

Students	Section J:		
	Knox County Board of Education Policy		
	Descriptor Term:	Descriptor Code:	Issued:
	Attendance	J-120	7/95
	Rescinds:	Revised:	
		9/15	

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42

The Board recognizes that good attendance at school is basic to student learning. Attendance is a key factor in student achievement; therefore, students are expected to be present each day that school is in session. Parents have both a legal obligation and a moral responsibility to see that children are present every day that school is in session.

The Director of Schools shall establish and maintain an attendance program designed to ensure all school-age children attend school and that alternative program options are available for students who do not meet minimum attendance requirements. This program shall be designed so that it addresses and adheres to all statutory and regulatory requirements established by the State of Tennessee. School administrators and faculties are expected to develop programs and practices to achieve or exceed student attendance goals established by the State Board of Education. For these reasons, the Knox County Board of Education has adopted the following policy on student absences.

Acceptable (excusable) absences:

1. Personal illness, injury and hospitalization.
2. Illness in the family temporarily requiring help from the child.
3. Death in the immediate family.
4. Recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of the student's faith.¹
5. Verifiable family emergency.
6. Court appearances for summons, subpoena or court order.
7. For students with a parent or guardian who is deployed as member of the United States Armed Forces the following excusable absences shall apply provided appropriate documentation of the service member's deployment is furnished:
 - (1) An excused absence for one (1) day when the member is deployed;
 - (2) An excused absence for one (1) day when the service member returns from deployment; and
 - (3) Excused absences for up to ten (10) days for visitation when the member is granted rest and recuperation leave and is stationed out of the country.
8. Students who are pregnant are excused from school for hospitalization and doctor's appointments when a physician's statement is provided. If a student is participating in a homebound program due to pregnancy, the homebound teacher will maintain attendance documentation.

9. Juniors and seniors are allowed two (2) days per year for college visits. These will be counted as excused absences. Visits must be arranged through the school counseling office.

10. Students participating in school-sponsored activities whether on or off-campus shall not be counted absent. In order to qualify as "school sponsored," the activity must be school-planned, school-directed, and teacher-supervised.

11. Extenuating circumstances determined on a case-by-case basis.

Any absence not complying with the above reasons for excused absences will be considered as unexcused. Examples of unexcused absences are (a) family vacations taken during the school year and (b) Senior Skip Day.

The principal or designee shall be responsible for ensuring that:

1. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class.
2. Daily absentee sheets contain sign-in/sign-out sheets and indicate students present or absent for the majority of the day.
3. All student absences are verified.
4. Written excuses are submitted for absences and tardiness.
5. If necessary, verification is required from an official or other source to justify absences.
6. System-wide procedures for accounting and reporting are to be followed.
7. Out-of-school suspensions (OSS) are not reported as an unexcused absence and are not a chargeable offense for truancy in Juvenile Court.
8. Students in a homebound program are not marked absent from school. Attendance for homebound students is recorded by the homebound teacher.

GRADES K-12

Excuses for absences must be made in writing to the principal or administrative designee by a parent or guardian and must be submitted within five (5) days of the student's return to school. All absences, and/or corrections to absences must be recorded within the respective 20-day attendance reporting period or no later than ten (10) days following the end of each 20-day attendance reporting period.

Parent or guardian shall be notified each time a student has five (5) days (aggregate) of unexcused absences and that attendance at school is required. Additional notices shall be sent after each successive accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences.²

Upon or before five (5) days of unexcused absences, the principal or designee shall notify the director of schools or designee and initiate meaningful communications with the student and their parent/guardian. The school shall attempt to determine the underlying cause(s) of the unexcused absences. When appropriate, a plan to improve school attendance should be initiated for the student.

1 Upon or before ten (10) days of unexcused absence, the principal or designee shall attempt to meet in
2 person with the student and/or their parent/guardian, develop or refine the attendance plan, and provide
3 necessary supports and services to improve school attendance. The principal or designee shall maintain
4 documented attempts to meet with the student and their parent/guardian and the resulting attendance plan.
5

6 Parent/guardian of a student with excessive (more than 5) absences may appeal the absences. Whenever
7 possible, attendance issues should be resolved at the school level. Parents/guardians who wish to appeal a
8 student's excessive (more than 5) absences, shall communicate their appeal to the school principal. At the
9 appeal, the principal will provide the parent/guardian written notice of the unexcused absences and the
10 parent/guardian will have the opportunity to be heard. The burden of proof rests on the student or the
11 parent/guardian.³
12

13 Faculties shall encourage student attendance and completion of classroom assignments according to the
14 following guidelines:
15

- 16 1. **Assuring quality classroom experience.** Maximum effort shall be made in all classroom settings
17 to provide a quality learning experience for each individual and to ensure that each day's class time
18 is important.
19
- 20 2. **Emphasizing regular attendance.** Teachers shall inform students that time on task is essential to
21 learning, that instruction loses context with lapse of time, and that, if students are absent from
22 class, work that has to be made up outside of the regular classroom environment does not provide
23 the same opportunity for learning as the regular class time.
24
- 25 3. **Making-up assignments.** If a student must be absent from school for any reason, excused or
26 unexcused up to ten (10) days, upon returning to school, he/she shall be given the opportunity to
27 make up any and all assignments that were missed during the student's absence. The student must
28 request make-up assignments within **three (3) days** after returning. Teachers shall set a reasonable
29 time for the completion of the work. Failure of a student to initiate a request for make-up work
30 within three (3) days will result in lost opportunity for credit for that assignment.
31

32 Students who are suspended or expelled from school for more than ten (10) days shall be offered
33 placement in the Alternative School Program for the duration of the suspension or expulsion, unless the
34 student is considered to be a danger to the school community.
35

36 Students who refuse Alternative School placement, or are dismissed from the Alternative School Program
37 early for any reason, or have been considered a danger to the school community shall not be given the
38 opportunity to request make-up assignments.
39

40 Students who are denied the opportunity to receive make-up assignments may appeal to the School
41 Attendance Review Committee, then to the Director of Schools and Board. The Director of Schools will
42 establish an administrative procedure to govern this appeal process.
43

44 In order to be counted present on any and all accounting attendance records, students in grades K-12 shall
45 attend school for a time period of three (3) hours and thirty (30) minutes per school day. Students who
46 attend less than three (3) hours and thirty (30) minutes per school day shall be recorded and reported as
47 absent on any and all attendance records.
48

49 Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as other student records.⁴
50

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49

PRE-KINDERGARTEN

In order to be counted present on any and all accounting attendance records, students in grade Pre-K shall attend school for a time period of at least 50% of their scheduled day. Students who attend less than 50% of their scheduled school day shall be recorded and reported as absent on any and all attendance records.

Legal References:

- 1. TRR/MS 0520-1-3-.08(1)(a).
- 2. TCA 49-6-3007.
- 3. TRR 0520-01-02-.17.
- 4. TCA 10-7-504; 20 U.S.C § 1232g.

Approved as to Legal Form
By Knox County Law Director 7/29/2015
/Susan E. Crabtree/Deputy Law Director