

2006-2007

ATTENDANCE POLICY OF THE WILSON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

Introduction

The Wilson County Board of Education believes that attendance is a key factor in student achievement. The Board encourages every positive and innovative means that will contribute to students' regular attendance, recognizing that school personnel, parents, the community, and the students themselves share in the responsibility. Students are expected to be present and punctual each day that school is in session. Also, under the federal guidelines of "No Child Left Behind" attendance is considered a key accountability factor.

Perfect Attendance

Perfect attendance means a child is present every day school is in session during the school year. The child must be present for each class; therefore, a child cannot have any tardies or early dismissals to have perfect attendance. A certificate of perfect attendance will be presented at the end of the school year.

Excused Absences*

Written documentation supporting reasons for absences must be submitted to school level principals within three (3) school days. Even though a parent may phone the school, a written notice must also be sent to the school. Written documentation shall include the reason for absence, date, parent signature, and phone number. **After that time period has elapsed, the absences will become permanently unexcused.**

**The student is excused for the day or days of absences, not the material covered in his/her classes. Therefore, it is the student's responsibility, and not the teacher's, for make-up work in all subject matter covered during his/her absence.*

1. Personal Illness – A doctor's note is accepted anytime a student is sick. The school may accept a written note from a parent or guardian verifying a student's illness (without a doctor's visit) for up to a total of five (5) accumulated days during the semester. The school principal, with proper notice and documentation, is allowed to make exceptions for students with childhood diseases, chronic health problems, or special needs and circumstances.

If an illness or hospitalization is to exceed ten (10) consecutive days, the parent or guardian should apply for homebound instruction after the first five (5) days of consecutive absences.

*Head lice – up to three (3) days may be excused per infestation. Head lice are small, about the size of a sesame seed. They are grayish-white with dark edges. While they cannot fly and do not jump, they move quickly. That's why it's difficult to find them in a child's hair. The female head louse lays two to five eggs a day. Diagnosis of head lice is generally made when lice eggs (called nits), that are fastened to the hair shaft are clearly evident. Nits are teardrop in shape and also very small. They are "glued" to the hair and cannot be washed or brushed out like dandruff. You may notice your child scratching his/her head or back of the neck a lot. Within her life span of approximately 1 month, the female louse is able to lay up to 300 eggs. These eggs hatch within 7-10 days. The newly hatched bug reaches adulthood in about 8 days, after which the female begins to lay eggs.

**Cats and dogs can not carry head lice.

- a. It is the duty of the school authorities to exclude from any public, private, or church-related school any child who is infected with head lice (pediculosis). It is a communicable disease and falls under the Tennessee Department of Health Communicable Disease Regulations. TCA 1200-14-1-.24
- b. Head lice screening examinations may be performed by personnel designated by the principal. Head lice do not carry any disease, nor does their presence mean that a child is dirty. To prevent further spread in a school, this condition should be treated at once. The family physician may be contacted by the parent or

the following recommendations from health officials should be followed:

Treatment

Your school nurse can provide information on treatment and procedures.

2. Illness of immediate family members – Parents or guardians should contact the principal before the absence when possible, to arrange a suitable time of absence as determined by the emergency circumstances. The principal may require written verification.
3. Death
 - a. In the family – One (1) day will be excused. Additional days will be at the discretion of the principal.
 - b. Of others – The principal may approve as an excused absence with appropriate documentation.
4. Religious holidays regularly observed by persons of the student's faith because of the observance of a day set aside as sacred by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member or adherent, where such religion calls for special observances of such day. The principal may require a statement from the minister or other person recognized by the given religious group.
5. Required court appearance – A student may be excused for required court appearance that is not related to truancy or the student's misdeeds. Verification from authorities must be provided. Final decision determined by the principal of each school.
6. Approved school-related activities that are school-sponsored or school-endorsed. (Prior approval is required.)
7. Unscheduled disasters – Example: destruction of a home, flood, tornado, or other extreme weather conditions.

8. Principal Discretion – Circumstances, with appropriate documentation, which, in the judgment of the principal, constitutes a good and sufficient cause of absences from school. Maximum of three (3) days allowed per year.

