

## 4.07 – ABSENCES

If any student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan conflicts with this policy, the requirements of the student's IEP or 504 Plan take precedence.

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. In recognition of the need for students to regularly attend school, campus specific attendance and absentee policies can be found in each school's student handbook. Parents will be notified of attendance policies through the student handbooks.

Absences for students enrolled in digital courses shall be determined by the online attendance and time the student is working on the course rather than the student's physical presence at school. Students who are scheduled to have a dedicated period for a digital class shall not be considered absent if the student logs the correct amount of time and completes any required assignments; however, a student who fails to be physically present for an assigned period may be disciplined in accordance with the District's truancy policy.

### Excused Absences

Excused absences are those where the student was on official school business or when the absence was due to one of the following reasons and the student brings a written statement to the principal or designee upon his/her return to school from the parent, legal guardian, person in loco parentis, or appropriate government agency stating such reason. A written statement presented for an absence having occurred more than five (5) school days prior to its presentation will **not** be accepted.

1. The student's illness or when attendance could jeopardize the health of other students. A maximum of six (6) such days are allowed per semester unless the condition(s) causing such absences is of a chronic or recurring nature, is medically documented, and approved by the principal.
2. Death or serious illness in their immediate family;
3. Observance of recognized holidays observed by the student's 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;
7. Participation in an FFA, FHA, or 4-H sanctioned activity;
8. Participation in the election poll workers program for high school students;
9. To serve as a page for a member of the General Assembly;
10. 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; and
11. For purposes pre-approved by the school administration such as visiting prospective colleges, to obey a subpoena, or to attend at an appointment with a government agency.

12. Absences for students excluded from school by the Arkansas Department of Health during a disease outbreak because the student has an immunization waiver or whose immunizations are not up to date.<sup>3</sup>

### **Unexcused Absences**

Absences not defined above or not having an accompanying note from the parent or legal guardian, presented in the timeline required by this policy, shall be considered as unexcused absences.

Number of absences permitted:

Benton High School – 4 unexcused in a term class and 2 in a 9-weeks class (due to Block Scheduling)

Benton Junior High School – 6 unexcused in a semester

Benton Middle School – 6 unexcused in a semester

All Elementary Schools – 8 unexcused in a semester

When a student has the number of allowable unexcused absences (see above) his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis shall be notified by letter on the following days:

Benton High School – On the second (2<sup>nd</sup>) unexcused absence from any term class and on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) unexcused absence from any 9-weeks class

Benton Junior High School – On the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) unexcused absence

Benton Middle School – On the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) unexcused absence

All Elementary Schools – On the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence

Students with the following number of absences in a course shall not receive credit for that course:

Benton High School – 5 unexcused in a term class and 3 unexcused in a 9-weeks class (due to Block Scheduling)

Benton Junior High School – 7 unexcused in a semester

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.

Whenever a student exceeds unexcused absences in a semester (*see paragraph above*), the District shall notify the Truancy Court; and the parent, guardian, or persons in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

Appeals Process:

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 or 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 statute.

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.

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. § 7-4-116

A.C.A. § 9-28-113(£)

A.C.A. § 27-16-701

Arkansas Department of Education Rules Governing Distance and Digital Learning

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