

4.7—ABSENCES

If any student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan conflicts with this policy, the requirements of the student's IEP or 504 Plan take precedence.

Education is more than the grades students receive in their courses. Important as that is, students' regular attendance at school, whether in person or digitally, is essential to their social and cultural development and helps prepare them to accept responsibilities they will face as an adult. Interactions with other students and participation in the instruction within the classroom enrich the learning environment and promote a continuity of instruction which results in higher student achievement.

Excused Absences

Excused absences are those where the student was on official school business or when the absence was due to one of the following reasons.

1. The student's illness or when attendance could jeopardize the health of other students. A maximum of six (6) such days are allowed per semester unless the condition(s) causing such absences is of a chronic or recurring nature, is medically documented, and approved by the principal.
2. Death or serious illness in their immediate family;
3. Observance of recognized holidays observed by the student's faith;
4. Attendance at an appointment with a government agency;
5. Attendance at a medical appointment;
6. Exceptional circumstances with prior approval of the principal;
7. Participation in an FFA, FHA, or 4-H sanctioned activity;
8. Participation in the election poll workers program for high school students.
9. Absences granted to allow a student to visit his/her parent or legal guardian who is a member of the military and been called to active duty, is on leave from active duty, or has returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. The number of additional excused absences shall be at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
10. Absences granted, at the Superintendent's discretion, to seventeen (17) year-old students who join the Arkansas National Guard while in eleventh grade to complete basic combat training between grades eleven (11) and (12).
11. Absences for students excluded from school by the Arkansas Department of Health during a disease outbreak because the student has an immunization waiver or whose immunizations are not up to date.
12. Absences due to conditions related to pregnancy or parenting, including without limitation:
 - Labor, delivery, and recovery;
 - Prenatal and postnatal medical appointments and other medically necessary, pregnancy-related absences;
 - The illness or medical appointment of a child belonging to a parent who is enrolled at a District school;

- A legal appointment related to pregnancy or parenting, including without limitation:
 - Adoption;
 - Custody; and
 - Visitation;
 - A reasonable amount of time to accommodate a lactating student's need to express breast milk or to breastfeed the student's child on the District's campus; and
 - At least ten (10) school days of absences for both a parenting mother and a parenting father after the birth of a child.
13. Absences for a student who is the child of a fallen service member or fallen first responder:
- Due to a mental health concern; or
 - To attend an event from a sponsoring organization that provides support to families of fallen service members or first responders or provides support for traumatic loss, grief, or resiliency.
14. Upon the written consent of a student's parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco parentis to the student, the District shall grant an excused absence for the following purposes:
- Social or public policy advocacy; or
 - Attempts to influence legislation or other governmental policy-making at the local, state, or federal level.

Students who serve as pages for a member of the General Assembly shall be considered on instructional assignment and shall not be considered absent from school for the day the student is serving as a page.

Up to one (1) time during each scheduled election, a student shall not be considered absent from school for the time the student accompanies the student's parent when the parent is exercising the parent's right to vote in a scheduled election.

In order for the absence to be considered excused, the student must:

- a. Submit a written statement to the principal or designee from the student's parent, legal guardian, or treating physician stating the reason for the student's absence. A written statement presented or uploaded for an absence having occurred more than five (5) school days prior to its presentation or upload will not be accepted. Additional excused absences may be approved by the building principal.
- b. If the student is attending the District's courses digitally, -provide a written statement from the student's parent, legal guardian, or treating physician stating the reason for the student's absence for review by the principal or designee; or
- c. Provide documentation as proof of a student's participation in an activity or program scheduled and approved by the 4-H program that is provided by a 4-H county extension agent, 4-H educator, or other appropriate entity associated with the 4-H activity or program; or

d. The student's parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco parentis to the student provides written documentation that the students' absence is to attend an event from a sponsoring organization that:

- Provides support to families of fallen service members or first responders or provides support for traumatic loss, grief, or resiliency; and
 - May be verified as an organization that provides support to the military and first responder community by reviewing the Resources Page for Military Family Engagement on the Department of Education website.

A student shall not be eligible to receive an excused absence for #13 above if:

- The student is not in good academic standing;
- The student does not have a prior record of good attendance; or
- The absence occurs during a date on which standardized testing is administered.

The District shall annually provide a report by June 30 to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education that contains the following:

- The number of absences requested under number 14;
- The number of absences granted under number 14; and
- The state purposes of the absence.

