JH Student Absences and Excuses

Issued 3/07 Draft

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for allowing and excusing student absences.

The board believes that attendance is a key factor in student achievement. Any absence represents an educational loss to the student. However, the board recognizes that some absences are unavoidable.

In order to receive one Carnegie unit of credit, a student must be in attendance at least 120 hours, per unit, regardless of the number of days missed. The board may grant approval of excessive absences in accordance with board policy.

The district will utilize a written intervention plan for improving student attendance. The purpose of the plan will be to link students with attendance problems and their families to all appropriate school and community resources.

The board recognizes that tardiness is primarily an attendance issue and will take all reasonable, educationally sound, and corrective actions to improve attendance prior to resorting to the juvenile justice system.

The board expects each student to attend his/her assigned school every day, for the entire school day, except in cases of illness or other reasons specifically stated in this policy. A student who fails to attend school when he/she is physically and circumstantially able to do so and has accrued three consecutive unlawful unverified absences or a total of five unlawful unverified absences is truant. Such a student is in violation of the South Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law which requires school attendance for children who are five years of age by September 1st until they become 17 years of age.

In accordance with state regulations, students can be absent for no more than 10 days per school year. A note from a parent/legal guardian or certified medical practitioner must be submitted to the school immediately upon the return of the student. Absences that exceed the 10 days must be approved by the school principal. A student with excessive absences may be subject to retention. High school students who exceed five absences in a semester course or 10 absences in a year long course may not receive credit for that course.

If a student fails to bring a valid excuse to school, he/she will receive an unverified unexcused absence, automatically be marked as unlawfully absent. If a student or parent/guardian brings a false (or forged) excuse, the teacher will refer the student, he/she must be referred to the school administration for appropriate action and the absence(s) considered unlawful.
The district will consider students lawfully absent under the following circumstances:
(Note: Board may include other reasons here.)

- They are ill and their attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others.
- There is a death or serious illness in their immediate family.
- There is a recognized religious holiday of their faith.
- The student has a court appearance or an appointment with a legal officer.
- The student has appointments with a physician, dentist or other recognized licensed/certified medical practitioner.
- The student is participating in school-related activities that have received prior approval by the principal or his/her designee.
- The student has an appointment with a physician, dentist or other recognized licensed/certified medical practitioner.
- The student has an appointment with a legal officer.
- The student is participating in school-related activities that have received prior approval by the principal or his/her designee.
- The student has been suspended from class or school.
- Prearranged absences for other reasons and/or extreme hardships, determined at the discretion of the principal.
- A child in foster care who must be absent due to a certified court appearance or related court ordered activity including, but not limited to court ordered treatment services.

The district will consider students unlawfully absent under the following circumstances:

- They are absent from school without the knowledge of their parent/legal guardian.
- They are absent without acceptable cause with the knowledge of their parent/legal guardian.
- The student is willfully absent from school without the knowledge of their parent/legal guardian.

Suspension is not to be counted as an unlawful absence for truancy purposes.

The parent/legal guardian will be notified that written excuses will be required for each student absence and the parent/legal guardian will be expected to provide the school with a written excuse for each absence.

After three consecutive unlawful unverified absences or a total of five unlawful unverified absences, the student is considered truant. School officials, along with the parent/legal guardian and student (when appropriate) will identify the reasons for the absences and develop an attendance improvement intervention plan (AIP) to improve future attendance.

The AIP will include, but not be limited to, the following:
• reasons for the unlawful unverified absences
• methods to resolve the cause of unlawful unverified absences
• actions to be taken in the event unlawful unverified absences continue
• signature of the parent/legal guardian or evidence that a reasonable attempt has been made to involve the parent/legal guardian.

Reasonable attempts should be made to contact the parent/legal guardian to identify the reasons for a student’s absences. Reasonable efforts include telephone calls, letters and home visits, both during and after normal business hours. Written messages sent via the United States Postal Service, e-mails and messages sent home with students are acceptable.

Should the parent/legal guardian refuse to cooperate with the AIP process and the student accumulate two additional unlawful unverified absences, a petition may be filed with family court. A petition may also be filed should the parent/legal guardian develop an AIP and fail to comply with the plan and the child student continues to accrue unlawful unverified absences. In either situation, the child student is deemed a "habitual truant," according to the state’s compulsory school attendance law.

**Reporting Violations of Court Orders**

When the school has determined that the student has violated the court order to attend school and/or the child student continues to accumulate unlawful unverified absences, the student is deemed a "chronic truant" under the state compulsory school attendance law. School officials may, should other community alternatives and referrals fail to remedy the attendance problem, refer the student to family court for a violation of a previous court order.

**High School Credit**

In order to receive credit for a high school course, a student must attend 85 days (for a 90-day semester course) or 170 days (for a 180-day year long course). At the discretion of the school principal, students may be eligible to pay to make up missed days not to exceed four make up days per class. All make-up time and work must be completed within 30 days from the last day of the course(s). The board or its designee may extend the time for student’s completion of the requirements due to extenuating circumstances as prescribed by state board of education guidelines.

Although absences may be lawful and not relative to truancy charges, all absences out of school are counted when considering the awarding of credit. Out of school suspension days, while lawful, count toward the denial of credit.

**Re-enrollment of Students**
Students residing in the school district who have been dropped from the roll in accordance with the Education Finance Act or for any other reason and subsequently return must be re-enrolled. The only exception will be those who have been placed on long-term suspension or expelled by the board or the district hearing officer.

Medical Homebound Instruction

The principal or his/her designee will be responsible for implementing and expediting medical homebound instruction for students experiencing a prolonged illness or injury requiring them to be absent from school.

Adopted 4/25/78; Revised 5/14/85, 6/12/90, 3/10/97, 7/1/03, 3/27/07

Legal references:

Federal Law:


B. S. C. Code, 1976, as amended:

1. Section 59-38-10 - South Carolina Education Bill of Rights for Children in Foster Care.
2. Section 59-46-50 - Interstate compact on educational opportunity for military children.
3. Section 59-65-50 - Nonattendance reported to court having jurisdiction of juveniles.

C. State Board of Education Regulations:

1. R43-274 - Student attendance.

Federal law:


S.C. Code, 1976, as amended:

Section 59-65-90 – State Board to establish rules and regulations defining lawful and unlawful absences.
State Board of Education Regulations:

R-43-274 — Student attendance.