

A POLICY STATEMENT  
OF  
THE HANCOCK COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
New Cumberland, West Virginia 26047

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

**MISSION**

Not only is daily attendance required by West Virginia State Law, it is essential for successful completion of each course of study. **The most common cause of academic failure is absence.** Because the Hancock County Board of Education and its employees expect students to succeed, we require students to attend school regularly and to be prompt in arriving for classes.

This mission also requires a creation of a safe environment that will be conducive for all students of Hancock County Schools. This environment will be committed to helping students develop the necessary responsibilities and self-discipline to be successful in today's world.

This policy as required by Hancock County Schools and West Virginia Department of Education reflects the input and review of the following groups and individuals:

- Hancock County School principals
- Hancock County School teachers (Elementary and Secondary)
- Hancock County School counselors (Elementary and Secondary)
- Hancock County Prosecuting Attorney
- Hancock County Probation Officer
- Hancock County School Improvement Council and Parents
- PTA Presidents and Parents of local schools

**JE-1 DEFINITIONS**

**JE-1.1 ABSENCE**

**Not being physically present in the school facility for any reason.** Absences resulting from the suspension of a student due to provisions in W. Va. Code §18A-5-1a (c) for which W.Va. Code provides that the pupil may be suspended shall be calculated in the school's/county's attendance rate. Under this section of W.Va. Code, a principal may suspend a student who has (1) threatened to injure, or in any manner injured, a pupil, teacher, administrator or other school personnel; (2) willfully disobeyed a teacher; (3) possessed alcohol in an educational facility, on school grounds, a school bus or any school-sponsored function; (4) used profane language directed at a school employee or a pupil; (5) intentionally defaced any school property; (6) participated in any physical altercation with another person while under the authority of school personnel; (7) habitually violated school rules or policies.

**JE-1.2 ENROLLMENT**

**A student is officially enrolled when one of the following conditions occur:**

- a. student was enrolled the previous year;
- b. student appears at school to enroll with or without a parent/guardian; or

- c. student and/or parent/guardian appear at school to enroll with or without records.
- d. Enrollment Count - A status count that reports the number of students on the attendance register as required by the West Virginia Department of Education.
- e. Membership Days - The days present plus the days absent.

### **JE-1.3 TRANSFER**

A process by which a student ends enrollment or attendance in one location and begins enrollment or attendance in a second location (e.g., within a county, between counties, or out of state). This can be evidenced through a transcript request or other documentation that the student is continuing elementary or secondary education.

### **JE-1.4 DROPOUT**

**A dropout is an individual who:**

- a. was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year; or
- b. was not enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before); and
- c. has not graduated from high school, obtained a GED diploma, or completed a state- or district-approved education program; and
- d. does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:
  - 1. transfer to another public school district, private school, registered home school, or state- or district-approved education program;
  - 2. temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness; or
  - 3. death.
- e. Dropout Date - For students of ages 16 or older, the dropout date is defined as the school day after the student's last day of attendance.

### **Procedures for reporting dropouts to the West Virginia Department of Education:**

- a. County will run the menu item WVS.725-Create Enrollment Race/Sex Summary Files.
- b. Use Program WVS.730-Maintain Dropouts File-this allows adjustments for students who are no longer to be counted as dropouts. Those as defined by the WVDE that are not considered dropouts include:
  - 1. Deceased
  - 2. Returned/Transferred to public or non-public school
  - 3. Received GED diploma
  - 4. Transferred to in-state home instruction/home schooling

## **JE-1.5 APPEAL PROCESS**

A parent / guardian may request a building level review of their child's attendance record at any time during the school year. If necessary, the county Attendance Director may act as a source of attendance information and / or as a mediator to any dispute in the attendance record.

## **JE-2 PROCEDURES REGARDING ABSENCES**

To comply with state law (18-8-1 and 18-8-2), all schools must record excused and unexcused absences. For uniformity, the following procedures should be followed:

When a student is absent, it is the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to inform the school by **phone** of the reason for the child's absence. If phone contact has not been made, upon returning to school, the student shall present a **written note**. If phone contact or note is not presented within three days, the absence shall remain unexcused. Principals may waive this requirement if circumstances warrant.

Students on Homebound instruction, Out-of-School Placement, Extended Hospital stays, and/or Alternative Education are not exempt from the Attendance Laws of the State of West Virginia.

Except in extenuating circumstances, the principal or designee shall contact the parent/guardian within two hours of the school's starting time to confirm a student absence. In extenuating circumstances the principal/designee will contact the parent/guardian as soon as feasible.

