

# REGULATION

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HIGH POINT REGIONAL

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## **R5200 - ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance by all students in the public schools of the state of New Jersey is a well established long standing policy (N.J.S.A. 18A-38:25,26) that has been repeatedly upheld by the courts of the state as well as by the Supreme Court of the United States.

The rationale for requiring such regular attendance was perhaps best summarized by New Jersey's Commissioner of Education who wrote:

"...pupil participation in all regularly scheduled classroom learning activities in each area of study is essential in order for each pupil to receive the maximum benefits of a thorough educational program.

The school cannot teach pupils who are not present. The entire process of education requires a regular continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences, and study in order to reach the goal of maximum educational benefits for each individual child. The regular contact of the pupils with one another in the classroom and their participation in well-planned instructional activity under the tutelage of a competent teacher is vital to this purpose. This is the well-established principle of education which underlies and gives purpose to the requirement of compulsory schooling in this and every other state in the nation.

Frequent absences of pupils from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional process. The benefit of regular classroom instruction is lost and cannot be entirely regained, even by extra after-school instruction.

Consequently, many pupils who miss school frequently experience great difficulty in achieving the maximum benefits of schooling. Indeed, many pupils in these circumstances are able to achieve only mediocre success in their academic programs..."

The High Point Regional High School Board of Education, Administration, and Faculty accept their responsibility in requiring all students to be in regular attendance and as a result have adopted the following policy dealing with attendance.

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## I. ABSENCE

### A. Legal Absences

Under the laws of the state of New Jersey the only legally acceptable reasons for absence from school are; personal illness, death in the immediate family, quarantine, and religious holidays.

### B. Truancy

"Truancy" is a pupil's absence from all or a part of the school day without the knowledge of the pupil's parent. A pupil will also be considered truant if he or she leaves school without permission when school is still in session or is present in school but is absent from class without approval or leaves class because of illness and does not report to the school nurse. Such truancy from class is recorded as a "class cut".

### C. Other Absences

There are occasions when a student finds it necessary to be absent from school that do not fall within the definition of either a "legal absences" or "truancy". Examples of such absences would be for college visitations, work interviews, examinations for drivers license and medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of the school day. It is strongly recommended that the student provide the school prior notice of such absence. Appropriate verification of the reason for the absence is required within five (5) days to be credited as an excused absence.

### D. Absence Verification

The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) is requested to call the school office before 7:30 a.m. of the morning of the pupils absence.

The parent(s) or legal guardian(s) who anticipates a future absence or anticipates that an absence will be prolonged should notify the guidance department, who will assist in the arrangement of make-up work.

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All absences require written notification by parents or guardians of minors and by an individual who has declared his/her majority. Such notes shall be received in the office designated upon return to school following an absence. All such notes must be received within 5 days and shall list the dates and reason for the absence, be signed and dated by the parent or adult pupil, and shall become a part of the official student record. A pupil who has been absent by reason of having or being suspected of having a communicable disease must present written evidence of being free of communicable disease, in accordance with Policy 8451.

A pupil returning from an absence of any length must present to the Main Office a written statement, dated and signed by the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the reasons for the absence.

A pupil who has been absent by reason of having or being suspected of having a communicable disease must present to the School Nurse written evidence of being free of communicable disease, in accordance with Policy 8451.

E. Consecutive Absences

Students under age of compulsory school attendance (16 years) who do not attend school for ten consecutive days and fail to notify the school as to the reason for the absence shall have served upon their parents or guardians a formal written notice to cause the student to attend school N.J.S.A. 18:38-29)

F. School District Response To Unexcused Absences During the School Year

1. For up to four cumulative unexcused absences, the Building Principal or designee shall:
  - a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
  - b. Conduct an investigation of the cause of each unexcused absence, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian;
  - c. Develop an action plan in consultation with the pupil's parent or legal guardian designed to address patterns of unexcused absences, if any,

