

# Alloway Township Board of Education District Policy Manual

**Students**

**Series 5000**

**Absences & Excuses**

**Policy 5113**

**Date Adopted: August 24, 1999**    **Date Revised: October 22, 2002**

**December 15, 2009, June 24, 2014,**

**February 23, 2016**

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The Board of Education believes that regular attendance in class, participation in class activities, and interaction between pupils and teachers are vital and integral parts of the learning process. Frequent absences of pupils from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional and learning processes. The school staff cannot teach pupils who are not present.

School will be open a minimum of 180 days each year and the maximum number of absences permitted within an academic year is 20. All absences will be counted. It is the intention of this policy that the permitted number of absences will provide for normal illness. Pupils are expected to attend school during the established school time.

Any pupil, who, for any reason, fails to attend 162 (10%) days of school within any academic year, shall be subject to an administrative review by the Superintendent/designee before the student can be considered for course credit or promotion. The following individuals will be invited to participate with the administrative review: other administrators; teachers; parent/guardians; students themselves and other school personnel such as guidance counselors, child study team members, etc.

## Unexcused Absences

For the purposes of this policy and pursuant to NJAC 6A:32-8.3, the definition of a school day is that a school day shall be such that a school day shall consist of not less than four hours of actual instruction, except that in an approved kindergarten a full school day may consist of one continuous session of 2 ½ hours.

For the purposes of this policy an unexcused absence shall be defined as absence of a student from school, a class or classroom or his/her assigned program for a school day without proper notification by the student's parent/guardian or for reasons other than those listed in this policy below.

The following absences, late arrivals and early dismissals are excusable:

1. Personal illness or injury – after 3 consecutive days, a doctor's note is required
2. Family illness (serious illness of a family member, residing in the household of the student or the quarantine of the family member, family or student in accordance with the directives of health officials);

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3. Death in the family (death of a family member of the student, including but not limited to parent/guardian, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, etc.);
4. Absence due to court intervention
5. Religious holidays as prescribed by NJSA 18A:36-16
6. Quarantine
7. School sponsored activities
8. Medical or dental appointments
9. Unique special circumstances as determined by the administration on a case-by-case basis

According to New Jersey law, attendance in school is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 16; and, according to universally accepted norms, pupils cannot benefit fully from the educational programs of schools unless attendance is regular and uninterrupted. Therefore, the Board of Education directs that attendance of pupils be controlled and supervised.

If a pupil is absent, the parent/guardian is required to call the main office the morning of the absence. Pupils shall be required to complete all work and exercises assigned during any absences. Arrangements to make up the work must be initiated by the pupil or parent/guardian.

The Superintendent/designee in consultation with the teacher shall determine the effect of excessive absences, excused or unexcused, upon a grade or promotion. The Superintendent/designee shall direct development of procedures to disseminate and implement this policy.

### Students with Disabilities

For students with disabilities, attendance plans and punitive and remedial measures shall be established in accordance with the students':

- A. Individualized Education Programs, pursuant to USC § 1400 et. seq., the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act;
- B. Procedural safeguards as set forth in NJAC 6A:14;
- C. Accommodation plans under 29 USC § 794 and 705(20);
- D. Individualized health care plans, pursuant to NJAC 6A:16-2.3(b)2ix.

### Cases of Up to Four Unexcused Absences

The Superintendent of Schools shall assign a district employee to attempt to notify parents/guardians of any unexcused absences of their children prior to the beginning of the school day following said unexcused absence.

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District personnel shall be assigned the task of conducting an investigation to determine the cause(s) of each unexcused absence. This investigation shall include contacting the parents/guardians of the student.

Appropriate district personnel shall develop an action plan to address patterns of habitual unexcused absences of students in order to have said students maintain regular attendance. This action plan shall be developed in consultation with the student's parents/guardians.

All student absences (except religious holidays) are counted against the district for the purpose of the school registry.

### Cases of Five to Nine Cumulative Unexcused Absences

The Superintendent of Schools shall assign a district employee to attempt to notify parents/guardians of any unexcused absences of their children prior to the beginning of the school day following said unexcused absence.

District personnel shall be assigned the task of conducting an investigation to determine the cause(s) of each unexcused absence. This investigation shall include contacting the parents/guardians of the student.

Appropriate district personnel shall develop an action plan to address patterns of habitual unexcused absences of students in order to have said students maintain regular attendance. This action plan shall be developed in consultation with the student's parents/guardians. In addition, the assigned staff member(s) shall evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan pursuant to NJAC 6A:16-7.8(a)41(3) and revise the action plan, as needed to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based on the student's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes supporting the student's return to school and regular attendance that may include any or all of the following:

- A. Refer or consult with the Intervention and Referral Services team, pursuant to NJAC 6A:16-8;
- B. Conduct testing, assessments or evaluations of the student's academic, behavioral and health needs;
- C. Consider an alternate educational placement;
- D. Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
- E. Refer to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;

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- F. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of NJSA 9:6-1 et seq. and NJAC 6A:16-11, if a potentially messing or abused child situation is detected; and/or,
- G. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities as appropriate.

## Cases of Ten or More Cumulative Unexcused Absences

In cases of 10 or more cumulative unexcused absences, the student between the ages of 6 and 16 shall be considered to be truant pursuant to NJSA 18A:38-37. In such cases, the following actions shall be instituted:

- A. A reasonable attempt to notify the student's parents/guardians of said mandatory referral;
- B. Continuation of consultations with the parents/guardians and the involved agencies to support the student's return to school and regular attendance;
- C. Cooperation with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate;
- D. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of NJSA 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School and other applicable state and federal statutes, as required.

