



BLAIRSTOWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Expectations

The Blairstown Board of Education requires students in this district to attend school regularly in compliance with Board policies and state and federal law. It is important that every parent accepts his/her responsibility to ensure that their child attend school regularly. Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in school during the days and hours that school is in session, unless it is shown to the satisfaction of the Board that the mental condition of the student is such that she/he cannot benefit from instruction or that the condition of the student is such as to prevent attendance at school. The Board also believes that promptness is an important element of school attendance. Therefore, the Board expects students to arrive at school and on time, ready to proceed with day's courses of study.

Definitions

1. School is considered “**in session**” when school is open and students are under the guidance and direction of a teacher or teachers engaged in the teaching process. Days on which school is closed for such reasons as holidays, teachers’ institutes and inclement weather shall not be considered as days in session pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3(a).
2. An “**excused lateness to class**” shall be defined as the arrival of a student in class if the student presents a hall pass from a teacher or an administrator upon arrival. All other student arrivals to class after the late bell rings shall be “unexcused.”
3. “**Excused absence**” is a student’s absence from school for a full day or a portion of a day for the observance of a religious holiday pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 through 16, for Take Your Child to Work Day, or any absence determined to be excused by the Department of Education.
4. “**Unexcused absence that counts towards truancy**” is a student’s absence from school for a full or a portion of a day for any reason that is not excused as defined above or for any unexcused absence that does not count toward truancy listed below.
5. “**Unexcused absence that does not count toward truancy**” is a student’s absence from school for a full day or a portion of a day for the reasons listed below:
 - A. The student’s illness supported by a written letter from the parent upon student’s return to school



- B. Family illness or death supported by a written letter from the parent upon the student's return to school.
- C. Where appropriate, when consistent with Individualized Education Programs, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C.# 794 and 705 (20), and individualized health care plans.
- D. The student's suspension from school.
- E. The student's required attendance in court.
- F. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day. (A doctor's note is appropriate here)
- G. An absence for any reason not listed above, but deemed "unexcused that does not count toward truancy" by the Principal, upon a written request by the student's parent stating the reason for the absence and requesting permission for the absence to be an "unexcused absence that does not count toward truancy."

6. **"Truancy"** means **"ten or more cumulative unexcused absences"** that count toward truancy of a student between the ages of six and sixteen as determined by the Board's Attendance Policy and Regulation pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6 (a)5iii and the definition of a school day pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3.

7. A student absence is **"unexcused that does not count toward truancy"** if one of the following factors is present:

- A. The student's absence is due to the death or serious illness of a family member.
- B. The student has, with the permission of the Superintendent or his or her designee, taken advantage of a valuable educational opportunity that prevents the student from attending school.
- C. The student presents the Superintendent or his or her designee with written parental permission to be excused from school attendance, provide:
 - i. Written permission should be submitted to the Superintendent or his or her designee within five (5) days of the student's absence; and
 - ii. Parental notes may be used during the school year to justify a school absence; unless the absence is mandatorily excusable due to religious observance pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-14 through 16.

An absence is one day or a period of consecutive whole days as covered by a written note.



D. The student's absence is appropriate in light of the student's Individualized Educational Program pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1400 et. seq.; or in light of the student's accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. 794 and 705(20) and individual health care plans, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(b)(2)ix.

E. The student's absence is due to mental or bodily unfitness to attend school. The following factors shall constitute "mental or bodily unfitness":

- i. Illness;
- ii. Recovery from accident or injury;
- iii. Required court attendance;
- iv. Death in the family; or
- v. Such good cause as may be acceptable to the Building Principal. (Board Policy 5200).
- vi. An excused absence shall not for any reason be counted as a day of attendance in the school register. [N.J.A.C. 6Z:32-8.3(d)].
- vii. A student absence is "unexcused that counts towards truancy" if none of the factors enumerated in this section or #5 A-G of the definition section are present.

Consequences

Students who are inexcusably late to class or school or are absent from class or school are subject to the following disciplinary consequences:

1. Late to School

A. A student who arrives at school late or is dismissed early and misses **4 periods of instruction or more**, will be considered to be a half (1/2) a day absent.

B. A student who arrives at school late after 8:25 a.m. for a third (3rd) time shall not be eligible to participate in an extra-curricular activity for that day.

C. For a fourth (4th) unexcused lateness to school, the student shall receive a warning from the Principal and the District shall contact the student's parents regarding the fourth (4th) unexcused lateness.

D. For a fifth (5th) unexcused lateness to school, the student shall receive an office detention.

E. For a sixth (6th) unexcused lateness to school, the student/parents shall meet with the Principal to determine a plan to eliminate the lateness.



2. Absenteeism

A. For up to five (5) cumulative unexcused absences, the school district shall:

- i. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day and develop an action plan in consultation with the student's parents designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any, and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance.

