

Part Two

SECTION 1—ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

A. One key aspect to obtaining a good education.....good attendance in school

Making school attendance a priority helps children learn good work and study habits that will serve them well now and throughout their lives. Regular school attendance also teaches children the ethics of responsibility and dedication. It builds qualities they will need as they tackle increasingly more demanding school work in upper grades and face life-long challenges. Furthermore, these character traits, along with strong academic and technical knowledge, are also what today's employers say they value most in those they hire.

Research has shown students who attend school on a regular basis demonstrate:

- A strong correlation between high attendance and a higher grade point average
- Higher levels of academic achievement than students who are frequently absent
- Stronger bonds to the school and community, &
- Increased participation in higher education or job related success

Research has shown that high rates of absenteeism result in:

- Lack of educational engagement
- Lack of participation
- Behavior challenges
- Falling behind in class work or credits
- Inability to keep up with their school work; for every missed day of school, it takes students two days to catch up since they must make up missed learning and catch up with new learning at the same time
- Being absent means that children miss out on the social side of school life which can affect their ability to make and keep friends and work alongside people later in life, &
- Increased risk of failing, retention, and dropping out later in school
(US Department of Education)

B. How Parents Encourage, Promote & Ensure Regular Attendance

Make attendance and academics a priority. Let children know that school attendance and homework come before time with friends, extracurricular activities or the computer.

Make medical and other appointments during non-school hours whenever possible. Schedule family vacations during school holidays or the summer break so that students are not missing important lessons and struggling to make up for lost time.

Stay home only when really sick. Most children will have occasional sick days. Children need to know that, unless they are truly sick, you expect them to go to school every day and do their best while there.

Communicate with school staff. If possible, let the school know in advance if your child is going to be absent or if you have concerns about your child's attendance or school performance.

Get organized. Create a space in your home for children to store backpacks and other supplies. Develop a routine where children have their homework done, classroom materials together and their bags packed the night before school.

Set reasonable bedtimes. On average, school aged children need about nine hours of sleep to be healthy and alert.

Reinforce reasonable bedtimes for children of all ages and, when they become teenagers, encourage them to get up and get ready on their own.

Communication to children high school age. Good school attendance shows potential employers that they are reliable and dependable.

C. Attendance Recognition

Any student who has been present every day of the school year, with no partial-day absences, and no tardies, will receive a perfect attendance award.

Any student who has no more than two excused absences and no more than three excused tardies will receive an exemplary attendance award. Any student who has no more than three excused absences and no more than three tardies will receive an outstanding attendance award.

D. Age limits for Compulsory Attendance

Each child in the district who has entered kindergarten or who is between the ages of six (6), as of August 1, and eighteen (18), except those specifically exempted by statute, shall enroll and be in regular attendance at the school to which s/he is assigned.

Per 704 KAR5:060, any five (5) year old child not otherwise subject to compulsory attendance laws, but who voluntarily enrolls in the primary school program at the beginning of the school year, may upon parental or guardian's written request be withdrawn from the program at any time within the first two (2) school calendar months. At the end of such trial period a child shall be considered irrevocably entered into the primary school program for purposes of KRS 159.010 and KRS 159.020.

E. Absence and Tardy Defined

Absence is defined as non-attendance for 36% or more of the regularly scheduled school day for the student's grade level.
Tardy is defined as non-attendance for 35% or less of the regularly-scheduled school day for the student's grade level.
Tardy includes missing any part of the day (being late to school or leaving school before classes are dismissed).

F. Excused Absence From School

Students who are absent from school are required to have a legitimate excuse. Within five days of a student's return to school, s/he must present a note to a designated staff person. If a note is not received within five days, the absence may be considered unexcused. The note should include the current date, the student's first and last name, the date(s) of the absence(s), the reason for the absence(s) and the parent/guardian signature. Parents may provide a note of excuse via hand written note, via email, or via electronic message. If an email or electronic message is sent for an excuse, it must be accompanied with a follow up phone call by the parent before it is accepted to verify the authenticity of the sender. If confirmation is not received by phone, the note will be documented as an unexcused parent note by the school.

A student may miss up to six (6) days without a doctor or legal note. This includes parent notes and unexcused absences. Once the six (6) day limit has been reached, all future absences without a doctor or legal note will remain unexcused.

A parent may write a note for a total of six (6) absences per year for the following permissible absences.

1. Illness of the student. If days of absence for illness exceed total allowable number of parent notes, a written statement from a medical professional (physician, dentist, orthodontist, psychologist, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, physical therapist, optometrist, or public health officer) will be required in order for each additional absence for illness to be excused.
2. Severe illness in the student's immediate family.
3. Religious holidays and practices approved in advance by the principal.
4. Family emergencies requiring immediate attention, as approved by the principal.
5. Three (3) total visits, no more than two (2) per semester, to colleges or universities approved in advance by the principal and restricted to juniors and seniors. Documentation from the college/university will be required.
6. Other valid reasons as determined by the principal.

