


<p>Tucson Unified School District</p>  <p>Tucson, Arizona</p> <p><b>POLICY REGULATION</b></p>	REGULATION TITLE: Student Attendance
	CODE: JE – R

The administration, teachers, attendance clerks and other school staff will work closely with parents and/or guardians to establish regular attendance for all students. Regular participation in classroom activities fosters critical thinking, communication skills, and responsibility, all of which are essential skills for future employment. Good attendance in school is also part of the self-discipline that we try to instill in our students to enable them to act as responsible members of the community.

**Definitions:**

- **Attendance:** The presence of each student in scheduled instruction.
- **Excessive Absence:** 10% or more of the required attendance days (180 days).
- **Tardy:** Not in the classroom by the time the bell rings.
- **Register of Attendance:** Any written or electronic record maintained for the purpose of recording the attendance, absence, tardiness, or early departure of a student.
- **Scheduled Instruction:** Every period that a student is scheduled to attend actual instruction or their designated learning environment of study.
- **Truancy:** An unexcused absence of a child who is between six and sixteen years of age for at least one class period during the day from compulsory school.
- **Truant Child:** A child who is between six and sixteen years of age and who is not in attendance at a public or private school during the hours that school is in session, unless excused.
- **Habitually Truant:** Is a child who is truant for at least five school days within a school year.
- **Excused Absence:** Absences that the parents/guardians have documented/authorized with time and reason.
- **Unexcused Absence:** Absence without approval of parents/guardians is considered truancy and unexcused.

**Policy Notification and Communication**

Tucson Unified School District will employ the following strategies to effectively implement the attendance policy.

- Increase awareness of policy among staff by:
  - Including a copy of the policy in the teachers’ handbook.
  - Additional methods of notification may be added by school councils.
- Increase awareness of policy among students by:
  - Including a summary in the students’ Rights and Responsibilities handbook.
  - Additional methods of notification may be added by school councils.
- Increase awareness of policy among parents by:
  - Discussing the policy at Open House.

- Additional methods of notification may be added by school councils.

## **When Absent from School**

### **Parents/Guardians**

- The parents/guardians are expected to call, send a note or an email to the school on or before the day(s) of the absence.
- In high school, if it is impossible to notify the school prior to the absence, the school **must receive notice within 48 hours** after the student returns to school; otherwise, it will be considered unexcused.
- State law mandates that the school record reasons for all student absences; therefore, all messages must include parent name, student name, date, time and reason for absence.
- All absences not authorized and verified by the parents/guardians will be unexcused.

### **Elementary and Middle School**

- When a student is absent from a class and/or day without notification or authorization (the school has not been notified by the parent/guardian within two hours after the beginning of the first class in which the student is absent), the school will make a reasonable effort to promptly telephone or notify the parents/guardians.
- If absences affect progress toward student achievement, the parent/student/teacher(s) must convene to discuss options.

### **Recording Attendance**

- Teachers are required to check and formally record attendance for all students assigned to their classes and school sponsored activities.
- Any absence, lateness, or early dismissal must be accounted for.
- Students who are absent shall be reported to the school office.
- School Office Staff is responsible for verifying and recording a reason for each absence.
- On the secondary level, (grades 6-12), attendance will be taken during each class period and compiled in a central location within each school. Teachers are responsible to cross-reference class absence with the daily absentee list.
- On the elementary level, (grades Pre-K-5), attendance will be taken once at the beginning of each day and once in the afternoon. The teacher, or adult supervisor in-charge, will know the whereabouts of each child throughout the day.

### **Absences**

- Elementary School (grades K - 5). An absence is defined as a student's nonattendance in the assigned classroom(s) for more than one-half of the school day.
- Middle and High School (grades 6 – 12). An absence is defined as a student's nonattendance in the assigned classroom(s) during the assigned period. The student will be marked absent arriving 1 minute past 50% of the class time.
- Students **shall not** be considered absent when they are authorized by school officials to be somewhere other than in their regularly scheduled class. (For example, if school personnel expects a student to report elsewhere during their regularly scheduled class time for such activities as meetings, conferences with school personnel, testing, physical exams, music lessons, or field trips.) It is the

responsibility of the student and/or the designated staff member to provide the teacher with written documentation to attend these sessions before they are permitted to leave the class.

