

4.7—ABSENCES

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.

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.

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. The student must bring a written statement to the principal or designees upon his/her return to school from the parent or legal guardian stating such reason. A written statement presented for an absence having occurred more than three (3) days prior to its presentation will **not** be accepted.

1. When attendance or the student's illness could jeopardize the health of other students. A maximum of five (5) such days are allowed per semester/year 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, 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 the eleventh (11th) grade to complete basic combat training between grades eleven (11) and twelve (12).

11. Any circumstances not covered above which the District determines are excused.

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.

It is the Arkansas General Assembly's intention that students having excessive absences be given assistance in obtaining credit for their courses. Excessive absences may, however, be the basis for the denial of course credit, promotion, or graduation.

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. Excessive absences shall not be a reason for expulsion or dismissal of a student.

When a student has five (5) unexcused absences, his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis shall be notified. Notification shall be by telephone or by regular mail with a return address ~~sent no later than the following school day.~~

When a student has ten (10) unexcused absences, his/her parents, guardians, or persons in loco parentis again shall be notified. Notification shall be by telephone or by regular mail with a return address ~~sent no later than the following school day.~~

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.

~~Whenever~~In addition to the notice, above, whenever a student has accumulated ~~thirteen (13)~~ten (10) unexcused absences or has violated the conditions of an agreement granting special arrangements, in a semester, the District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, guardian, or persons in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

Credit Courses

Students with fifteen (15) total 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.

The Fort Smith Police Department, in cooperation with the District, participates in the “Operation Stay in School” program. Any certified law enforcement officer may stop and detain any unsupervised school-age student found off school premises during school hours and request the production of documentation excusing her/his presence from school.

Students who attend in-school suspension shall not be counted absent for those days.

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 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. § 6-18-702
 - A.C.A. § 7-4-116
 - A.C.A. § 9-28-113(f)
 - A.C.A. § 27-16-701

Date Adopted: