

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

The Evangeline Parish School Board recognizes that the fundamental right to attend the public schools places upon students the accompanying responsibility to be faithful in attendance. Regular attendance can be assumed to be essential for a student's successful progress in the instructional program.

The principal of a school, or his/her designee, shall notify the parent or legal guardian in writing on or before a student's *third* unexcused absence or unexcused occurrence of being tardy, and shall hold a conference with such student's parent or legal guardian. This notification shall include information relative to the parent or legal guardian's legal responsibility to enforce the student's attendance at school and the civil penalties that may be incurred if the student is determined to be habitually absent or habitually tardy. The student's parent or legal guardian shall sign a receipt for such notification.

Each school shall attempt to provide verbal notification to a child's parent, tutor, or legal guardian, and, if such verbal notification cannot be provided, then the school shall provide written notification to a child's parent, tutor, or legal guardian when that child has been absent from school for five (5) school days in schools operating on a semester basis, and for ten (10) days in schools not operating on a semester basis. The accumulation of days absent need not be consecutive.

No public elementary or secondary school pupil shall be permitted for any reason to absent himself/herself from school attendance during the school day upon his/her own authority. The principal or designee shall make all reasonable efforts to verbally notify the parent or other person responsible for the pupil's school attendance of any such prohibited absence by a pupil.

For attendance reporting purposes, the days absent for elementary and secondary school students shall include *excused absences*, *unexcused absences*, and *suspensions*. Students shall not be excused for any absences other than those specified under *Excused Absences* below, and shall be given failing grades in those subjects for those days missed, and shall not be given an opportunity to make up work, except as is provided under *Suspensions*.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused absences are absences of two (2) or fewer consecutive school days incurred due to personal illness or serious illness in the family. In addition, excused absences are those stipulated in state law that are considered exemptions from compulsory attendance, as noted below.

Students may be excused from attendance regulations for certain extenuating circumstances that shall be verified by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance.

Please refer to Bulletin 741, *Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators*, for the list of extenuating circumstances.

The only other exceptions to the attendance regulations shall be other absences as verified by the principal or his/her designee as stated below:

1. Prior school system-approved travel for education
2. Death in the family (not to exceed one week)
3. Natural catastrophe and/or disaster

For any other extenuating circumstances, the student's parents or legal guardian must make a formal appeal in accordance with the due process procedures established by the school system.

Students who are eligible to receive grades shall not receive those grades if they are unable to complete makeup work or pass the course.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

An *unexcused absence* shall be defined as any absence not meeting the requirements set forth in the excused absence and extenuating circumstances definitions, including but not limited to, out of school suspensions and absences due to any job (including agriculture and domestic services, even in their own homes or for their own parents or tutors) unless it is part of an approved instructional program.

An unexcused absence is also an absence for which no written excuse verifying the absence was submitted to the school, or the written excuse was not submitted within the allotted time frame for submission.

SUSPENSIONS

Students absent from school as a result of any suspension shall be assigned school work missed while he/she is suspended and shall receive either partial or full credit for such work if it is completed satisfactorily and timely in accordance with Board policy.

WRITTEN EXCUSES

For a student to be eligible to receive credit and make up work following an absence, the student shall be required in each instance to submit parental confirmation of the reasons for the absence. If a student is tardy or absent, the parent or guardian must submit a written excuse, signed and dated, to school authorities upon the student's return to classes, stating the reason for the student's absence from school. A doctor's, dentist's, or nurse practitioner's written statement of student's incapacity to attend school shall be required for those absences for three (3) or more consecutive days due to illness, contagious illness in a family, hospitalization, or accidents. All excuses for a

student's absence, including medical verification of extended personal illness, must be presented within three (3) school days of the student's return to school, or the student's absence shall be considered unexcused and the student not allowed to make up work missed. Only five (5) parent/legal guardian notes may be accepted per student per school year.

REPORTING ABSENCES

The attendance of all school pupils shall be checked each school day and at the beginning of each class period and shall be verified by the teacher keeping such record, which shall be open to inspection by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance or duly authorized representative at all reasonable times. All schools shall immediately report to the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance any unexplained, unexcused, or illegal absence, or habitual tardiness.

The Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance shall, after written notice to the parent or legal guardian of a child, or a personal visit of notification, report any such child who is habitually absent or who is habitually tardy to the family or juvenile court of the parish as a truant child, there to be dealt with in such manner as the court may determine.

APPEAL OF ABSENCES

When a student exceeds the maximum number of absences allowed, including excused and unexcused absences, the parents or student may make a formal appeal to the principal if they feel any of the absences are because of extenuating circumstances. If they feel that the decision is unfavorable, they shall appeal to the Superintendent or his/her designee. After a review by the Superintendent or his/her designee, a decision shall be made and communicated to the parents or legal guardian by letter.

High school students in danger of failing due to excessive absences may be allowed to make up missed time in class sessions held outside the regular class time, if provided for by the District. The make-up sessions must be completed before the end of the current semester and all other applicable policies must also be met.

TARDINESS

A student shall be considered tardy to class if the student is not in the classroom when the bell to begin class ceases. A student shall be considered tardy to school if the student is not in his/her homeroom/first period class when the bell to begin homeroom/class ceases. Tardy shall also mean leaving or checking out of school unexcused prior to the regularly scheduled dismissal. Habitual tardiness on the part of students shall not be tolerated.

Students who exhibit habitual tardiness shall be subject to disciplinary action, appropriate under the circumstances. Parents of students who continue to be tardy

shall be notified for a conference with the principal, and the student may be subject to suspension from school and the parent/legal guardian subject to court fines or community service.

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Ref: La. Rev. Stat. Ann. §§17:221, 17:226, 17:230, 17:232, 17:233; Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators, Bulletin 741, Louisiana Department of Education; Board minutes, 3-16-85, 5-20-92, 7-5-00, 5-7-08, 7-21-10.