

Student Absences and Excuses

The Board of Education believes that attendance is a key factor in student achievement. Thus, any absence from school represents an educational loss to the student. The Board recognizes, however, that some absences are unavoidable. Therefore, this policy is designed to minimize student absenteeism while providing students the opportunity to make up school work missed due to absences that can reasonably be considered unavoidable.

The Board of Education further believes that student attendance is positively influenced by school and classroom climate and by a high quality of instruction that is supportive and conducive to learning. The parents and guardians of the Eagle County School District must be supportive of the educational program and must work in cooperation with school officials if maximum attendance is to be expected.

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

Each year the Board establishes the school attendance period by adopting a school calendar. Secondary students are required to be in attendance 1,056 hours and elementary students 968 hours during each school year.

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.

The Board of Education encourages school administrators to schedule activities in a manner that is the least disruptive to the day-to-day academic program.

BELIEF STATEMENTS REGARDING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE:

We believe that...

- ... *students must be in regular attendance before the school can be held accountable for student achievement.*
- ... *research has clearly correlated attendance and time on task with student achievement.*
- ... *poor student attendance has a negative effect on the peer relationships and self-concept of the student.*
- ... *when parents/guardians and students strive for excellence in school attendance, they are demonstrating their value for education.*
- ... *attendance policies reflect community values.*

- ... *in an effective classroom, poor attendance should have a naturally negative effect on the grade received by the student.*
- ... *it helps a child to learn to be responsible when the school and the parents/ guardians insist on a regular school attendance.*
- ... *there is a negative effect on the entire class when one or more students are tardy.*
- ... *the District and each school within the District should make efforts to be consistent regarding the treatment of tardies and absences.*
- ... *although educational experiences may happen outside of school, parents/ guardians should make regular school attendance for their child(ren) a high priority.*
- ... *students should be obligated to make up any work missed due to absences.*
- ... *all parties involved should be aware of the rules of attendance prior to the beginning of the school year.*
- ... *the teacher's first obligation is to instruct those students who are keeping regular attendance.*
- ... *students who are high achievers are also negatively affected by poor attendance, as they are not able to acquire or achieve the level of excellence that would otherwise be possible.*

REGULATIONS:

1. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to notify the school office either by telephone or in writing when their child will be absent from school. Although it is the first responsibility of the parents/guardians to communicate with the school office when a child is going to be absent, the school will attempt to contact parents/guardians if the child is absent from school and the office has not been notified of the child's absence prior to 9:30 A.M. Students may be required to present a written excuse from a parent/guardian on their return to school and will be required to present a written excuse if a telephone or personal contact with the parents/guardians has not been made.
2. Students who are absent from school due to participation in a school-sponsored activity will not be counted as absent.
3. The following shall be considered excused absences: absences caused by illness, injury, death in the family, or acts of God. Medical appointments are also classified as excused absences and may require verification by a physician's statement, an appointment card, or a note from the parents/guardians. The school principal may require a statement of verification from a doctor if a child has missed more than three cumulative days of school in any one school year due to illness. Other excused absences include:
 - a. 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 with five school days notice* which cannot be taken care of outside of school hours. A medical emergency would be an exception to the requirement of the five day notice.

- b. A student who is absent for an extended period due to physical, mental or emotional disability.
- c. A student who is pursuing a work-study program under the supervision of the school.
- d. A student who is attending any school-sponsored activity or activities of an educational nature with advance approval by the administration.

In addition to the aforementioned excused absences with five days prior notice parents/guardians may request that their child be excused from school attendance for parent/guardian-directed activities. The following procedures must be implemented for a parent/guardian-directed absence to be counted as an excused absence:

- a. To allow for proper planning, the parent/guardian must make a written request a minimum of five school days in advance of the absence to include the reason for absence. Upon receipt of the request the principal may schedule a conference with the parent/guardian to discuss the request. At the discretion of the principal, emergencies may be excluded from this five-day advance request clause. The principal will determine whether the requested absence is an emergency to be considered an excused or unexcused absence, after discussing the parent/guardian request.
 - b. The principal will discuss the parents'/guardians' request with the student's teacher(s). The principal will then inform the parents/ guardians as to whether or not the school recommends that the child be absent from school as per the request. In making this decision, the principal and the teacher(s) will consider: (1) the present level of performance of the student, (2) the prior attendance record of the student, (3) whether or not they think that missing school will significantly impact the student's chances for success in his/her class(es).
 - c. The parents/guardians will make the final decision as to whether or not to remove the child from school, but the principal will determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused.
 - d. Make-up work must be completed in the timeframe outlined in Regulation #5.
4. Unexcused absences are defined as: i) those absences that are not approved by the principal, ii) those absences resulting from suspensions or expulsions, or iii) those absences that do not otherwise meet the definition of an excused absence. Students who have unexcused absences for reasons other than suspension or expulsion will be allowed to make up their work, and may receive academic credit for that work. Students who have unexcused absences due to suspension will be provided an opportunity to receive up to 50% academic credit for the makeup work performed. The intent of this provision is to provide an opportunity for the student to reintegrate into the educational program of the District following the period of suspension.

The provisions of this paragraph are not applicable to students who are expelled from the District.

Each unexcused absence shall be entered on the student's record. The parents/guardians of the student receiving an unexcused absence shall be notified in writing by the school of the unexcused absence.

In accordance with law, the District may impose academic penalties which relate directly to classes missed while unexcused.

If a student's academic welfare is at risk, judicial proceedings can be initiated to enforce compulsory attendance after four unexcused absences per month or ten unexcused absences per school year (excluding days suspended).