Homebound/Hospitalization

The purpose of the homebound/hospitalization program is to provide instruction while the student is physically or mentally incapable of participation in regular classroom activities. The State of Tennessee Department of Education has written guidelines for the use of homebound. Their definition of medically incapable is "fragile". Homebound services will be approved only if there are no other modifications that can be made to allow them to remain in school. Through the assistance and approval of the principal and guidance counselors, accommodations can be made to allow for students that need assistance in changing classes or carrying books, modified schedule, etc. to continue regular classes. There is no substitute for in-school instruction. A student will best benefit from the social and academic interaction and classroom instruction. In some situations, students will benefit from the one on one instruction of homebound; but, bear in mind the purpose of homebound is not to improve grades that have declined from previous absences or other outside influences. Also, homebound cannot be used to request a child miss school in order to care for an infant or elderly family member.

Placement in the program should be viewed as a **temporary intervention**. Homebound service consists of two (2) home visits per week for 1 ½ hours per visit. All students will be returned to a regular school placement, where the least restrictive educational experience can be provided, as soon as possible.

Students unable to attend school **may be eligible** for homebound/hospital instruction. The student's medical or psychological disability must be fully documented and verified by his/her attending physician or psychiatrist. **Medical documentation** (i.e. progress/soap notes, admission and discharge summary, etc.) and a fully completed Homebound Referral packet must accompany any request for homebound instruction. Upon receipt of all required documentation, a determination will be made regarding your child's eligibility for homebound services.

- The parent is responsible for the completion and return of the Homebound Packet. Do not expect the physician to send it

from his office. Only the original paperwork will be accepted as application for homebound instruction. The appropriate medical documentation must accompany the application packet.

- The forms filled out by your physician and returned to the Board of Education Office are reviewed by the homebound committee; and, if necessary, a follow-up with the physician's office will be made.

Please be advised that completion of the Homebound/Hospitalization Packet does not necessarily mean that homebound services will be approved. Decisions regarding your child's educational placement are made by a committee at the Board of Education and are based on the recommendations and information received from the appropriate specialists. While awaiting a decision regarding your child's placement to homebound, it is your responsibility to get assignments and materials from the school in order to keep your child current in his/her work. If your child is approved for homebound services, the homebound teacher will not be responsible for work that should have been completed during the waiting period.

Unexcused Absences

1. Students who are absent for reasons not covered in the provisions as described under "Excused Absences" are considered "unexcused." While daily class work may not be made up for a grade, the student may make up a tests or project assignments upon request. The request must be made on the day of return from the absence. A grade of no higher than 84 (C) shall be used for credit purposes on an unexcused make-up test.
2. The name of each child who is absent without excuse for five (5) days during the school year must be reported to the superintendent or his designated representative, as required by T.C.A. 49-6-3007. This refers to a total of five (5) days, and does not necessarily mean five (5) consecutive days. The superintendent will then serve, or cause to be served, on the parent or guardian a written notice that attendance is required. If the parent or guardian does not assure attendance of the pupil within three (3) days the superintendent shall follow legal procedure to ensure compliance with the attendance law.

3. Out of school suspension is an unexcused absence, but is not a chargeable offense for truancy in Juvenile Court.

Late Arrival / Early Dismissals

Being on time to school and class is essential for optimum teaching and learning. When a student is tardy, or leaves early he/she disrupts the process for others and loses important learning time for himself/herself. School bus transportation is provided free of charge to students of Wilson County. For this reason, tardies and early dismissals related to car problems, traffic, oversleeping, etc., are not valid reasons for tardiness. To receive an excused tardy when late to school or leaving early, the student must have either:

- A. A doctor's statement
- B. An official court notice that is not related to truancy or a student's misdeeds.
- C. A parent conference or a parent's telephone call and approval by administration.

(Personal illness would be excused up to 5 days per semester for illness without a doctor's note)

The name of any student who has been truant due to late arrivals and/or early dismissals may also be referred to the attendance personnel. The school principal will pursue available means to facilitate and persuade the student's return to regular attendance. If the student's attendance does not improve significantly, both the student and parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be subject to court action. The attendance personnel or the principal/designee may file charges against the parent and/or student if tardies/early dismissals are excessive.

