

The Board of Education believes there is no substitute for the uninterrupted personal contact between students and teachers in the classroom environment where learning experiences are carefully planned by the teachers. Classroom attendance and participation is an integral part of the school experience. Regular attendance also develops patterns of behavior essential to success in later life, both personal and business. Even though students may make up work missed because of absences, they may never be able to replace the educational, cultural and social contacts they would have experienced through face to face instruction and class participation. Accordingly, the Wilkes County Board of Education expects each student to attend every class.

This policy contains the following three distinct provisions:

- A. Compulsory Attendance Requirements.
- B. Support to Students with Excessive Absences.
- C. The Wilkes County Board of Education's Attendance Requirements for Promotion to the Next Grade.

A. COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

North Carolina General Statute 115C-378 provides that "Every parent, guardian or other person in this State having charge or control of a child between the ages of seven and sixteen years shall cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session. Every parent, guardian, or other person in this State having charge or control of a child under age seven who is enrolled in a public school in grades kindergarten through two shall also cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session unless the child has withdrawn from school. No person shall encourage, entice, or counsel any such child to be unlawfully absent from school. The parent, guardian or custodian of a child shall notify the school of the reason for each known absence of the child, in accordance with local school policy..." North Carolina General Statute 115C-380 provides for a criminal penalty for any parent, guardian or other person violating the provision of the *State Compulsory Attendance Laws*. The *State Compulsory Attendance Laws* shall be strictly observed by the Wilkes County Board of Education. They are appended to this Policy for easy review.

TERMS

ATTENDANCE -To be considered in attendance, a student must be present in the school for at least one-half of the school day or at a place other than the school with the approval of the principal to attend an authorized school activity (school related absence).

EXCUSED ABSENCES - The Wilkes County Board of Education shall excuse the temporary absence of a student upon showing of satisfactory evidence of one of the following bases:

1. Illness or injury prevents the student from being physically able to attend school or the local health officer or the State Board of Health orders the isolation of the student.

2. The student is absent due to the death of a member of the immediate family of the child.
3. The student has a medical or dental appointment or such an appointment which has been approved in advance by the principal.
4. The student is a party to or is under subpoena as a witness in the proceedings of a court or administrative tribunal.
5. The student has obtained prior approval by the principal to be absent due to the observance of an event required or suggested by the religion of the student or the student's parents.
6. The student obtains prior approval (by the principal) to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity, such as travel. Educational Travel is unexcused until class assignments are made up to the satisfaction of the teacher. Educational travel absences will be included in the maximum number of allowed absences per year as defined below*.

INVOLUNTARY SUSPENSIONS - The absence of a student which results from suspension, out of school, for misconduct pursuant to the provisions of N.C.G.S. 115C-391, shall not be considered an unexcused absence for the purposes of the *Compulsory Attendance Law*. However, such an absence shall be treated as an unexcused absence for purposes of makeup work time and co-curricular activity eligibility. Middle School (6-8) students may be required to attend Alternative Learning Program (ALP) in order to be considered for promotion.

SCHOOL RELATED ABSENCES - The Wilkes County Board of Education shall excuse the temporary absence of a student from school when that student is at a place other than the school with the approval of the principal to attend an authorized school activity.

It is the intention of the Wilkes County Board of Education that classes missed for authorized school activities as outlined above is kept to an absolute minimum through close scrutiny of the principal. School related activities shall not be counted or coded as absences from either class or school. However, students shall follow the same procedure for makeup work as they do for other excused absences.

TARDY - Each instance when a student is late for a class or checks out early three (3) unexcused tardies to school shall constitute one unexcused absence for the purpose of this policy. This will be monitored by the classroom teacher and/or principal designee.

NOTIFICATION OF EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

The laws require that the school notify parents of excessive unexcused absences under the conditions that follow. It is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to update the school with a current mailing address at all times.

1. After the third unexcused absence:
 - a. The principal or his designee shall notify the parent/guardian by mail.
 - b. If unable to contact the parent/guardian, the principal shall refer the matter to a school social worker or his designee for immediate investigation.
2. After six unexcused absences, the principal or his designee shall notify the parent/guardian of the student's excessive number of unexcused absences from school.
 - a. Notification of the parent shall be by mail and shall state that the parent may be in violation of the *North Carolina Compulsory Attendance Law* and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under established attendance policies (see G.S. 115C-378).
 - b. A copy of the notice will be directed to the school social worker, or other appropriate school personnel, who will work with the student and family to remedy the problem (see G.S.115C-378).
3. If a student accumulates 10 unexcused absences in a school year, the student's parent/guardian shall be notified by mail of the student's excessive number of unexcused absences. The principal shall also review any reports or investigation prepared pursuant to G.S. 115C-378 through 115C-381 and shall confer with the student and his parent/guardian if possible to determine whether the parent/guardian received notification pursuant to the requirements of the *Compulsory Attendance Law* and made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal determines that the parent/guardian has not, he shall notify the district attorney's office, and/or the Department of Juvenile Justice, and/or the Director of Social Services.

