

## STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

### Types of Absences

An absence is recorded when:

- A secondary student (6th-12th grade) misses more than fifteen (15) minutes of any class period.
- An elementary student (K-5th grade) misses more than one-half (1/2) of the instructional time in any morning or afternoon session (1 1/2 hours)

Note: The State of New Mexico requires that Excused and Unexcused absences be used in the calculation for *Chronic Absenteeism*. These results are reported to the State, and schools are responsible for lowering chronic absenteeism.

*Excused Absences* -- A parent notifies the school that their child will be absent for the following reasons: personal illness, professional appointments that could not be scheduled outside school time, or serious personal and/or family problems. Medical Doctor Excused Absences are recorded when the school receives a written doctor notification that the student was absent due to a medical appointment or a medical condition of which the student was under a doctor's care. Absences which are the result of discipline levied by the school administrator primarily for disciplinary reasons such as out-of-school suspension are considered excused absences for reporting purposes. However, a student that has been suspended from school for any reason will receive a grade of zero (0) for each day of suspension. School administrators are authorized to allow completion of work for partial credit depending upon the circumstances of the suspension.

*Unexcused Absences* – An absence from a class or school day for which the student does not have an allowable excuse from a parent or doctor. Five (5) unexcused tardies also constitute an unexcused absence.

*Official Absences* -- Absences due to an interscholastic extracurricular or co-curricular activity are considered *Official* and are not recorded as school absences. A student must meet the eligibility requirements of the New Mexico Activities Association for an *official absence* to be granted. These absences are not included in the calculation for *Chronic Absenteeism*. Absences which require a student to be present in a court of law will be considered official absences.

School administrators are authorized to excuse students for necessary and justifiable reasons as determined by the circumstances surrounding the cause of the absence.

### **When Absent from School**

If the parent(s)/guardian(s) have a telephone and provide the contact number to the school, the school may make a reasonable effort to give notification of absence within three (3) hours of the beginning of the school day if the school has not received confirmation of the student's absence. No right of being informed is established by this direction to staff.

State law mandates that parents are responsible for children to be in attendance during the period when school is in session. Therefore, when a student is absent, the parent shall call the school on or before the day of the absence in order to advise the school as to the reason for the absence if a telephone is available. When it is impossible to call on the day of the absence, the school should be notified on the morning the student returns by signed parental note, in time for the student to obtain an admission approval prior to class time. All absences not verified by parental or administrative authorization will be considered unexcused.

If a parent does not have access to a phone, either at home or at work, a note will be accepted for verification purposes.

For absences greater than one (1) day in length, the school should be notified each day of the absence.

If a student is absent for three (3) or more successive school days, the school shall contact the student's parents, legal guardian or custodian by telephone, if possible, no later than the close of school on the school day next succeeding the three-day period. A written notice shall be dispatched if telephone contact has not been made. The provisions of this section do not apply to any absence if the parent, legal guardian or custodian, prior to the end of the three-day period, has contacted the school to explain the absence.

All personnel will solicit cooperation from parents in the matter of school attendance and punctuality, particularly regarding the following:

- The scheduling of medical and dental appointments after school hours except in cases of emergency.
- The scheduling of family vacations during school vacation and recess periods.

## **Interventions for Student Absences (as required by NMSA 22-12A-1)**

At each of the levels described below, parents will attend a meeting with school administrators and an attendance team (with the student in the secondary schools) to formulate interventions and services needed to improve student attendance. Students and families who do not respond to intervention face consequences which may include referral to the Children, Youth and Families Department for excessive absenteeism.

- *Individual Prevention* -- a student misses 5% (but less than 10%) or more of classes or days of school.
- *Early Intervention* – a student misses 10% (but less than 20%) or more of classes or days of school.
- *Intensive Support* – a student misses more than 20% of classes or days of school.

## **Procedures for Notifying Parents of Student Absences**

After the third (3rd), fifth (5th), and tenth(10th) unexcused absences during the current semester; parents will be notified by a form letter stating the number of student's absences.

## **Tardies**

Definition of a Tardy - Secondary student (6th-12th grade): Arriving to any one (1) of the class periods during the school day after the scheduled tardy bell has rung. Elementary student (K-5th grade): Arriving after the official start time.

A secondary student (6th-12th grade) may be tardy to any one (1) class, two (2) times per nine (9)-week period, and no action will be taken. When a student receives three tardies in any one (1) class, the student will be sent to the office, and the school administrator will take appropriate disciplinary action. Additional tardies will result in further disciplinary action taken by the school administrator. Tardiness of fifteen (15) minutes or more to a class (6th-12th grade) is considered an unexcused absence. The teacher shall notify the student when such incidents are recorded as absences.

All office/teacher-caused tardies will be discouraged to the utmost. When unavoidable, a pass will be issued allowing sufficient passage time. Such situations will not be considered tardies.

Five (5) unexcused tardies (during a nine [9] week period) shall count as an unexcused absence. Each tardy (during a nine [9] week period) thereafter will also count as an unexcused absence.

## **Extra Credit for Regular Attendance**

Students who maintain consistent and regular attendance will be rewarded at the end of each nine (9) week period with points added to their final nine (9) week grade average as follows:

- Zero (0) to one (1) day absent per nine (9) weeks -- four (4) points added to nine (9) weeks final average.
- Two (2) days absent per nine (9) weeks = three (3) points added to nine (9) weeks final grade average.
- Three (3) days absent per nine (9) weeks = two (2) points added to nine (9) weeks final grade average.

\*All types of absences will count when determining Extra Credit for Regular Attendance except for Official Absences.

## **Make Up Work for Absences**

Make up work for absences is the responsibility of the student and will be allowed based on one (1) day for every one missed, not to exceed two (2) weeks. A student who misses only one (1) day on the day of a previously announced test or deadline date will be responsible for making up the work the day he/she returns to school.

## **Homebound Program**

If a student is hospitalized or is out of school due to pregnancy or long-term illness, the student will be placed in the homebound program. A student's parent or guardian must notify the office within two (2) days after the start of a long-term illness. The principal or assistant principal will determine whether the student should be placed in the homebound program. A student that has been placed in the homebound program must bring a written physician's statement and Exclusion and Exemptions Form (J-1982 JHD-EB in School Board Manual) to the office explaining why the student is unable to attend school.

This policy replaces J-1561 JH-R previously adopted.