



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NINTH FLOOR, ANDREW JOHNSON TOWER
710 JAMES ROBERTSON PARKWAY
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0375

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

CANDICE MCQUEEN
COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

TO: Directors of Schools

FROM: Nakia Towns, assistant commissioner for data and research

RE: Attendance & Assessment Policies

DATE: April 14, 2015

The information in this memo was communicated last year and is still applicable.

The purpose of this document is to clarify both law and State Board policy pertaining to student attendance and the relationship to assessment. Districts and schools should adhere to all applicable laws and policies related to student attendance and assessment.

There are three sets of law and policy related to student requirements for assessment and attendance.

- Tennessee is required to administer a state assessment aligned to academic standards under the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) §1111 (b)(3). Neither federal nor state law provides for a parental opt-out policy from state assessments. Furthermore, states are required to ensure a 95% participation rate on assessments for the purposes of accountability under ESEA §1111(b)(2)(I)(ii).
- Tenn. Code Ann. §49-1-617 states that student performance on the state assessment will count as a portion of a student's final spring semester grade. Further, State Board rule 0520-01-03-.06(d) states that student performance on end-of-course examinations will be factored into the student's grade.
- Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3002 requires districts to establish standards and policies governing attendance based on State Board policies. It is a local decision on what constitutes an excused or unexcused absence. If a student is not in attendance on the date of the test, the school should apply their policies governing excused or unexcused absences. After a student has accumulated five or more unexcused absences districts should enforce state law pertaining to compulsory attendance under Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-3007.

If a student is absent on the day of the assessment and does not return prior to the end of testing, independent of the reason, mark the student's assessment document absent, and apply the district's policy governing excused or unexcused absences.

- If the student cannot make up the test within the testing window, the absence will adversely impact the district and school's participation rate.

- If the student cannot make up the test within the testing window, the student will be reported as absent on quick scores for the purposes of student grades as outlined in Tenn. Code Ann. §49-1-617 or State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.06(d). The school will apply local policy related to missed assessments in averaging the student score.
 - In a secondary content area with an End of Course assessment, for the purposes of student grades, the student may be given an incomplete and take the test at the next available administration.
- Note that truancy action must be taken against a student with five or more unexcused absences in accordance with Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-3007.

If the student is in the building on the day of the state administered assessment, the student should attempt the test.

- If the student refuses to test, the district should complete a Report of Irregularity (RI) and mark the student as a 'Refusal/Did not Attempt'.
- A student that refuses to take the assessment does not adversely impact a district or school's participation rate or achievement data.
- The student receives a 0 for assessment on both the quick score report and the Individual Performance Report (IPR). This score should be used for the student's grade in compliance with Tenn. Code Ann. §49-1-617 or State Board Rule 0520-01-03-.06(d).