

Blount County Board of Education

Monitoring: Review: Annually, in April	Descriptor Term: 6-12 Attendance	Descriptor Code: 6.2002	Issued Date: 12/02/21
		Rescinds: 6.2002	Issued: 08/05/21

Attendance is a key factor in student achievement and therefore, students are expected to be present each day that school is in session.

Truancy is defined as an absence for an entire school day, a major portion of the school day or the major portion of any class for 6-8 students, and an absence in a class for any student who is more than 10 minutes late or leaves class more than 10 minutes prior to ending time for 9-12 students.

All students are expected to be on time for all classes. A student who is tardy three (3) times to any class may be assessed one (1) unexcused absence for 6-8 students. Tardies for 9-12 students will be kept by teachers on a term to term basis, and will not be cumulative over the academic year.

The attendance supervisor shall oversee the entire attendance program which shall include:¹

1. All accounting and reporting procedures and their dissemination;
2. Alternative program options for students who severely fail to meet minimum attendance requirements;
3. Ensuring that all school age children attend school;
4. Providing documentation of enrollment status upon request for students applying for new or reinstatement of driver's permit or license; and
5. Notifying the Department of Safety whenever a student with a driver's permit or license withdraws from school.²

The principal shall be responsible for ensuring that:⁶

1. Attendance is checked and reported daily for each class;
2. Daily absentee sheets contain sign in/sign out sheets and indicate students present or absent for the majority of the day;
3. All student absences are verified;
4. Written excuses are submitted for absences and tardiness;

5. System-wide procedures for accounting and reporting are followed.

The school system will acknowledge the following reasons for absences and making up work:⁴

1. The child's personal illness;
2. Death in the family (not to exceed three days);
3. Family illness requiring temporary help. A physician's statement is required;
4. Religious observances;⁵
5. Absences excused by the principal (if prior to the student's absence the parent or guardian consults the principal and both principal and teacher agree that the absence is legitimate, the absence shall be excused, if requested at least three days in advance. Vacations should be scheduled during the summer);
6. School-endorsed activities; and
7. Circumstances which in the judgment of the principal create emergencies over which the student has no control.

Parent's signature and/or doctor's note will be accepted to justify any of the above seven reasons for five (5) absences per block per academic term.

Students who have five (5) absences without adequate excuse shall be reported to the director of schools/designee who will, in turn, provide written notice to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student's absence. The director of schools/designee shall also comply with state law regarding the reporting of truant to the proper authorities. In addition, the principal/designee shall initiate meaningful communications with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in order to determine the underlying cause(s) of the unexcused absences. When appropriate, the principal/designee shall develop an attendance plan and coordinate additional services designed to improve the student's attendance.⁷

The sixth (6th) absence and all absences thereafter in an academic term must have doctor or court note to be excused.

Upon notification that a student has been absent ten (10) days without adequate excuse, the principal/designee shall attempt to meet in person with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the appropriate services needed to improve the student attendance. The principal/designee shall document all communication attempts and develop or refine the attendance plan as needed.⁹

Students are entitled to make up any work missed. The teacher shall allow a reasonable amount of time for the student to make up his/her work. A reasonable amount of time should be at least a day for each day missed plus one extra day.

ATTENDANCE INCENTIVES

1. Semester exam exemption if four (4) or less days absent, passing grade, and no in-school or out of school suspensions and
2. Principal discretion for other school incentive/privilege(s) for four (4) or less days absent, passing grade, and no in-school or out of school suspensions.