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- and to have the child return to school and maintain regular attendance;
- d. Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6-1 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or abused child abuse situation is detected; and
  - e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
2. For between five and nine cumulative unexcused absences, the Building Principal or designee shall:
- a. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of each unexcused absence prior to the start of the following school day;
  - b. Conduct a follow-up investigation, including contact with the pupil's parent or legal guardian, to determine the cause of each unexcused absence;
  - c. Evaluate the appropriateness of the action plan developed pursuant to F.1.c. above;
  - d. Revise the action plan, as needed, to identify patterns of unexcused absences and establish outcomes based upon the pupil's needs and specify the interventions for achieving the outcomes, supporting the pupil's return to school and regular attendance that may include any or all of the following:
    - (1) Refer or consult with the building's Intervention and Referral Services Team, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-8;
    - (2) Conduct testing, assessments, or evaluations of the pupil's academic, behavioral, and health needs;
    - (3) Consider an alternate educational placement;

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- (4) Make a referral to a community-based social and health provider agency or other community resource;
    - (5) Refer to the court program designated by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts; and
    - (6) Proceed in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 9:6 et seq. and N.J.A.C. 6A:16-11, if a potentially missing or child abuse situation is detected.
  - e. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate.
3. For cumulative unexcused absences of ten or more, the pupil between the ages of six and sixteen is truant, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:38-27, and the Building Principal or designee shall:
  - a. Make a mandatory referral to the court program required by the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts;
  - b. Make a reasonable attempt to notify the pupil's parent or legal guardian of the mandatory referral;
  - c. Continue to consult with the parent or legal guardian and the involved agencies to support the pupil's return to school and regular attendance;
  - d. Cooperate with law enforcement and other authorities and agencies, as appropriate; and
  - e. Proceed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31, Article 3B, Compelling Attendance at School, and other applicable State and Federal statutes, as required.
4. For pupils with disabilities, the attendance plan and punitive and remedial procedures of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.8 and Policy and Regulation 5200 shall be applied, where applicable, in accordance with the pupil's Individualized Education Programs, pursuant to 20 U.S.C. ' 1400 et seq.; the Individuals

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with Disabilities Education Improvement Act; the procedural protections set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:14; accommodation plans under 29 U.S.C. ' ' 794 and 705(20); and individualized health care plans, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.3.

5. All receiving schools pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-7.1(a) shall act in accordance with F.1. above for each pupil with up to four cumulative unexcused absences.
  - a. For each pupil attending a receiving school with five or more cumulative unexcused absences, the absences shall be reported to the sending district by the receiving school.
    - (1) The sending school district shall proceed in accordance with the district Board of Education policies and procedures pursuant to F. above and the provisions of F.2. through F.4. above, as appropriate.

## F. Excusal from Physical Education

Excusal from physical education will generally be based on medically confirmed need to restrict physical activity. Those pupils who are excused from all physical education with a medical excuse are to be assigned to study classes. If only certain activities need to be avoided or physical education is excused only under certain conditions, the physician must include this information in his or her note. Notes for physical education excusal or modification are to be presented to the main office promptly upon reporting to school. Students with medical conditions that require long-term excusal from physical education will be rescheduled for other programs or courses as available and appropriate.

## G. School Activities

Approved school activities which necessitate a student being absent from class shall not be reflected in absentee totals. Such activities will typically include but not be limited to activities such as field trips, athletic contests, student council meetings, music lessons with teacher permission, etc.

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## H. Discipline

1. Pupils may be denied participation in co-curricular activities if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth in Policy No. 2430.
2. Pupils may be denied participation in athletic competition if their attendance fails to meet the standards set forth in Board Policy No. 2431.
3. No pupil who is absent from school for observance of a religious holiday may be deprived of any award or of eligibility for or opportunity to compete for any award because of the absence.
4. In addition to the requirements as outlined in F.3.a. through e. above, a pupil deemed truant shall be subject to appropriate pupil discipline.
5. The absence of a pupil missing from school for unexplained reasons will be handled in accordance with Regulation No. 8464.