## Lateness

The Board expects students to arrive at school and in classrooms on time. Students who arrive late to school or in their assigned classroom(s) shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the district's Code of Student Conduct. Students not in the building by 5 minutes after the Homeroom Bell will be considered late and must sign-in in the office.

## Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

Late arrivals and early dismissals are as disruptive to the educational process as absenteeism. Only the reasons for absence listed as excusable above shall be held valid for a late arrival or early dismissal. The parent/guardian shall inform the school in advance whenever possible. A student to be dismissed early must be met in the school office by the parent/guardian or authorized agent. After a combination of 5 unexcused late arrivals or unexcused early dismissals, parents/guardians will receive a letter. After 10, parents/guardians will be required to meet with the administration.

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## Class Cutting and Truancy (Unauthorized Absence)

Penalties for students who cut classes shall include detention and in-school suspension. Parents/guardians who fail to comply with the compulsory attendance laws are subject to the penalties prescribed by law.

## Make-Up Work

Students shall be provided the opportunity to make up all work and examinations missed because of absence. Failure to make up such work or take such examinations shall result in appropriate academic penalty. Students will be afforded one day for each day missed to make up work.

## Vacations

In extraordinary circumstances where family vacations cannot be scheduled when school is not in session, the administrator can excuse the absence if:

1. Written notice is submitted to the administrator at least 10 days prior to the vacation;
2. Documentation is provided to administration to show this is an extraordinary case;
3. The administrator determines that the student's academic progress will not be significantly hindered by the absence.

Work will be provided after the vacation days so it will reflect what was taught during the student's absence.

## Exclusions

When a student has been excluded from school in accordance with statute, he/she shall have the same opportunity to make up missed work as a student absent for any other reason. Such days of non-attendance shall be recorded as excused absences.

## Potentially Missing Children

**Administrative Procedures:** The Superintendent/designee should be notified immediately by the staff when there is sufficient reason to believe there may be a child missing from school. The Superintendent or the designated official will notify the NJ State Police when there is a reported incident of a possible missing child within the school district.

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In accordance with Board Policies 5141.4 – Child Abuse & Neglect and 5141.5 Early Detection of Missing Children, and pursuant to NJSA 9:6-1 et. seq. and NJAC 6A:16-11, any case in which it appears that the student who is absent is potentially missing or the victim of child abuse and/or neglect, the Superintendent/designee shall conduct an investigation of the circumstances and proceed in accordance with law and in cooperation with law enforcement officials where appropriate.

## Procedures to Identify Missing Children

When a child is absent from school, parent/guardians are responsible for informing the office on the day of the absence and sending an explanatory note when the child returns.

If a child is absent from school and the parent/guardian does not call, the school will contact the parent/guardian to determine the cause of absence. If the school is not contacted and persons on the “emergency calling lists” cannot be contacted, the NJ State Police will be called to investigate the absence.

If a parent/guardian withdraws a child from school, an official request for the child’s records from the new school district should be received within 15 school days, if the transfer takes place within the school year, the request for pupil records should occur within 60 calendar days.

No pupils shall be permitted to leave the school before the end of the school day unless met in the school office and signed out by a parent/guardian or a person authorized to act on his/her behalf. Pupils may be asked to identify the authorized person.

No pupil may be released on the basis of an unverified telephone call. If there is reason to question the authority of the calling person, the school will call the parent/guardian to make a positive verification.

Children of estranged parents/guardians may be released only upon the request of the parent/guardian whom the court holds directly responsible for the child and who is the parent/guardian registered on the school records. An official document verifying custody may be required. The school shall not be a party to other arrangements with estranged parents/guardians.

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## Legal References

NJSA 18A:11-1 General mandatory powers and duties  
18A:35-4.9 Pupil promotion and remediation; policies and procedures  
18A:36-14, -15, -16 Religious holidays; absence of pupils on; effect ...  
18A:36-19a Newly enrolled students; records and identification  
18A:36-24 through -26 Missing children; legislative findings and declarations ...  
18A:38-25 Attendance required of children between six and 16; exceptions  
18A:38-26 Days when attendance required; exceptions  
18A:38-27 Truancy and juvenile delinquency defined  
18A:38-31 Violations of article by parents or guardians; penalties  
18A:38-32 District and county vocational school attendance officers  
18A:40-7 Exclusion of pupils who are ill  
18A:40-8 Exclusion of pupils whose presence is detrimental to health and cleanliness  
18A:40-9 Failure of parent to remove cause for exclusion; penalty  
18A:40-10 Exclusion of teachers and pupils exposed to disease  
18A:40-11 Exclusion of pupils having communicable tuberculosis  
18A:40-12 Closing schools during epidemic  
52:17B-9.8a through -9.8c Marking of missing child's school record

NJAC 6A:8-5.1 Graduation requirements  
6A:16-1 et seq. Programs to support student development.  
6A:30-1.1 et seq. Evaluation of the Performance of School Districts  
6A:32-8.1 et seq. Student Attendance and Accounting  
6A:32-8.3 Student attendance

Wetherell v. Board of Education of Township of Burlington, 1978 S.L.D. 794  
Wheatley v. Board of Education of City of Burlington, 1974 S.L.D. 851  
C.R., on behalf of J.R., v. Board of Education of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, 1988 S.L.D. (June 22)

## Possible Cross References

5020, 5111, 5114, 5115, 5124, 5141.2, 5141.4, 5142, 6146, 6147, 6147.1, 6154, 6171.4, 6173