

## Shelby County Board of Education

6014

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# ATTENDANCE AND EXCUSES

## I. PURPOSE

To facilitate regular school attendance.

## II. SCOPE

This policy applies to Shelby County Schools students.

## III. POLICY STATEMENT

The Shelby County Board of Education believes that regular attendance is a necessary requirement of all students.

All students are expected to attend school on each day that school is officially in session and remain at school for the entirety of the school day. Only the following reasons will be considered for excused absences:

1. Illness, injury, pregnancy, homebound circumstance, or hospitalization of student. The District may require a parent conference and/or physician verification to justify absences after the accumulation of ten (10) days of absence during a school year. Notes must be date specific and will be required for subsequent absences beyond ten (10) days.
2. Death or serious illness within the student's immediate family.
3. When the student is officially representing the school in a school sponsored activity or attendance at school-endorsed activities and verified college visits.

4. Special and recognized religious holidays regularly observed by persons of their faith. Any student who misses a class or day of school because of the observance of a day set aside as sacred by a recognized religious denomination of which the student is a member or adherent, where such religion calls for special observances of such day, shall have the absence from that school day or class excused and shall be entitled to make up any school work missed without the imposition of any penalty because of the absence.
5. A court order; a subpoena; and/or a legal court summons.
6. Extenuating circumstances over which the student has no control as approved by the principal.
7. If a student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student is a member of the United States Armed Forces, including a member of a state National Guard or a Reserve component called to federal active duty, the student's Principal shall give the student:
  - a. An excused absence for one (1) day when the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student is deployed;
  - b. An additional excused absence for one (1) day when the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student returns from deployment; and
  - c. Excused absences for up to ten (10) days for visitation when the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student is granted rest and recuperation leave and is stationed out of the country.
  - d. Excused absences for up to ten (10) days cumulatively within the school year for visitation during the deployment cycle of the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student. Total excused absences under this section (c) and (d) shall not exceed a total of ten (10) days within the school year. The student shall provide documentation to the school as proof of the deployment of the student's parent, custodian or other person with legal custody or control of the student.
8. Participation in a non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity. A school principal or the principal's designee may excuse a student from school attendance to participate in a non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity, if the following conditions are met:

- a. The student provides documentation to the school as proof of the student's participation in the non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity; and
- b. The student's parent, custodian, or other person with legal custody or control of the student, prior to the extracurricular activity, submits to the principal or the principal's designee a written request for the excused absence. The written request shall be submitted no later than seven (7) business days prior to the student's absence. The written request shall include:
  - i. The student's full name and personal identification number;
  - ii. The student's grade;
  - iii. The dates of the student's absence;
  - iv. The reason for the student's absence; and
  - v. The signature of both the student and the student's parent, custodian, or other person with legal custody or control of the student.

The principal or the principal's designee shall approve, in writing, the student's participation in the non-school-sponsored extracurricular activity.

The principal may limit the number and duration of non-school-sponsored extracurricular activities for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school year; however, the principal shall excuse no more than ten (10) absences each school year for students participating in non-school-sponsored extracurricular activities.

9. To attend a released-time course in religious moral instruction for up to one (1) class period during each school week; provided, that:
  - a. The student's parent or legal guardian signs a written consent form prior to the student's participation in the released time course;
  - b. The released time course shall be conducted off public school property;
  - c. The independent entity maintains attendance records and makes the records available to the LEA and the local board of education;
  - d. Any transportation to and from the place of instruction, including transportation for students with disabilities, is the responsibility of the independent entity, parent, legal guardian, or student;
  - e. The independent entity assumes liability for the student attending the released time course from the time that the student leaves the school until the student returns to the school;

- f. No public funds are expended and no public school personnel are involved in providing the instruction for released time courses;
- g. The student assumes responsibility for any missed schoolwork;
- h. The principal of the school, or the principal's designee, shall determine the classes from which the student may be excused to participate in the released time course; provided, that the student may not be excused to participate in a released time course during any class in which subject matter is taught for which the state requires an examination for state or federal accountability purposes; and
- i. The released time courses shall coincide with school class schedules.

NOTE: A child who serves as a page of the general assembly during the school year, either at regular or special sessions, shall be credited as present by the school in which the child is enrolled in the same manner as an educational field trip. The child's participation as a page shall not be counted as an absence, either excused or unexcused.

Students receiving an excused absence under this section shall have the opportunity to make up school work missed and shall not have their class grades adversely affected for lack of class attendance or class participation due to the excused absence.

A written statement within two (2) school days of the student's return to school shall be required from the parent or guardian explaining the reason for each absence.

If necessary, verification is required from an official source to justify absences.

All absences other than those outlined above shall be considered unexcused.

Parents may appeal unexcused absences to their child's school principal (or designee). The appeal must be: (1) in writing and include documentation necessary to support the appeal; (2) submitted within five (5) school days of the parent's receipt of the first official attendance letter generated by the District that is referenced in policy 6016 Truancy; and (3) based on one or more of the allowable reasons for excused absences outlined in this policy. Within five (5) school days of receipt of the request for appeal, the Principal (or designee) shall review the appeal, meet with the parents to allow them an opportunity to be heard, and render a decision regarding the appeal. The decision of the principal (or designee) that is compliant with applicable law and district policy is final.

(This appeal process for determining unexcused absences is ancillary to a truancy decision rendered by a juvenile court judge as described in TCA 49-6-3010.) Questions regarding school-level decisions may be directed to the district department responsible for academic school operations.

### **Make-up Work**

Students should make every effort and be afforded the opportunity to make up work missed due to excused and unexcused absences. In the event of an excused absence, students are expected to make up work missed within a reasonable time (e.g., at least one or more days of makeup for each day of excused absence).

In the event of an unexcused absence<sup>1</sup> (including short-term suspensions), one day of makeup time shall be allowed for each day of unexcused absence, unless otherwise extended by the school or extended based on law or policy. Students and/or their parents should work with the teacher for assistance in making up work (e.g., obtaining make-up work/assignments, participating in available tutoring/requesting tutoring, etc.).

## **IV. RESPONSIBILITY**

A. The Superintendent (or designee) is responsible for implementing this policy.

#### Legal References:

1. TCA 49-10-1101
2. TCA 49-6-3019(a)
3. TRR/MS 0520-01-03-.03
4. TCA 49-6-3002(b)

#### Cross References:

1. 6069 Recognition of Religious Beliefs, Customs, and Holidays
2. 5014 Grading System for Grades K-5
3. 5015 Grading System for Grades 6-12

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<sup>1</sup> For absences due to long-term suspension (over 10 days)/expulsion, the program of making up work shall be in accordance with state law T.C.A. 49-6-3402(b), which allows students to attend alternative schools to receive instruction as nearly as practicable with that of their home schools and requires that all course work completed and credits earned in the alternative schools be transferred to and recorded in the home school.