- Absences resulting from the student assigned to in-school suspension will not count as a class absence; they will be coded as AA (In-house). Absences resulting from a student assigned to out-of-school suspension will count as an absence and coded as suspended (AS)
- Students who will be absent for 60 or more days due to physical or mental reasons are withdrawn from their home school and enrolled at Direct Link I or Direct Link II (formally called Homebound/Teleteaching) where instruction is given and attendance is taken.
- Students with 3 or more unexcused absences will be reported to TUSD Truancy Enforcement.
- Students who have had 10 consecutive unexcused absences will be dropped from the school only after parents/guardians have been contacted, an intervention plan has been developed, Dropout Prevention and Truancy Enforcement have been called and no results have been achieved. Documentation will identify all contacts and support provided.

### **Make-up Work**

- Teachers must provide **all students** who are absent (excused & unexcused) **from each class** with make-up work.
- Students will have a reasonable time (1 for 1 – 1 day absence, 1 day for make-up, etc.) to turn in the work. Teachers may make special exceptions based on circumstances.
- A coordinated school distribution system for student make-up work may be developed by the school council.

### **Excused Absence**

- Any absence due to illness, vacation, death in the family, religious observance, accident, or other unusual personal circumstances may be excused, provided a message is received from the parents/guardians stating the day, time and reason for the absence.

### **Unexcused Absence**

- Unexcused absences can affect grades, assessments, participation in extra-curricular activities and promotion/graduation.
- Until determined otherwise through a parent/guardian telephone call to the school and a written excuse from the parent/guardian, every absence will be considered unexcused.
- Elementary school (grades K-5). In accordance with state law, if a student in kindergarten or grades one through eight is absent from school without excuse or without notice (school has not been notified by the parent/guardian) the school, within two hours after the first class in which the student is absent, shall make reasonable effort to promptly telephone and notify the parents/guardians of the student's absence from school.
- Secondary school (6-12). If a student leaves school during the school day and fails to check out through the attendance or nurse's office prior to leaving school, and the

absence is not otherwise permitted – e.g., a field trip – such absence will be an unexcused absence.

### **Minimum Attendance Requirement for K- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

Students are expected to be in class 100% of the time, but circumstances of illness, death in the family, etc., don't always allow this to happen. In these circumstances the assignments and classroom work need to be made-up within a reasonable time. All parent/guardian contacts and interventions are documented.

#### **Notification Sequence**

- Parents/Guardians will be contacted when absences are getting in the way of progress toward reaching the standards.
- At the first sign the student is deficient in his/her work possibly due to the number of absences, an intervention plan will be established in collaboration with the parents/guardians.
- If absences are unexcused, the parents/guardians have been contacted, an intervention plan has been developed, and no results have occurred, the principal will notify Dropout Prevention. School Safety/truancy/local law enforcement will be contacted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> unexcused absence.
- All communication with parents regarding absences should include the following statement: Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-802(E), parents who do not ensure their child(ren) between the ages of 6 – 16 regularly attend school, may be held criminally liable.
- In the case of a school keeping a student after regular school hours it is the school's responsibility to notify the parent prior to keeping the child.
- Parents/guardians of middle school students will be provided with written notification after the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> absence (excused or unexcused). Letters will not be sent to parents/guardians whose children are absent for school business, suspension, or chronic illness.

#### **Consequences of Excessive Absenteeism for K – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

- Make-up work will be assigned as applicable.
- Additional time may be required (i.e. before or after school).
- Excessive absences may impact student grades.
- Unexcused absences may include a referral to a truancy officer and criminal liability.

### **Minimum Attendance Requirements for 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students**

The high school attendance requirement states, in part, that to be granted academic credit for any course, a student must earn a passing grade in the course. Attendance in the classroom, group activities, participating in discussions, labs, etc. can improve a student's ability to earn his/her desired grade.

#### **Applicability**

- This policy shall apply to students in grades 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>.
- This policy shall apply to each course independently.
- Students who transfer from one class to another during the school year will have their class attendance transfer to the new class.

