

Student Attendance

Guidelines for Absences and Attendance

Purpose

During its March 2024 meeting, BESE approved updates to policy in [Bulletin 126 - Charter Schools](#) and [Bulletin 741 - Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators](#) regarding absences and attendance. The revisions provide clarity; opportunities for academic recovery; and the reporting of attendance data daily.

Types of Absences

The days absent for elementary and secondary school students shall include excused, unexcused absences, and suspensions/expulsion.

- **Excused Absences** — absences which are not considered for purposes of truancy, including absences incurred due to extenuating circumstances in accordance with §1103. of this Chapter.
- **Unexcused Absence**—any absence not meeting the requirements set forth in the excused absence definition, including but not limited to absences due to any job (including agriculture and domestic services, even in their own homes or for their own parents or tutors) unless it is part of an approved instructional program.
- **Suspension/Expulsion**—absence in which a student is not in attendance in the regular instructional setting due to disciplinary actions imposed by the school. The absence is not considered for purposes of truancy unless the student was assigned to an alternative site and is not in attendance at the assigned alternative site.

Academic Recovery

A student who is absent, including a suspended student, shall be allowed to submit missed assignments and tests, and shall be eligible to receive the same academic credit and grades originally available when work is completed satisfactorily and in a timely manner. LEAs should determine through policy and guidance what constitutes satisfactory and timely work.

Attendance Reporting

Daily attendance shall be taken in accordance with R.S. 17:232. Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, student attendance shall be submitted daily to the LDOE, including the number of students in attendance, the number of students absent, and the truancy status of each student.

Exceptions to the attendance regulation shall be the enumerated extenuating circumstances that are verified by the supervisor of child welfare and attendance or the school principal/designee where indicated. Excused absences do not apply in determining whether a student meets the minimum minutes of instruction required to receive credit for a course.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How many minutes should a student be in attendance each school year?

Elementary students shall be in attendance a minimum of 60,120 minutes.

High school students shall be in attendance a minimum of 30,060 minutes per semester or 60,120 minutes a school year for schools not operating on a semester basis.

2. If a student is in danger of failing due to excessive absences, is the student allowed to make up missed time?

Yes, a student may make up missed time in class sessions held outside of the regular class time. These make-up sessions must be completed before the end of the current semester, and all other relevant policies must be met.

3. What types of absences are considered extenuating circumstances?

- a. Extended personal physical or emotional illness as verified by a physician or nurse practitioner licensed in the state.
- b. An extended hospital stay in which a student is absent as verified by a physician or dentist.
- c. An extended recuperation from an accident in which a student is absent as verified by a physician, dentist, or nurse practitioner licensed in the state.
- d. An extended contagious disease within a family in which a student is absent as verified by a physician or dentist licensed in the state.
- e. Quarantine due to prolonged exposure to or direct contact with a person diagnosed with a contagious, deadly disease, as ordered by state or local health officials.
- f. An observance of special and recognized holidays of the student's own faith.
- g. Visitation with a parent who is a member of the United States Armed Forces or the National Guard of a state and such parent has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. Excused absences in this situation shall not exceed five school days per school year.
- h. Absences verified and approved by the school principal or designee in these instances:
 - i. Prior school system-approved travel for education
 - ii. Death in the immediate family (not to exceed one week)
 - iii. Natural catastrophe and/or disaster
 - iv. Student personal illness or serious illness in family
 - v. Pregnant and parenting students at a minimum of 10 days after the birth of a child.
- i. A student may be absent related to the student's mental health for up to three days in any school year, and such absences shall be excused when documentation/verification is submitted in accordance with the student handbook. The student shall be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Upon the return to school following the second day of mental health absence in any school year, the student shall be referred to the appropriate school support personnel for guidance in addressing the underlying issue, which may include referral to medical services outside of the school setting.
- j. If a student is absent from school for 2 or more days within a 30-day period under a contract or employment arrangement to render artistic or creative services for compensation as set forth in the Child Performer Trust Act (R.S. 51:2131 et seq.) the employer shall employ a certified teacher, beginning on the second day of employment, to provide a minimum of three education instruction hours per day to the student pursuant to the lesson plans for the particular student as provided by the principal and teachers at the student's school. There must be a teacher to student ratio of one teacher for every 10 students.

- 4. Are absences due to extenuating circumstances applicable to meeting the minimum minutes of instruction?**
LEA policy may allow for this in accordance with locally-established due process procedures.
- 5. Do absences with a parent note for “personal illness” count against a student’s number of minutes to earn credit?**
LEA policy may provide for a limit to the number of days that can be excused via a parent note.
- 6. What is the process for accepting excused absences?**
LEA policy can dictate the process for accepting documentation of excused absences.
- 7. How many days can a student be absent “due to personal illness” without a doctor’s note and the student is not labeled “truant?”**
If there is no documentation, from a doctor or a parent, regarding the absence, then that absence would contribute to the student being labeled truant.
- 8. A student is absent twice per week, for one month (4 weeks). The student brings in a “personal illness” note from the parent one time each week. After a month is the student truant?**
No, the student is not as the student has 4 unexcused absences and 4 excused absences. A student is considered truant with 5 unexcused absences or 5 tardies in a semester.
The student misses 4 more days the next month and provides a note stating “personal illness” from the parent. Is the student now “truant?”
No, as the student has not reached the threshold of 5 unexcused absences or 5 tardies.
- 9. The policy states that a student who is absent, including a suspended student, can submit missed assignment and test and is eligible to receive the same academic credit and grades originally available when work is completed satisfactorily or in a timely manner. How is a *timely manner* defined?**
This is a local decision.