Positive Incentives for Good Attendance

Grades K-12

Individual schools are encouraged to provide positive incentives for regular attendance.

All high school students will take final exams for all courses.

Attendance Supervision

The attendance supervisor shall oversee the entire attendance program, which shall include:

- A. All system-wide accounting and reporting procedures;
- B. Ensuring that all school age children attend school;
- C. Observing and enforcing all county attendance policies and state attendance laws; and
- D. Notifying the Department of Safety whenever a student with a driver's permit or license is revoked due to grades and/or attendance.

Principal

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that:

- A. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class;
- B. Daily absent sheets contain sign in/sign out sheets and indicated students present or absent for the majority of the day;
- C. All student absences are followed up;
- D. Determination is made if an absence is excused or unexcused, based on criteria approved by the Wilson County Board of Education;
- E. System-wide procedures for individual accounting and reporting are followed;
- F. An attempt is made to contact, individually by telephone, each student or his/her parent each day (Principal or his/her designee) (9-12);
- G. An attempt is made to contact parents/guardians, individually by telephone, of all K-12 students who have missed five (5) unexcused days or more prior to ten (10) unexcused days (principal or his/her designee);
- H. Each student receives a copy of the attendance policy; and

- I. Said policy is explained in a homeroom or assembly meeting.

Confidentiality

Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as student records. Authorized school officials for legitimate educational purposes only may have access to student information without the consent of the student or parent/guardian (T.C.A. 10-7-504; U.S.C.A. 20-1232g).

Eighteen-Year Old Absenteeism (Unexcused)

A student who is eighteen (18) years of age and has missed five (5) unexcused days will be referred to the principal. After meeting with the student, the principal will send a letter to the student's parent or guardian informing him/her of the consequences of nonattendance. (Said letter shall advise parents of the possible transfer to the Adult High School if student misses ten (10) or more unexcused days.)

After the student missed ten (10) or more unexcused absences, he/she may be transferred to the Adult High School upon completion of admissions procedures.

Change of Address

Parents are reminded to notify the school when there is a change of address, telephone number, custody, etc.

Tennessee Compulsory Attendance Laws

(Compulsory School Age is 6 Years to the 18th Birthday)

T.C.A. 49-6-3001 - School Age – (c) (1) Every parent, guardian or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between six (6) years of age and seventeen (17) years of age, both inclusive, shall cause such child or children to attend public or non-public school, and in event of failure to do so, shall be subject to the penalties hereinafter provided. *(The courts have ruled that the word "inclusive" requires a child to attend school until the day before his/her eighteenth birthday.)*

T.C.A. 49-6-3007- Attendance and truancy reports – (e) (1) It is the duty of the principal or teacher of every public, private or parochial school to report promptly to the superintendent, or to the

superintendent's designated representative, the names of all children who have withdrawn from school, or who have been absent five (5) days (this means an aggregate of five (5) days during the school year and not necessarily five (5) consecutive days) without adequate excuse. Each successive accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences by a student shall also be reported.

T.C.A. 49-6-3009 – Penalty for Violations – (a) Any parent, guardian or other person who has control of a child, or children, and who violates the provisions of this part commits a Class C misdemeanor.

(b) Each day's unlawful absence constitutes a separate offense.

T.C.A. 40-35-111 – Terms of Imprisonment or Fines – (3) Class C misdemeanor, not greater than thirty (30) days or a fine not to exceed fifty dollars (\$ 50.00), or both, unless otherwise provided by statute.

Driver's License Revocation

Any student fifteen (15) years of age or older who becomes academically deficient or deficient in attendance shall be reported to the Department of Safety for driver's license revocation.

A student shall be deemed academically deficient if he/she has not received passing grades in at least two (2) full unit subjects on the block schedule or their equivalency at the conclusion of any subsequent grading period.

A student shall be deemed deficient in attendance when he/she drops out of school or has more than (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) days total in unexcused absences during a single semester. Suspensions shall be considered unexcused absences.