5. Any student who has been absent from class for six consecutive weeks or more in any one school year, except for reasons of expulsion, excused long term illness or death, is considered a "dropout" and shall be reported to the Department of Education by the school district. However, if the student is in attendance at the end of the school year, or enrolled in another school, home study course or on-line program, such student is not considered a drop-out and shall not be reported.
6. According to law, absences for suspension or expulsion shall be considered as unexcused. Make-up work shall be provided for any class in which a student has an excused absence or has an unexcused absence resulting from suspension unless determined otherwise by the building administrator. It is the responsibility of the student to pick up any make-up assignments permitted on the day he returns to class. There shall be one day allowed for make-up for each day of absence. The maximum number of days students will have to complete make-up work will be ten days (e.g. students who have been absent for three days will have three school days during which to make up the work missed; students who have been absent for fifteen days will have ten school days during which to make up the work missed).

Although the school staff is obligated to facilitate the make-up process, the prime responsibility for assuring that make-up work happens in a timely and quality manner rests with the student/parent/guardian. Make-up work may be provided upon the student's return. During the time of suspension make-up work shall be provided which shall receive up to 50% academic credit. It should also be understood that there are things that happen in a classroom that are experiential and cannot be made up. Students and parents/guardians must accept the natural consequences of missing classes.

7. When an excused absence is due to a student's participation in an activity of an organized and recognized group, the student will receive credit for make-up work if that work is made up to the satisfaction of the teacher. The Superintendent (*or his/her designee*) will be responsible for identifying those groups that the District will recognize. The Board of Education will be notified when organizations/groups are given this approval by the Superintendent (*or his/her designee*).

8. When, in the opinion of a principal (*or his/her designee*), the absences of a student are causing significant academic concerns, the principal (*or his/her designee*) will notify the parents/guardians of this concern. A meeting will be scheduled with the District Attendance Officer and school representatives. The student will present evidence of work and reasons why credit should be granted for the term.
9. Tardiness is defined as the occasion when students are not in their assigned classroom when a class bell rings but when the student arrives in the class during the first half of the class. If the student arrives after the first half of a class period, the student will be counted absent.

Because of the disruptive nature of tardiness and the detrimental effect upon the rights of the nontardy student to uninterrupted learning, penalties shall be imposed for excessive tardiness. Parents/guardians shall be notified of all penalties regarding tardiness.

It will be expected that the teacher will record and handle tardies on a routine basis. If, however, a student is tardy in any one class more than three times per semester, the teacher will notify the building principal or the assistant principal. When a student has been referred to the principal's office by a teacher because of tardiness concerns, the parents/guardians may be notified and a conference may be requested.

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 his next class. Teachers shall honor passes presented in accordance with this policy.

10. When students are absent from school for more than one-half of the day, they will not be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities for that day. Exceptions to this will be an appointment that cannot be scheduled at another time or an excused absence other than illness as approved by the Activities Director or Principal
11. Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to schedule family vacations outside of the school year, when possible, and are also strongly encouraged to not withdraw their child(ren) from school prior to the end of the school year.

At the elementary school, any student who has fifteen or more unexcused or pre-excused absences in a year, will be considered for retention. At the middle and high school level, any student who has eight or more absences in a trimester or twenty or more absences in a year, will be withdrawn from the class(es) with a withdrawn failing (WF) grade. Exceptions to this policy are absences due to participation in school sponsored activities or athletics; extended absence beyond three days due to a death in the immediate family, (i.e. parent, brother/sister, grandparent, aunt/uncle); absence due to an act of God; absence due to a verified physical, mental or emotional disability beyond three days requiring hospitalization or homebound instruction and any absence due to religious

reasons. Pre-excused absences that have been authorized by the principal due to extenuating circumstances will be considered for exception to this policy if the student has exceeded the 8-day limit. Any parent/guardian who would choose to appeal a building level decision may appeal to the principal/attendance officer within a five-day period. The decision of the principal/attendance officer is final.

In regard to vacation or other extended absence, if the parent requests that a student be absent from school for three consecutive weeks or more, they will be required to officially withdraw their student from school. Every student will be reenrolled upon returning to the District. High school students will only reenroll on an audit basis for the remainder of the trimester.

12. In the application of this policy, the student will be afforded all due process rights as defined in the District's discipline policy.
13. It is the responsibility of the principal to communicate the contents and intent of this policy to students. Further, all middle school and high school students will receive a written copy or summary of this policy.
14. 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.

NOTE: This law requires the local board of education to designate an attendance officer for the District to enforce the provisions of the compulsory attendance law, counsel students and parents, investigate the causes of non-attendance and report his findings to the Board. The attendance officer for the Eagle County School District will be the Director of Secondary Education.

LEGAL REF.: C.R.S. 22-2-114.1 (3)(a) (*definition of "dropout" student*)
C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(n) (*length of school year, instruction and contact time*)
C.R.S. 22-32-109-1 (2)(a) (*conduct and discipline code*)
C.R.S. 22-33-101 et seq. (*School Attendance Law of 1963*)

CROSS REF.: IC/ICA - School Year/School Calendar
IKE – Promotion, Retention and Acceleration of Students
JEA - Compulsory Attendance Ages
JI/JIA - Student Rights and Responsibilities
JK - Student Discipline
JKD/JKE - Student Suspension/Expulsion
JJIB/JJIC - Interscholastic Sports/Standards for Participation
JLIB - Student Dismissal Precautions