

4.7—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, whether in person or digitally, 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.

Absences for students enrolled in synchronous digital courses shall be determined in the same manner as for District students attending courses in person. Absences for students enrolled in a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning at grades K-12 shall be determined by attendance during mandatory live instruction as specified in virtual student contract and schedule. Students who are scheduled to have a dedicated period for a synchronous course may be considered truant under district policy for failure to be physically where they are assigned to be but would not be considered absent for the digital course itself if the student satisfies the attendance requirements for the asynchronous digital course.

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:

1. Student's illness when medically documented or approved by the principal.
2. Death or serious illness in their immediate family, i.e. – spouse, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, any relative who lives in the same household as the student;
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. 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.
10. 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).
11. 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.
12. Absences due to conditions related to pregnancy or parenting, including without limitation:
 - Labor, delivery, and recovery;
 - Prenatal and postnatal medical appointments and other medically necessary, pregnancy-related absences;

- The illness or medical appointment of a child belonging to a parent who is enrolled at a District school;
- A legal appointment related to pregnancy or parenting, including without limitation:
 - Adoption;
 - Custody; and
 - Visitation;
- A reasonable amount of time to accommodate a lactating student's need to express breast milk or to breastfeed the student's child on the District's campus; and
- At least ten (10) school days of absences for both a parenting mother and a parenting father after the birth of a child.

13. Parental permission for any reason not covered, above, not to exceed five (5) such days per year, provided the parent has contacted the attendance office, by note or phone call, the day the absence occurs,

- a) For the purposes of elementary school attendance, parent permission days will be counted in the form of five (5) a.m. and five (5) p.m. absences.
- b) No more than five (5) of either a.m. or p.m. absences will be excused as parental permission.
- c) Absences for parental permission shall not be granted in conflict with semester examination schedules.

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.

Up to one (1) time during each scheduled election, a student shall not be considered absent from school for the time the student accompanies the student's parent when the parent is exercising the parent's right to vote in a scheduled election.

In order for the absence to be considered excused, the student must:

- a. Bring a written statement to the principal or designee upon the student's return to school from court or legal documents, or treating licensed health care provider identifying the office and/or the name of the professional who provided the service stating the reason for the student's absence; or
- b. If the student is attending the District's courses digitally, upload a written statement from court or legal documents, or treating licensed health care provider identifying the office and/or the name of the professional who provided the service stating the reason for the student's absence; through the District's digital course management platform for review by the principal or designee; or
- c. Provide documentation as proof of a student's participation in an activity or program scheduled and approved by the FFA, FHA, or 4-H program that is provided by a FFA, FHA, or 4-H county extension agent, 4-H educator, or other appropriate entity associated with the FFA, FHA, or 4-H activity or program.

A written statement presented or uploaded for an absence having occurred more than five (5) school days prior to its presentation or upload will not be accepted.

Unexcused Absences

Absences that are not defined above; do not have an accompanying note from the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, person standing in loco parentis, the student's treating licensed health care provider identifying the office and/or the name of the professional who provided the service, or FFA, FHA, or 4-H county extension agent, FFA, FHA, 4-H educator, or other appropriate entity associated with the FFA, FHA, 4-H activity or program; or have an accompanying note that is not presented or uploaded within the timeline required by this policy shall be considered as unexcused absences. Students with (15) unexcused absences in a course in a semester may 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 (5) unexcused absences, his/her parents, legal guardians, persons with lawful control of the student, or persons standing 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 (10) unexcused absences in a semester, the District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or persons standing in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

It is the Arkansas General Assembly's intention that students having excessive absences be given assistance in obtaining credit for their courses. Therefore, at any time prior to when a student exceeds the number of unexcused absences permitted by this policy, the student, or his/her parent, legal guardian, person with lawful control of the student, or person standing 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, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or person standing 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; provided, however, that days missed due to out-of-school suspension shall be excused for academic purposes only (i.e., school work may be made up).

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.

Legal References: A.C.A. § 6-4-302
 A.C.A. § 6-18-209
 A.C.A. § 6-18-213
 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. § 6-18-234
A.C.A. § 6-18-235
A.C.A. § 6-18-507(g)
A.C.A. § 6-18-702
A.C.A. § 6-28-114
A.C.A. § 7-4-116
A.C.A. § 9-28-113(f)
A.C.A. § 27-16-701
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education Rules Governing Distance and Digital Learning

Additional Reference: ASBA Model Policies

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