## Notification Sequence

- The notification process pertains to the number of absences in a single course. A student may be notified several different times if excessive absences exist in more than one class.
- The school must notify the Dropout Prevention Specialist after the 3<sup>rd</sup> unexcused absence to begin the intervention process.
- After the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> absence (excused or unexcused), the high school administration will send written notification to the student's parents/guardians, Dropout Prevention Specialist and Guidance Counselor.
- The letters shall notify the parents/guardians as follows:

**After the 3<sup>rd</sup> absence:** The student needs to be aware that attendance may have an impact on their grade. TUSD Truancy Enforcement will be notified if the absences are unexcused.

**After the 6<sup>th</sup> absence:** The student has been absent nearly half the number of maximum absences and may lose credit if unexcused absences continue. The Parents/Guardians and Teacher/Counselor/Administrator may need to conduct a conference to develop an intervention plan

**After the 10<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence:** The student may not receive credit due to excessive unexcused absences, pending appeal. Administrator/Teacher/Counselor/Dropout Prevention Specialist will convene a conference.

**Please be aware:** Pursuant to A.R.S. §15-802(E), parents who do not ensure their child(ren) between the ages of 6 – 16 regularly attend school may be held criminally liable.

Letters will **not** be sent to parents/guardians whose children are absent for school business, suspension or chronic illness.

In every letter to a student's parent(s), a request will be made for the parents/guardians to meet with their child's teacher(s), counselor and/or Dropout Prevention Specialist. The impact of excessive absences on the student's education, possible intervention strategies to eliminate the problem, and the consequences associated with the student's absenteeism will be discussed. The parents/guardians will have an opportunity to confer with the school staff, before the student is denied academic credit due to excessive unexcused absences.

## Consequences of Excessive Absenteeism for 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Students

- Make-up work will be assigned as applicable.
- Additional time may be required (i.e. before or after school).
- Excessive absences may impact student grades.
- Unexcused absences may include a referral to a truancy officer and criminal liability.

All parent/guardian contacts and interventions are documented. Teachers will continue to give letter grades on all student work and record the grades.

## High School Appeal Process for Loss of Credit Due to Excessive Unexcused Absences

Parents/Guardians or students may file a written appeal for review by the Appeals Committee at the school. The Appeals Committee will consist of one administrator, one guidance counselor, and one teacher. The written appeal, including all supporting documentation, must be received by the building principal within ten days of the end of the

credit period. The final decision will rest with the Committee. Any further unexcused absence during the appeals process may result in dismissal of appeal and loss of credit.

Appeals Committee will consider granting credit when:

- Absences are reduced and the student remains in class.
- Homework is being completed in a timely manner.
- Grades reflect that the student has met the requirements of the course.
- Other areas may need to be considered.

If the result of the class ends with a failing final grade the student/parent may appeal the failing grade to the Governing Board. (Promotion, Retention, Acceleration Regulation IKE – R Appeal Process).

### **Exceptional Education & 504**

All students with identified attendance issues will be managed in the same manner as all other students, unless the Individual Education Plan identifies special circumstances.

Reviewed: May 25, 2007 (Friday Report)

Revision: August 9, 2007 (correction)

Reviewed: September 22, 2009

**Legal Ref:** A.R.S 15-346 Policies and procedures concerning pupils with chronic health problems; definition.  
15-802 School instruction; exceptions; violations; classification; definitions  
15-804 Attendance officer; appointment; salary  
15-805 Attendance officer; powers and duties  
15-807 Absence from school; notification of parent or person having custody of pupil; immunity  
15-873 Exemptions, nonattendance during outbreak

**Cross Ref:** Policy & Regulation # IKE – Promotion, Retention and Acceleration of Students

Policy # IKA – Grading/Assessment System

Policy # JHCB – Released Time for Religious Instruction

**Replaces TUSD Regulation # 5000 Attendance Administrative Regulation – High School; Regulation # 5050 Pupils' Absences; Release of Pupils during School Day; Policy # 5320 – Keeping a Student after Regular School Hours**