5.7—ABSENCES

Education is more than the grades students receive in their courses. Important as that is, students’ regular attendance at school is essential to their social and cultural development and helps prepare them to accept responsibilities they will face as an adult. Interactions with other students and participation in the instruction within the classroom enrich the learning environment and promote a continuity of instruction, which results in higher student achievement.

**Excused Absences**

Absences are excused for one of the following reasons:

1. The student’s illness or when attendance could jeopardize the health of other students;
2. Death or serious illness in their immediate family (parent, legal guardian, grandparent, sibling, or any other relative living in the same household);
3. Observance of recognized holidays observed by their faith;
4. Attendance at an appointment with a government agency;
5. Attendance at a medical appointment;
6. Exceptional circumstances with prior approval of the principal; or participation in a school sanctioned Activity;
7. To participate in the election poll workers program for high school students.
8. Absences granted to allow a student to visit his/her parent or legal guardian who is a member of the military and been called to active duty, is on leave from active duty, or has returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. The number of additional excused absences shall be at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.
9. Absences granted, at the Superintendent's discretion, to seventeen (17) year-old students who join the Arkansas National Guard while in eleventh grade to complete basic combat training between grades eleven (11) and (12).

Students who serve as pages for a member of the General Assembly shall be considered on instructional assignment and shall not be considered absent from school for the day the student is serving as a page.

It is the Arkansas General Assembly’s intention that students having excessive excused absences be given assistance in obtaining credit for their courses. Students will receive an excused absence only after the parent or legal guardian has contacted the school by telephone explaining the reason for the absence. Some principals may accept a written explanation in lieu of the required phone call.

**Unexcused Absences**

Absences not defined above or not having a parent or legal guardian telephone contact or an accompanying note, if allowed by the principal, from the parent or legal guardian shall be considered as unexcused absences. Students with 4 unexcused absences in a course in a semester shall not receive credit for that course. At the discretion of the principal after consultation with persons having knowledge of the circumstances of the unexcused absences, the student may be denied promotion or graduation. Excessive absences shall not be a reason for expulsion or dismissal of a student.

When a student has 2 unexcused absences, his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis shall be notified. Notification shall be by telephone by the end of the school day in which such absence occurred or
by regular mail with a return address sent no later than the following school day.

Whenever a student exceeds 4 unexcused absences in a semester, the District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, guardian, or persons in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

At any time prior to when a student exceeds the number of unexcused absences permitted by this policy, the student, or his/her parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis may petition the school or district’s administration for special arrangements to address the student’s unexcused absences. If formal arrangements are granted, they shall be formalized into a written agreement which will include the conditions of the agreement and the consequences for failing to fulfill the agreement’s requirements. The agreement shall be signed by the student, the student’s parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis, and the school or district administrator or designee.

Students who attend in-school suspension shall not be counted absent for those days. Days missed due to out of school suspension shall not count toward allowable number of days. Days missed due to out of school suspension shall not count toward the allowable number of days. See Policy 5.7 Student Discipline for make-up work.

Days missed due to expulsion shall be unexcused absences.

The District shall notify the Department of Finance and Administration whenever a student fourteen (14) years of age or older is no longer in school. The Department of Finance and Administration is required to suspend the former student’s operator’s license unless he/she meets certain requirements specified in the code.

Applicants for an instruction permit or for a driver's license by persons less than eighteen (18) years old on October 1 of any year are required to provide proof of a high school diploma or enrollment and regular attendance in an adult education program or a public, private, or parochial school prior to receiving an instruction permit. To be issued a driver's license, a student enrolled in school shall present proof of a “C” average for the previous semester or similar equivalent grading period for which grades are reported as part of the student’s permanent record.

**ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

1. “Absence” means a student was not present at a roll call or during some portion of the school day.
2. Anything this regulation requires The Principal to do may be delegated; however, the Principal shall maintain supervisory control and accountability for proper performance by the delegate.
3. The Principal may excuse absences due to religious holidays, illness, accident, unavoidable circumstances, family emergencies, or educationally valuable activities away from school. Even excusable absences may have a negative impact upon academic performance; therefore, the Principal may decide not to excuse an absence in light of the District’s duty to enforce the compulsory education laws and encourage academic progress.
4. If a student is absent 8 times from any class during a semester, the Principal may decide to not excuse any more absences from that class.
5. Principals are authorized to deny academic credit on the basis of 4 unexcused absences or after 12 absences, whether excused or unexcused.
6. Principals are authorized to convene a student attendance committee to assist in the implementation of this administrative regulation.

7. Principals shall provide parents a copy of the District policy on excessive unexcused absences.

8. When a student under age 18 has accumulated 2 unexcused absences in a semester, the Principal shall notify his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis. Notification shall be by telephone by the end of the school day in which such absence occurred or by regular mail with a return address sent no later than the following school day.

9. When a student under age 18 has accumulated 4 unexcused absences in a semester, the Principal shall notify his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis by regular mail with a return address sent no later than the following school day. The Principal shall also prepare an affidavit using the approved affidavit format and forward the affidavit with attachments to the Juvenile Prosecutor for Washington County.

10. The Principal shall make a thorough attempt to locate and improve the attendance rate of those students who have accumulated excessive unexcused absences.

11. Principals may not “drop” or terminate a student’s enrollment unless the Principal has verified that the student does not reside in our school district.

12. When a student has 10 unexcused absences in a semester, the Principal shall transfer that student’s name and a copy of the student’s file to the Associate Superintendent.

13. Associate Superintendent shall notify the Department of Finance and Administration of students age 14-17 with excessive unexcused absences who are no longer in school, using the form required by the department.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-4-302
A.C.A. § 6-18-209
A.C.A. § 6-18-220
A.C.A. § 6-18-222
A.C.A. § 6-18-229
A.C.A. § 6-18-231
A.C.A. § 6-18-507(g)
A.C.A. § 6-27-113
A.C.A. § 9-28-113(f)
A.C.A. § 7-4-116
A.C.A. § 27-16-701

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