B. PROVIDING SUPPORT TO STUDENT WITH EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

The principal and his staff shall take appropriate action to help prevent excessive absences. Parents shall be notified of their child's absences, as above outlined. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will also be notified when a child accumulates ten (10) total absences. Where appropriate, the principal and/or his staff may require parent(s) or guardian(s) to attend a school based attendance meeting. School personnel shall work with the student's family in an attempt to eliminate the problem, counsel, and recommend other appropriate resources as needed.

C. THE WILKES COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION'S ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION TO THE NEXT GRADE

EXCUSED ABSENCES - A note is required for each excused absence within three (3) days of returning to school. When a child accumulates 10 or more absences, the principal will determine if the parent(s) or

guardian(s) will be required to attend a school-based attendance meeting to develop a plan to improve attendance. A doctor's note may be required for future absences to be considered excused.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES - For every unexcused absence, the student shall immediately meet with each teacher of every class missed and shall make up all work to the satisfaction of the teacher of the class missed. A note is required for every absence within three (3) days of returning to school.

LOSS OF OPPORTUNITY TO BE PROMOTED TO THE NEXT GRADE

Irrespective of how absences are coded, if the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student in grades K-8 who does not comply with the requirement of attending a school-based attendance meeting, committee/principal requirements, and the student does not comply with the requirement of completing the makeup work to the satisfaction of the teacher as above outlined, the student may not be promoted, pending appeal as described herein below.

APPEAL PROCESS

Any student who is denied the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade due to inadequate attendance as provided for herein shall have a right to appeal to the school's attendance committee. The procedure for appeal shall be as follows:

1. Each school shall have an attendance committee which shall include an administrator, a teacher, the school social worker, the counselor and such additional members as may be appointed at the sole and complete discretion of the school principal.
2. The attendance committee shall meet as needed.
3. When a student has accumulated ten (10) absences, the student and his parent/guardian shall be notified, in writing that the student may be denied the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade, unless the student makes up all work and the parent(s)/guardian(s) attend a school-based attendance meeting as set out hereinabove. The written notice shall advise the student and his parent/guardian that he may appeal the denial of the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade to the school's attendance committee by submitting a request for appeal to the principal five (5) school days within receipt of the notification referred to hereinabove. A parent conference can be requested by the parent or school. The failure of the school to provide this notification shall not negate the policy.
4. Any appeal to the attendance committee must be submitted, in writing, to the principal not later than five (5) school days after the student and his parent/guardian receive notice pursuant to paragraph 3 above. The notice of and request for appeal must state the reason the student should be allowed the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade without making up work and

parent(s)/guardian(s) compliance with meeting requirements. Written documents in support of the student's statement may be attached to the notice of and request for appeal.

5. Upon receiving an appeal from the student and or parent/guardian, the attendance committee shall meet and review the written records submitted by the school and by the student and his parent/guardian. If the committee's decision is in favor of the student, the student and his parent/guardian shall be so notified. If the committee determines that it cannot decide the matter in the student's favor based upon the written records, the committee shall arrange a time for a hearing at the convenience of the committee members and the student, which hearing shall be no more than ten (10) school days after the committee makes that determination.
6. The attendance committee can decide to:
 - a. allow the student the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade upon the completion of a designated amount of make-up time and/or completion of appropriate work to compensate for loss of instruction, or other activities as established by the committee;
 - b. deny the student the opportunity to be promoted to the next grade
7. If the decision of the attendance committee is adverse to the student, the student and his parent/guardian shall have five (5) days from the date of notification of the committee's decision to appeal the decision to the superintendent or his designee.

EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN - Those students identified and classified as Exceptional Children who appeal loss of opportunity to be promoted to the next grade for failure to comply with this Policy shall first have their appeal data reviewed by their school's Exceptional Children's School Based Committee.

ADDENDUM - The principal will have the option to require a doctor's excuse when a student has had excessive absences. Doctor notes will be accepted at the Principal's discretion.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-378, 380, 391; 16 NCAC 6D .0103

Cross References: Curriculum Development (policy 3100), Graduation Requirements (policy 3460)

Adopted: August 9, 1993

Revised: July, 1994

Revised: May 17, 2004, May 7, 2007, January 7, 2008, June 4, 2012