## I. Recording Attendance

1. Teachers must accurately record the pupils present, tardy, and absent each day in each session or each class. Attendance records must also record pupils' attendance at out-of-school curricular events such as field trips.
2. Teachers must classify and record each absence as excused, unexcused, or truancy.
3. A report card will record the number of times the pupil was absent and tardy in each marking period.
4. A pupil's absence for observance of a religious holiday will not be recorded as such on any transcript or application or employment form.

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## ALTERNATE INSTRUCTION

### A. Home Assignments

Home assignments are available to students confined to their homes because of illness. Parents are asked to contact the Guidance Office between 8 and 9 a.m. to request assignments.

Such procedure usually requires two days (phone call received on the morning of Day 1, assignments available at the close of School Day 2).

### B. Makeup Work

Pupils are provided an opportunity to complete assignments missed because of their absences. However, it would be unwise to believe that one can make up the learning activity of a total class session.

The rule of thumb for the time allowed to make up work missed is equal to the amount of time absent. Responsibility for arrangements to make up work lies with the pupil. Extended time to make up work may be granted by the respective teachers.

Pupils choosing to cut classes, or otherwise found to be truant, may not make up work missed during these infractions.

Pupils may complete assignments for time missed because of action initiated by the authorities of the school, i.e., suspension, exclusion, internal suspension, etc.

### C. Home Instruction:

For students who are confined to home for extended periods of time (more than 10 school days by a physician who provides a medical diagnosis) a program to provide tutors in the home is available. Parents of students who have diagnosed illnesses are to contact the Guidance Counselor to arrange for transfer of the student from regular attendance rolls to the Home Instruction Register. Students on the Home Instruction Register are not recorded as absent.

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## III ATTENDANCE AS REQUIREMENT FOR CREDIT:

### A. Absenteeism

Students who are excessively absent shall not receive credit for courses in which they are enrolled. Excessive absenteeism shall be defined as class absence 1) greater than 14 occasions for full year courses and/or, 2) more than seven (7) occasions in a semester length course.

This is not a statement of permissiveness and is not intended to give license as to the number of absences which can be taken. In all classes the grade and credits earned in a course shall reflect daily participation as well as other academic requirements.

### B. Class Absence Totals

1. For the purposes of computing excessive absenteeism, all absences shall be counted in the class absence total except that which results from:
  - a. Religious holidays
  - b. Doctor's notes
  - c. Death in the immediate family
  - d. College visits (maximum of 4 with letter from Admissions Office; community college visitations would receive .5 day credit)
  - e. Administrative reasons (field trips, suspensions)
  - f. Court appearances
  - g. Scheduled test for driver's license
  - h. Other (according to administrative discretion)
2. All notes would have to be received by the Main Office within five (5) days to be credited as an excused absence.
3. For the purposes of computing excessive absenteeism, the following types of absences are included in the totals. Examples include such as:

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- a. Tardiness: Students arriving in school, or for a class, more than 20 minutes after class has started shall be recorded as absent from the class.
- b. Other: Students who are absent from class for other reasons not dictated by the school program such as early release, class "cuts", emergency, illness or personal reasons shall be recorded as absent from the class.

C. Notification

The school will maintain records of absences for all students. Parents or guardians will be notified of absences as follows:

1. For full year courses, written notification shall be supplied with the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) and tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) class absence. Final notification of loss of credit shall be supplied upon the occasion of the fifteenth (15<sup>th</sup>) absence.

Courses that meet for a full year, but are graded separately for each semester are considered to be full year courses for purposes of notification. Credits for the first semester of such courses are not awarded until the completion of the attendance requirement for the year.

D. Loss Or Credit

Students whose absentee record warrants loss of credit shall continue in classes scheduled but shall have indicated N/C (No Credit) in the "credits earned" category of report documents. Students in such status shall complete all course requirements in order to be eligible to file an appeal and/or participate in makeup programs or summer school.

E. Makeup Program to Earn Credits

Students who have demonstrated acceptable mastery of all course proficiencies other than attendance may become eligible to make up the time missed in a special summer program. Such students will be considered to have demonstrated mastery of course proficiencies by obtaining a passing final grade for the course.

