasionally unique or unusual situations arise which are not specifically addressed by this policy. The superintendent, upon written recommendation from the school principal, may authorize alternatives to the policy in order to achieve fairness to the student without weakening the effect of the policy.

XI. Pursuant to this policy, students failing to meet attendance requirements in any required course for promotion or graduation shall neither be promoted nor allowed to participate in graduation ceremonies.

XII. 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.