RULES AND PENALTIES

1. Students participating in school-sponsored activities whether on- or off-campus shall not be counted absent. In order to qualify as "school-sponsored", the activity must be school-planned, school-directed, and teacher-supervised. Mass exodus or early dismissal or late arrival of all students or any segment of students shall not be permitted for any reason except for emergencies such as inclement weather or other unavoidable situations, unless instruction time is made up in full.⁵
2. Ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) total unexcused absences during any semester renders a student ineligible to retain a driver's permit or license or to obtain such if of age. The principal shall be responsible for notifying in writing the director of schools or designee and the parents of the student of any action taken by the school.
3. After ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) total reported absences (excused or unexcused) by the student during any semester, an attendance committee appointed by the principal will conduct a hearing to determine if any extenuating circumstances exist or verifying that the student has met attendance requirements that will allow him/her to retain or obtain a driver's permit or license.²
4. Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as other student records. Only authorized school officials with legitimate educational purposes may have access to student information without the consent of the student or parent/guardian.⁶ Parent/guardian will have access to attendance records.

Progressive Truancy Plan⁸

Tier 1

Tier one of the progressive truancy plan shall apply to all students within the district and include schoolwide prevention-oriented supports. These supports shall include:

1. Letter sent home to parents or guardian for conference
2. Conference with student and his/her parent or guardian

Upon a student accumulating five (5) unexcused absences, he/she shall be subject to additional intervention tiers. Tier two supports shall include, but are not limited to,

Tier 2

1. Conference with student and his/her parent or guardian
2. Attendance contract, based on the conference, signed by the student, the parent or guardian, and an attendance officer. The contract shall include:
 - a. A specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student
 - b. The period of time for which the contract is effective.
3. Penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court;
4. Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings to discuss the student's progress;
5. An individualized assessment by a school employee, such as a school counselor or graduation coach, of the reasons a student has been absent from school; and
6. If necessary, referral to counseling, community-based services, or other services to address the student's attendance problems.

Tier three shall be implemented if tier two truancy interventions are unsuccessful. These supports may consist of one of the following supports:

Tier 3

1. School-based community services;
2. Participation in a restorative justice program;
3. Referral to a school-based teen court;
4. Saturday or after-school courses designed to improve attendance and behavior; or
5. Director of Schools or Director's designee report student's absences to juvenile court if the progressive truancy tiers have been unsuccessful and there is documentation the student's parents or guardians have been unwilling to cooperate with the truancy interventions.

STUDENTS FROM MILITARY FAMILIES¹⁰

The Director of Schools shall develop the necessary administrative procedures to ensure that students with parent(s)/guardian(s) in the armed services are identified and that appropriate and available services are provided to these students.

RELOCATION OF MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER¹⁰

A student who does not currently reside within the school district shall be allowed to enroll if he/she is a dependent child of a service member who is being relocated to Tennessee on military orders. To be eligible for enrollment, the student will need to provide documentation the he/she will be a resident of the school district on relocation.

Within 30 days of enrollment, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student shall provide proof of residency within the school district.

ABSENCES

Principals shall provide students with a one (1) day excused absence prior to the deployment of and a one (1) day excused absence upon the return of a parent/guardian serving active military service.

Principals shall also allow up to ten (10) excused cumulative absences per year for students to visit a parent/guardian during a deployment cycle. The student shall provide documentation to the school as proof of his/her parent's/guardian's deployment. Students shall be permitted to make up school work missed during these absences.¹⁰

Legal References

1. TCA 49-6-3006
2. TCA 49-6-3017(c)
3. 20 USCA § 1232g
4. TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17(5); State Board of Education Policy 4.100
5. TCA 49-6-2904(b)(5)
6. TCA 49-6-3007
7. TCA 49-6-3021
8. TCA 49-6-3007; TCA 49-6-3009; Public Acts of 2021, Chapter No. 223
9. TCA 49-6-3022
10. TCA 49-6-3019

Cross References

School Calendar 1.800
 Extracurricular Activities 4.300
 Interscholastic Athletics 4.301
 Field Trips/Excursions/Competitions 4.302
 Reporting Student Progress 4.601
 Promotion and Retention 4.603
 Recognition of Religious Beliefs, Customs, & Holidays 4.803
 Voluntary Pre-K Attendance 6.2011
 Homeless Students 6.503
 Students in Foster Care 6.505
 Students from Military Families 6.506
 Student Records 6.600

