

**BUNCOMBE COUNTY SCHOOLS
MIDDLE 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:

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. 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 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. 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.

- V. To obtain credit in a given class, a student must be in attendance for a minimum of 166 days. A student must be in class for at least one-half of the class period to be counted present.
 - A. For any courses resulting in high school credit, students must follow high school attendance policy.
- 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. An Attendance Summer School program will operate in three five- day sessions. The daily schedule will run from 8:30 a.m. –11:30 a.m. each day, and the cost will be \$50.00 per session—paid in advance. No transportation will be provided.

If a student attends less than 166 days, the following will apply:

- 160-165 days in attendance = 1 five-day session
- 155-159 days in attendance = 2 five-day sessions
- 150-154 days in attendance = 3 five-day sessions

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 Superintendent'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 and no credit will be given.

- X. Principals shall have the discretion to offer Saturday make-up classes of at least 5.5 hours of classroom instruction or work. A fee not to exceed \$10 per Saturday session will be charged. Saturday sessions shall be self-supporting. An excused absence may be made up by satisfactorily attendance at a make-up class.
- XI. 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.
- XII. Pursuant to this policy, students failing to meet attendance requirements in any required course for promotion shall neither be promoted nor allowed to participate in promotion exercises.
- XIII. 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.