

BLOUNT COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
BOARD POLICY REVISION FOR
2018-2019

NEW OR REVISED POLICY

POLICY NUMBER: 5.4

POLICY TITLE (IF NEW POLICY): _____

TYPE POLICY REVISION HERE

5.4 Attendance

Alabama law requires that all children between the ages of ⁽³⁾ six and ⁽²⁾ seventeen be enrolled in and attend school. In addition, new state law amendments (Ala. code s. 16-28-16, as amended by Act 1999-705) provide that all children who choose to enroll in school even if not of compulsory school age, are subject to the school attendance and truancy laws of the state. All students should attend school regularly and be punctual for all classes in order to receive the greatest benefit from the instructional program and develop habits of punctuality, self-discipline, and individual responsibility. There is a direct relationship between poor attendance and class failure. Students who have good attendance generally achieve higher grades and enjoy school more. Students who miss more than 15 total days in a school year are considered “chronically absent” by the state and are at a higher risk of negative school outcomes. Students who miss as little as two days each month miss an entire year of instruction over their K-12 school span. This can have a detrimental effect on achievement and future success. Attendance at school shall be one of the factors considered in determining the promotion of a student from one grade to another or in any given course.

Parents and guardians are responsible for enrolling their children in school and ensuring that the children attend school and obey behavior policies adopted by the Board. Parents failing to enroll students and ensuring their attendance and proper behavior are subject to fines and imprisonment under state law. State law also requires that all student suspensions from school must be reported to the local district attorney.

Principals must report to the local superintendent any parent, guardian, or other person having control or custody of a child who fails to require the child to attend school or receive instruction by a private tutor, or fails to properly conduct him/herself at school. The Superintendent or designee is required to report the violators to the district attorney within 10 days.

- A. Compulsory Attendance – Every child between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17) must attend a public school, private school, church school, or be instructed by a competent private tutor for the entire length of the school term except that every child attending a church school is exempt from the requirements of the *Code of Alabama* (1975) 16-28-3;16-28-5, provided such child complies with the enrollment and reporting procedure specified in the *Code of Alabama* (1975) 1628-7 of the code. It is the policy of the Blount County Board of Education that children enrolled in a private school, church school, or instructed by a private tutor must provide appropriate documentation to the Superintendent within 10

days after the beginning of school or upon withdrawal from school or upon residency in Blount County.

- B. Absences and Excuses – Every parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of any child required to attend public school, private school, or church school, shall as soon as practical explain the cause of any absence of the child under his control or charge which was without permission of the teacher. Failure to furnish such explanation shall be admissible as evidence of such child being a truant with the consent and connivance of the person in control or charge of the child, unless such person can show to the reasonable satisfaction of the court that he had no knowledge of such absence and that he had been diligent in his efforts to secure the attendance of such child. *Code of Alabama (1975) 16-28-15*

A good cause or valid excuse, as used in this section, exists when on account of sickness or other condition attendance was impossible or entirely inadvisable or impracticable or when, by virtue of the extraordinary circumstances, the absence is generally recognized as excusable. *Code of Alabama (1975) 16-28-13*

Students are not permitted to be absent from school without a valid excuse.

Absences will be designated as excused or unexcused. Excused absences will be permitted for the following reasons:

- Personal illness
- Hospitalization
- Emergency conditions as determined by the principal
- Death in immediate family
- Court subpoena
- Legal quarantine
- Absences approved by the principal prior approval (including military leave of parent or guardian)

Documentation supporting an excused absence must be submitted within **three (3) days** after the student returns to school or the absence will be deemed to be unexcused. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a loss of academic credit or referral of the matter to juvenile or other appropriate legal authorities for investigation.

Only seven (7) days or partial days can be excused by parent/doctor notes each semester as a valid excused absence.

Any absence over seven in a semester will be marked unexcused in the attendance register. If a student has significant medical diagnosis, parents can submit a Medical Condition Release Form and a physician's letter to the school documenting the medical condition and the necessity of additional absence days. Letters and release forms must be resubmitted each school year.