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The makeup program will be conducted over a specified three weeks during the summer recess. The organization and administration of the makeup program shall be the responsibility of the Assistant Principal. Staff members will be employed as instructor-monitors as a part of the summer workshop program.

Students approved for participation will meet with the Assistant Principal to develop a plan for makeup. This plan shall include the assignment of an instructor, makeup work to be completed and a schedule for attendance. The makeup program would be a course in itself, consisting of such topics as decision-making, self-esteem, conflict resolution and career related issues. These units will be structured in a three day block, with a total of 10 blocks available to keep students engaged for the duration of the entire makeup program. It is assumed that the attendance requirement for a makeup project will be approximately double that of the excess absence being made up. For example, a student making up three (3) excess absences. or three over the total allowed for the year or semester would be expected to attend six (6) times for 40 minutes.

Depending on the number of absences the student has accumulated, he/she may be able to only have partial credit restored through the summer makeup program.

Since the makeup program is held at the conclusion of the school year after graduation, seniors who have exceeded the attendance policy and in A No Credit@ status are not eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony unless an appeal has been submitted and granted by the Attendance Committee. Upon completion of the make up program and having met all other obligations and requirements for graduation, a diploma will be awarded. Students who fail to adhere to the rules of the program shall be removed from the program and lose credits in the courses for which they have exceeded the maximum number of absences as set forth in this policy.

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## F. Appeals

It is to be recognized that no policy, no matter how well intended, can anticipate all circumstances. The policy is no way intended to create hardships for serious well-intentioned students or their families.

1. Appeals of loss of credit may be granted if it can be substantiated that the pattern of excessive absence resulted from either of the following causes:
  - a. an unusual, long term medical problem as documented by a physician
  - b. an unusual or personal family problem judged to be beyond the control of the student and parent.

Guidelines as to the specific types of information or documentation required for each type of appeal are furnished with the notification of no-credit status.

2. A permanent Attendance Committee is established to monitor and recommend as to the conduct of this policy, including representation of administration, supervisors and teaching staff. This committee has the primary responsibility for hearing and ruling on the merits of appeals. Their findings and recommendations are forwarded to the Principal.
3. The first step in the appeals process is for the parent or adult student to file a request for an appeal with the Attendance Committee. Appropriate forms and directions shall be included with the letter of notification of the "no-credit" status and must be returned within 15 days of the receipt.
4. The Attendance Committee shall meet in closed session at the end of the school year to review all requests for appeals of those students in no credit status. The decision of the Attendance Committee shall be communicated to the parents within five (5) school days of the review meeting.

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5. Appeals of the decision of the Attendance Committee at the review meeting may be made to the Attendance Committee within five (5) school days of the receipt of notification. In such cases a Hearing Committee shall be established to hear the appeal in open session. The hearing will be scheduled at the end of the first semester or at the end of the school year. At the hearing, the parent or student may present any additional information that they feel to be pertinent to explain the cause of the absence. The decision of the Hearing Committee will be communicated in writing within (5) school days of the date of the hearing.
  6. Appeals of the decision of the Hearing Committee may be made to the Board of Education. Such requests must be made in writing to the Superintendent of Schools within ten (10) school days of receipt of notification of the decision.
  7. Appeals of the decision of the Board of Education may be made to the Commissioner of Education.
- J. Attendance Improvement Plan
1. The Superintendent will collect attendance data from each of the schools in the district and calculate the average daily attendance rate for the district and for each school. The attendance rate shall be calculated by dividing the total number of pupil days present for all pupils by the total possible number of pupil days present for all pupils and multiplying the result by one hundred.
  2. When the average daily attendance rate for the district or for a school does not meet the New Jersey Department of Education requirements, performance objectives to improve pupil attendance pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:32-12.2(a)3 shall be developed.

Date Adopted: 12/18/95

Date Revised: 10/18/93, 4/23/01, 9/15/03, 2/26/2007, 7/16/07