B. For between five (5) and eight (8) cumulative unexcused absences, the school district shall:

- i. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
- ii. Conduct a follow-up investigation, including contact with the student's parents, to determine the cause of each unexcused absence.
- iii. Evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan developed pursuant to VII(C)(3)(1)(i) above;
- iv. Revise the action plan, as needed, to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based upon the student's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes, supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance that may include any or all of the following:
 - a. Refer or consult with the building's Intervention and Referral Services team, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8;
 - b. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
 - c. Consider an alternate educational placement;
 - d. Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
 - e. Refer to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts; and
 - f. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potential missing or abused child situation is detected; and
 - g. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.



C. For cumulative unexcused absences of 10 or more, the student, between the ages of six and 16, considered truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, the school district shall:

- i. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
- ii. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents of the mandatory referral;
- iii. Continue to consult with the parent and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
- iv. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and
- v. Proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required.

D. Students who accumulate **fifteen (15) unexcused absences for a full year** shall be considered for retention and a meeting with the principal, parents and teacher will be scheduled.

E. For students with disabilities, the attendance plan and punitive and remedial procedures set forth therein shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the students' Individualized Education Programs, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § § 1400 et seq., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act; the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14; accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. § § 794 and 705(20); and individualized health care plans, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3(b)2ix.

All daily absences are to be assigned by the attendance secretary. It is recognized that certain extreme, unavoidable and legal circumstances may prevent a pupil from for any reason listed below, and presents documentation; said absences shall not be held against the student for withholding 1) promotion to the next grade:

1. Illness, not requiring a doctors note.*
2. Death in a student household's immediate family, verified by parental note within five (5) school days;
3. Religious observance which requires the absence, verified by parental note within five (5) school days, or;
4. Administrative reasons (i.e., suspensions, illness excused by doctor's note);
- *5. Parental notes; **an absence is one day or a period of consecutive whole days as covered by a written note.**



NOTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION

The following procedures will be implemented by school personnel to ensure the policy is applied to maximize students' performance.

1. On day 5 and 8

– Written notification to parents.

2. On day 10

– Written notification to parents.

– Written notification of truancy given to authorities if the student is under 16 years of age.

3. On day 15

– Written notification of possible retention sent to parents.

4. Before Notification of Retention:

– Final consideration of unique or special situations by Attendance Officer, Counselor, Principal and Parents.

5. Retention Letter

– Formal notification of “Retention” via certified mail to parent/guardian/student by the counselor and Principal stating all pertinent data

– Notification of appeals procedure

– A meeting with the Principal is required.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

An excessive absence by students who have been retained, yet remain in school, is an issue which the Board of Education recognizes as its responsibility to:

1. Ensure compliance with compulsory attendance laws; and

2. Ensure the school district's accreditation is not placed “at risk” due to the substantial impact on overall school attendance data.

When a student has been notified as being in “retention status”, and misses more than **20 total days of unexcused absences**, the following procedures may be implemented as needed to ensure the integrity of the policy. Nothing herein shall prohibit the initiation of any intervention steps at an earlier stage.

3. Students of Compulsory School Age

If the student is under 16 years of age, pursuant **N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27**, then he/she may receive a Child Study Team evaluation and recommendations will be made concerning the continuation with his/her schedule. The parents of the student will also be taken to court on the charge “failure to send to school.”



UNEXCUSED ABSENCE THAT DOES NOT COUNT TOWARD TRUANCY

All notes for “unexcused absences that do not count toward truancy” must be presented within five (5) days of the student’s return to school. **All late to school or early dismissals that are to be excused must be done in writing or personal contact with the office at the time of the late arrival or early dismissal.**

SUSPENSION

When a student has been excluded from school as a result of suspension in accordance with statute, he/she shall have the same opportunity to make up missed work as a student absent for any other reason.

The out-of-school suspension days are considered absences; however, they are exempt from the policy and do not count against the student for credit withdrawal.

VACATIONS AND TRIPS

Parents should make every effort to arrange vacations and trips when students are not in school.

VERIFICATION NOTES

All absences must be explained in writing or personal contact with the office. Students returning from any absence, **including late to school or early dismissal** must bring a note from a parent/guardian. Notes/personal contacts are required to authenticate absence and verify parental knowledge.*

*Notes are also used to establish a working file on a student’s absence, help to identify absence patterns and to provide an information base in case of an attendance appeal.

The parent note stating the reason for absence must be returned to the attendance secretary within five (5) school days of the student’s return to school. Doctors’ notes shall also be submitted within five (5) school days.

PARENTAL CALL IN

If a pupil is absent, the parent/guardian is **requested to call the attendance office the morning of the absence.**

MAKE-UP WORK

Pupils shall be required to complete all work and exercises assigned during any absence. Arrangements to make up the work must be initiated by the pupil or parent/guardian. Twenty-four (24) hour notice must be given to the teacher.



HOME INSTRUCTION

When parents are aware their child will be out of school for a period longer than two weeks due to illness or injury, they are required to immediately supply the school with a doctor's note stating the reason for the long term exclusion from school. Home instruction will begin and the absences will not be counted in the total for attendance.