

SS - 11 Student Absences And Excuses

March, 2017

I. Purpose and Philosophy.

A. The Beaufort County School District ("BCSD") believes attendance is a key factor in student achievement. Any absence from school represents an educational loss to the student, and BCSD staff will take educationally sound corrective actions to eliminate impediments to student achievement prior to referring a truant student to the juvenile justice system.

B. The BCSD recognizes some absences are unavoidable. This Administrative Regulation establish the basic structure for excusing qualifying absences in the BCSD and setting basic requirements for receiving course credit.

II. Attainment of High School Course Credit. To receive one Carnegie unit of credit, a student must be in attendance at least 120 hours, per unit, regardless of the days missed, or must demonstrate proficiency as determined by the BCSD. The exception for demonstration of proficiency shall be administered by the BCSD on a case by case basis and is only applicable to students who have excessive absences approved pursuant to this Administrative Regulation.

III. Written Intervention Plan. The BCSD will utilize a written intervention plan for improving student attendance. The purpose of the plan will be to link students with attendance problems and their families to all appropriate school and community resources.

IV. Excuse for Absence. A student who misses one (1) or more school days must present a written excuse within three (3) school days of returning to school, signed by his/her parent/legal guardian. The excuse will contain such other information as directed by the school administration. The school administration will keep all excuses confidential. If a student fails to bring a valid excuse to school within three (3) school days, the absence will be coded as unexcused. If a student brings a false or forged excuse, the teacher or staff member receiving the excuse will refer the student to the school administration for appropriate disciplinary action.

V. Lawful Absences.

A. The BCSD considers a student lawfully absent under the following circumstances:

1. The student is ill and his/her attendance in school may endanger the health of the student or of others;
2. Death or serious illness in the student's immediate family.
3. Recognized religious holiday of the student's faith.
4. Prearranged absences for other reasons and/or extreme hardships at the discretion of the Principal.

B. The Principal will be responsible for implementing and expediting medical homebound instruction for students experiencing a prolonged illness or injury requiring them to be absent from school.

VI. Unlawful Absences. The BCSD considers a student unlawfully absent under the following circumstances:

- A. The student is willfully absent from school without the knowledge of his/her parent/legal guardian.
- B. The student is absent without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his/her parent/legal guardian.

VII. Truancy.

A. A student ages six (6) to seventeen (17) years old who has three (3) consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five (5) unlawful absences is considered truant as defined by state board of education regulation.

B. A student ages twelve (12) to seventeen (17) years old who fails to comply with the school's intervention plan and accumulates two (2) or more additional unlawful absences is considered a habitual truant.

C. A student ages twelve (12) to seventeen (17) years who (1) has been through the school intervention process, (2) has reached the level of a habitual truant, (3) has been referred to family court and placed on an order to attend school, and (4) continues to accumulate unlawful absences is considered a chronic truant.

D. An out of school suspension is not to be counted as an unlawful absence for truancy purposes.

VIII. Intervention.

A. To encourage and assist students in attending school regularly, the BCSD will administer the following intervention procedures.

B. Once a student is determined to be truant, school officials will make every reasonable effort to meet with the student's parent/legal guardian to identify the reasons for the student's continued absence, including telephone calls, home visits, written messages and e-mails.

C. A school administrator, in conjunction with the student and the student's parent/legal guardian, shall develop a written intervention plan. The intervention plan must include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. A designated person to lead the intervention team (may be someone from another agency);
2. Reasons for the unlawful absences;
3. Actions the parent/legal guardian and student will take to resolve the causes of the unlawful absences;
4. Documentation of referrals to appropriate service providers and, if available, alternative school and community-based programs;
5. Actions to be taken by intervention team members;
6. Actions to be taken in the event unlawful absences continue;
7. Signature of parent/legal guardian or evidence that attempts were made to include them;
8. Documentation of involvement of team members; and
9. Guidelines for revising the plan.

D. School officials may utilize a team intervention approach to include representatives from social services, community mental health, substance abuse and prevention, and other persons deemed appropriate in formulating the intervention plans.

IX. Referrals and Judicial Intervention.

A. The BCSD will not refer a student age six (6) to seventeen (17) years to the family court to be placed on an order to attend school prior to the written intervention plan being completed by the school with the parent/legal guardian. The BCSD will not use a consent order from any local school or district as an intervention plan.

B. Refusal by the parent/legal guardian to cooperate with school intervention planning can result in a referral of the student to family court and the filing of a report against the parent/legal guardian with social services in accordance with law.

C. The BCSD will inform the parent/legal guardian and/or the student of their right to have legal representation and their right to a trial regarding their student's truancy.

D. If the situation continues to where the student is classified as a habitual truant, school officials may file a petition for a school attendance order. Once a school attendance order has been issued by the family court and the student continues to accumulate absences to the point of becoming a chronic truant, school officials may refer the case back to family court. The school and BCSD will exhaust all reasonable alternatives prior to petitioning the family court to hold the student and/or parent/legal guardian in contempt of court.

X. Transfer to Another School. If a student transfers to another public school in the state, the BCSD will forward the student's intervention plan to the receiving school.

XI. Approval of Absences in Excess of Ten (10) School Days.

A. After a student accumulates ten (10) lawful or unlawful absences or a combination thereof, the Principal shall approve or disapprove each succeeding absence. For the purpose of awarding credit for the school year, the Principal must approve or disapprove absences in excess of ten (10) school days, regardless of whether those absences are lawful, unlawful or a combination of the two.

B. A Principal should evaluate individually and approve the following lawful absence situations:

1. Family educational trips;
2. Community and church related performing groups; and
3. Organized competitive events or related activities.

XII. Approval as Determined by the Principal. Certain factors will be considered including academic performance, attendance history and academic standing.

XIII. Make-up Work.

A. Students who have excused absences from class as defined by state and BCSD Administrative Regulation will be given the opportunity to make up work and be assigned a grade based upon the quality of that work. For excused (lawful) absences, students will be granted the opportunity to make-up any missed assignments and /or work due to the absence(s). This will include quizzes, test, writing assignments, etc. The period for making up the work will be a minimum of one (1) class day for each class day missed to a maximum of one (1) week. For example, if a student misses two (2)

days of school (Monday and Tuesday) and returns on Wednesday, then Thursday and Friday will be granted as make-up days for missing Monday and Tuesday (one (1) day for each day missed). In this example, all missed assignments or work (test, quiz etc.) would not be due until Monday.

B. Students who have unexcused absences may be given the opportunity to make up work at the discretion of the Principal and teacher during make-up sessions, however, the unexcused absence remains in the student's record.

Adopted: July 18, 2001

Revised: July, 2010; April, 2013; March, 2017

Legal References:

Federal law:

[20 U.S.C. Section 7112](#) (2002) - No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

[42 U.S.C. Section 5601](#), *et seq.* (2002) - Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Improvements Act of 2001, [P.L. 107-110](#), [42 U.S.C. Sections 11431-11435](#)

S. C. Code, 1976, as amended:

[Section 59-65-90](#) - State Board to establish rules and regulations defining lawful and unlawful absences

State Board of Education Regulations:

[R-43-274](#) - Student attendance

Beaufort County Schools