The final decision to excuse an absence rests with an administrator.

Unexcused Absences

Absences that are not defined above; do not have an accompanying note from the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, person standing in loco parentis, the student's treating physician, or a 4-H county extension agent, 4-H educator, or other appropriate entity associated with the 4-H activity or program; or have an accompanying note that is not presented or uploaded within the timeline required by this policy shall be considered as unexcused absences. Excessive absences shall not be a reason for expulsion or dismissal of a student.

When a student has (4) unexcused absences, his/her parents, legal guardians, persons with lawful control of the student, or persons standing in loco parentis shall be notified. Notification shall be by telephone, or by regular mail. At this time, the school will notify the parent or persons standing in loco parentis of the consequences of continued poor attendance by the student. The school may request a parent conference.

When a student has (8) unexcused absences, his/her parents, legal guardians, person with lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco parentis shall be notified. Notification

shall be by telephone or by regular mail. The consequences for continued poor student attendance will be explained. The school will request a parent conference.

Whenever a student exceeds (11) unexcused absences or has violated the conditions of an agreement granting special arrangements, in a semester, the student shall be denied credit for that course. Additionally, the District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or persons standing in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law. Students who lose credit because of excessive unexcused absences are expected to remain in school and attend courses. At the discretion of the principal, after consultation with persons having knowledge of the circumstances of the unexcused absences, the student may be denied promotion or graduation.

It is the Arkansas General Assembly's intention that students having excessive absences be given assistance in obtaining credit for their courses. Therefore, at any time prior to when a student exceeds the number of unexcused absences permitted by this policy, the student, or his/her parent, legal guardian, person with lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco parentis may petition the school or district's administration for special arrangements to address the student's unexcused absences. If formal arrangements are granted, they shall be formalized into a written agreement which will include the conditions of the agreement and the consequences for failing to fulfill the agreement's requirements. The agreement shall be signed by the student; the student's parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco parentis; and the school or district administrator or designee.

Students who attend in-school suspension shall not be counted absent for those days.

Days missed due to out-of-school suspension or expulsion shall be unexcused absences.

The District shall notify the Department of Finance and Administration whenever a student fourteen (14) years of age or older is no longer in school. The Department of Finance and Administration is required to suspend the former student's operator's license unless the former student meets certain requirements specified in the statute.

Attendance Policy

Tardy

Students who are absent for more than 15 minutes of a class period, due to tardiness, truancy, and/or early dismissal will be counted as an unexcused absence for that period, unless the missed time is caused by a school activity.

School Business

Absences due to school business include approved field trips, assemblies, contests, school competitions, or those deemed school business by the principal. Such absences are not counted as absences when considering the 4, 8, and 11 day limits each semester; however, students may be expected to make up any missed course work.

Truancy

A truancy is defined as any absence which occurs without the prior knowledge of the parent/guardian. Such absences are counted as unexcused absences and students may face disciplinary penalties, as well.

Denial of Credit

Students who accumulate more than (11) unexcused absences during one semester in any course will be denied credit for the course. A letter will be sent to parents when a student has been denied credit. Students will be allowed to appeal through an appeal process. The attendance committee will determine and evaluate whether credit will be accepted.

Virtual Course Attendance

Absences for students enrolled in digital courses shall be determined in the same manner as for District students attending courses in person.

Attendance in virtual learning courses shall be determined by the online attendance and time the student is working on the coursework as monitored by the teacher of record to ensure the student progress toward standard mastery and credit attainment for the course.

Cross References: 4.8—MAKE-UP WORK
 4.57—IMMUNIZATIONS
 5.11—DIGITAL LEARNING COURSES
 5.29—WELLNESS POLICY

Legal References:

A.C.A. § 6-4-302

A.C.A. § 6-18-209

A.C.A. § 6-18-213

A.C.A. § 6-18-220

A.C.A. § 6-18-222

A.C.A. § 6-18-229

A.C.A. § 6-18-231
A.C.A. § 6-18-234
A.C.A. § 6-18-236
A.C.A. § 6-18-237
A.C.A. § 6-18-239
A.C.A. § 6-18-507(g)
A.C.A. § 6-18-702
A.C.A. § 6-28-114
A.C.A. § 7-4-116
A.C.A. § 9-28-113(f)
A.C.A. § 27-16-701

Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rules Governing
Distance and Digital Learning

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