Homebound services may be provided for qualified students as determined by the Board of Education.

Excessive unexcused absences may result in a loss of academic credit or referral of the matter to juvenile or other appropriate legal authorities for investigation.

C. Make-up Work – Excused Absences

If a student is absent for any excused reason as defined above, the student shall be allowed to make up school work missed during said absence or absences. The student shall be responsible for contacting the teacher or teachers to arrange for make-up work. Said student shall contact the teacher or teachers to make up work within three (3) days after returning from said absence.

D. Make-up Work – Unexcused Absences

Teachers shall not provide make-up work or examinations for students absent for unexcused reasons.

E. Academic Incentives – for exceptional attendance

Students may be exempt from semester exams if they have (a) an 85+ average and one absence or less, or (b) a 90+ average in the class with three absences or less.

F. Academic Sanctions – for excessive unexcused class absences

Students that exceed **seven (7) absences** in a semester or **fourteen (14) total absences** in a school year will lose course credit and/or be retained.

G. Truancy Reporting

Truancy Definition

A parent, guardian, or other person having charge of any child officially enrolled in Alabama public schools (K-12) shall explain in writing the cause of any and every absence of the child no later than three (3) school days following return to school. A failure to furnish such explanation shall be evidence of the child being truant each day he is absent. Seven (7) unexcused absences within a school year constitute a student being truant for the purpose of filing a petition with the Court.

All children enrolled in Blount County Schools, whether compulsory school age or not, are subject to school attendance and truancy laws of the State of Alabama. All cases of non-enrollment or non-attendance will be investigated by the Blount County Board of Education Attendance Officer. In cases where there is no valid reason for absence, the attendance officer will give written notice to the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child to require attendance of the child within three days of the date of the notice. If the absence is found to be without valid excuse or reason and intentional, the attendance officer shall be required to bring criminal prosecution against the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child.

(16-28-16 Code of Alabama Effective July 1, 2000.)

1) 1st Truancy/Unexcused Absence (warning)

- Parent/guardian shall be notified (by memo or phone notification) that the student was absent.

2) 2nd Truancy/Unexcused Absence (Principal's Letter)

- Parent/guardian will be notified by letter that the student was truant and provided a copy of the student's attendance.

3) 3rd Truancy/Unexcused Absence (Attendance Officer Letter)

- Parent/guardian shall be notified by letter that the student is not in compliance with school attendance laws and policies and advised of the penalties that can be applied and the procedures that shall be followed in the event that other unexcused absences occur.

4) 5th Unexcused Absence (Early Warning)

- The parent, guardian, or person having control of the child shall participate in the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program provided by the Juvenile court.
- Attendance at the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program shall be mandatory except where prior arrangements have been made or an emergency exists.
- Failure to appear at the Early Warning Truancy Prevention program can result in the filing of a complaint/petition against the parent under *Code of Alabama*. (1975), 16-28-12(c) (failure to cooperate), or a truancy against the child, whichever is appropriate.

5) 7th Unexcused Absence

- The Attendance Officer will file a complaint/petition against the child and/or parent/guardian, if appropriate.

6) Child under probation

- The school attendance officer should be notified by the juvenile probation officer of all children in the school system under probation supervision by the juvenile court as consistent with state statute.
- Where a child under probation is truant, the school attendance officer should immediately notify the juvenile probation officer.

7) Suspensions are unexcused absences, but do not constitute unexcused absence total for truancy purposes.

(Justification for Policy Revision):

- The 7 absences per semester (14 absences per year) will help reduce chronic absenteeism (15 or more absences per year).
- Changing all absences to either excused or unexcused will help with tracking student absenteeism.
- Referencing the Bridge Academy attendance requirement from submitted revision 5.5.1
- Referencing the submitted revision to exam exemption numbers and absences due to military leave of immediate family.