Documentation, from sources other than a parent, will be accepted for the following absences:

7. Court appearances requiring the student's presence. Documentation from the court will be required.
8. Medical and dental appointments. A physician's excuse shall state the date(s) and/or number of days for which the student will be excused.
 - a. Medical statements submitted to the school from an in-person doctor's visit must be an original; no copy will be accepted as a valid excuse. Medical statements submitted to the school from a virtual doctor's visit must be forwarded to the school attendance clerk with the original email from the doctor included.
 - b. Faxed medical statements will be accepted from a medical facility. **It will be the parents responsibility to confirm the faxed note was received by the school attendance clerk.**
 - c. Local physicians' offices will use the standardized Jessamine County Schools' Medical Statement for Return to School form.
 - d. Any physician note marked "Not Seen" will be coded as an unexcused absence.
 - e. When a student exceeds 12 medical statements, the parent/guardian will be asked to use a standard medical excuse form provided by school office staff for the treating physician/physicians. This form will allow the Health Advisory Committee to review health information for the purpose of:
 - *Determining the need for documentation regarding a Chronic Health Condition;
 - * Addressing the student's academic status;
 - * Determining the possible need for Home/Hospital services.
 - f. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Students, who participate in any extra-curricular activities, must attend school all day to practice, perform, or play unless they have prior approval from the principal or athletic director. Doctors notes and legal documentation, as identified in Documentation Sources 7 and 8 above, will excuse the students and allow them to be able to participate.

G. Confirmation of Medical Statements

If falsification of a medical statement is suspected, the physician's office will be contacted to validate the authenticity of the medical statement. Until the authenticity of the medical statement is verified, the school will not count any of the covered dates as excused absences.

H. Secondary School Attendance for Students Ages 18-21

We encourage, support and applaud students 18 years and older who choose to pursue completion of their studies. However, Kentucky statutes are very clear in regards to school attendance for adults.

Any student between the ages of 18 and 21 who has not met graduation requirements may continue in school as long as s/he:

1. is in regular attendance (see section E above)
2. is making satisfactory progress toward graduation
3. refrains from causing any disciplinary problems; and
4. abides by school regulations.

Failure on the part of the student to meet these requirements may be interpreted as that student's voluntary withdrawing from school. In addition, according to KRS 159.150 and 159.990, an 18-year old who has been absent from school without valid excuse for three (3) or more days, or tardy without valid excuse on three (3) or more days, is a truant and can be fined one hundred dollars (\$100) for the first offense and two hundred fifty dollars (\$250) for each subsequent offense.

A committee including the principal or designee and guidance counselor will review each case to determine the best course of action for the individual student and the school. The principal or designee will chair the meeting and the student will be invited to attend the meeting. Failure on the part of the student to attend the meeting does not restrict the committee from making a decision.

The committee will discuss educational programs that may serve as an alternative to regular classroom instruction (correspondence courses, GED, adult education, etc.) with the student.

In cases that involve special needs students, the procedures mandated by federal and state law for students with disabilities shall be followed.

If the committee decides to withdraw the student, s/he may appeal the decision of the committee in writing within (10) days of the committee's decision to the superintendent.

I. Homebound Instruction

Home/hospital instruction provides educational services to students who cannot attend school for extended periods due to temporary or recurring conditions, including fractures, surgical recuperation, or other physical, health or mental conditions. An "extended period" refers to an absence for more than five (5) consecutive school days.

Home/hospital instruction will be a minimum of two (2) visits per five days of school with one (1) hour of instruction per visit, which is equivalent to one (1) child's attendance in school for five (5) days. A parent or responsible adult must be present in the home/hospital room during the time the home/hospital teacher is present.

J. Unexcused Absence From School

All absences other than those described in Section E are considered unexcused absences.

K. Make Up Work For Missed Days

Opportunity for make-up work will be given for all excused absences. Students suspended out of school will be expected to make up all work for full credit. The number of days allowed to complete make-up work will be equal to the number of school days the student was absent plus one additional day.

While students will always be provided the opportunity to make-up work missed during an unexcused absence, **such make-up work may not count for credit at middle school and high school.** Students will, however, be allowed to make up tests and projects for credit even if the absences are unexcused.

L. Truancy Defined

Any child who has been absent from school without a valid excuse for three (3) or more days, or tardy on three (3) or more days, is truant. Partial-day absences will be added together to determine truancy. Any child who has been reported as truant two (2) or more times is habitually truant.

M. Truancy and Habitual Truancy Procedures

Principals and assistant principals shall follow these procedures at a minimum regarding truancy and habitual truancy:

1. After three (3) days of accumulated unexcused absences (or first truancy), a contact by phone or letter will be made to the parents notifying them of the truancy. Documentation will be kept.
2. After six (6) days of accumulated unexcused absences (or second and habitual truancy), a conference will be offered between the parents and designated school staff. An intervention plan will be developed and implemented, which may include a truancy survey questionnaire.
3. If truancy continues, documentation of the school's efforts will be sent to the Director of Pupil Personnel who will issue a final notice and then proceed under KRS 159.180 to seek legal resolution of the problem through the court system.

The DPP office can determine if an earlier intervention needs to take place regarding a student's attendance.

N. Chronic Absenteeism Defined

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing more than 10% of school days at any given point in the school year for any reason, or a total of 18 days by the end of the year. Students who are chronically absent are at increased risk for academic failure, involvement in the juvenile justice system as adolescents, and dropping out of high school. Jessamine County Schools is committed to lowering the number of chronically absent students through educating the public about the issue, reporting chronic absenteeism data on a regular basis, revising policies involving attendance and intervening with students who are chronically absent.