## **JE-3 EXCUSED ABSENCES**

The following are legal, excused absences as approved by the Hancock County Board of Education:

- a. **Personal illness** (Verified by parents/guardians) *When personal illness exceeds 10 days a SAT will convene if necessary. Parents will be notified of a pending SAT.* (In the case of extenuating circumstances, the principal/designee may waive this guideline.)
- b. **Death in the family** *(As defined by State Attendance Code Interpretations.)*
- c. **Religious holidays with verification**
- d. **Legal obligation with verification.**
- e. **Parent Request (Limited to five days for the school year and prior approval required)**

Participation in school sponsored, board-sanctioned activities or attendance at a state tournament **in which the school is participating** *is recorded with an XI code (school approved curricular or extra-curricular activity).* The absence is not included in the calculation of attendance rate.

**Absences for all other reasons not stipulated in board policy will be considered unexcused.**

The following represent the ABSENCE REASONS used in Hancock County Schools and as defined by the West Virginia Department of Education.

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
B1 B2	Bus, Failure to Run	Failure of the bus to run in hazardous conditions
C1 C2	Calamity (Fire, Flood, etc)	Calamity such as Fire in the home, flood or other family emergency
C3 C4	Health Exclusion	Lice or other contagious parasite conditions
D1 D2	Death in Family	Death in family – family may be defined as mother, father, stepparent, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, brother-in-law, brother’s child, sister-in-law, sister’s child, student’s child, or any person living in the same household
I5 I6	Illness Verified by Parent	Illness verified by parent or guardian in writing may set limits as to how many are allowed
L1	Leave of Educational Value ***Parent Request***	Leave of educational value may include: college visits, other sites of learning, family educational trips, 4-H educational activities, etc. These absences may require specific stipulations from the individual school or county.
L3 L4	Legal Obligation (w/verification)	Legal obligation that is verified, which may include court proceedings, court subpoenas or appointments required by the courts
M1 M2	Medical Appointment	Illness or injury of the student requiring physician’s verification
X1 X2	School Approved Curricular/Extra-Curricular Activity	School, county or state approved curricular or extra-curricular activities
U1 U2	Unexcused	Any absence not meeting the excused absence reason codes
S1 S2	Out of School Suspension (Other than Safe Schools)	Any absence due to out of school suspension that is not a safe school violation
S3 S4	Suspension for Safe Schools Violation	Absences due to <b><u>safe school violations</u></b>
P3 P4	Pursuing Judicial Remedies	Absences after the attendance director has pursued judicial remedies
TE	Excused	Student was tardy for school or class and it was excused.
TU EE EU	Unexcused Early Dismissal Excused Early Dismissal Unexcused	Student was tardy for school or class and it was unexcused.

**For statistical purposes, attendance will be reported and aggregated to the nearest half day according to the following definitions:**

**Full-day attendance is being present at least .74 of the school day.**

**Half-day attendance is being present at least .26 of the school day.**

## **JE-4 LATE ARRIVALS/EARLY DISMISSALS**

Reasons must be provided, verified, and recorded as excused or unexcused. If a student is not present for one half of a class period, he/she will be considered absent for that class.

### **JE-4.1 LATE ARRIVALS**

Monthly Newsletters, Attendance Director's classroom visits, proactive parent letters, and school based prevention activities will consistently address the issues of arriving late to school. Each school is responsible for the implementation of these activities.

A student arriving late must first report to the office and provide an explanation. The excuse must be verified by phone contact with parent or written note.

#### **Tardy Policy to School**

**Level 1 – Student/Parent Notification** - Parents will be notified by letter at 3 to 5 tardies. Letter will include expected time schedule to be followed.

**Level 2 - Attendance Director Notification** - Parents will be notified by letter at 6-9 tardies. Letter will include consequences of continued tardiness.

**Level 3 - Agency Notification** - After 10 tardies, parents will be referred to one or more of the following agencies:

- Juvenile Mediation
- Juvenile Probation Office
- DHHR - Department of Health and Human Resources
- High School Only-Loss of Driving Privileges to school.

**According to State Attendance Policy 6.1.2.g students cannot be suspended solely for failure to attend or being tardy for a class.**

### **JE-4.2 EARLY DISMISSALS**

Students will not be dismissed from school unless the parent or guardian, or individual designated by the parent or guardian comes to the school office and signs a release form. **Age of student is not an exception.**

In an extreme emergency, the principal may release the child to another party, but that individual must meet the student at the office and sign the release form. (Written permission from the parent/guardian must be presented at the time of release.)

## **JE-5 HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION**

Homebound instruction is provided for students unable to attend school because of physical or emotional needs. Hancock County Schools believe that the best place for an education is in the school. Homebound instruction is provided only when accommodations cannot be made by providing a reduced day schedule and/or modifications in the classrooms. The Homebound instruction can be administered in the hospital, home, or a central location agreed upon by the parents, doctor(s), and school administration.

A licensed physician may recommend a student for homebound services if the diagnosis is such that a student is unable to participate in a regular school setting. The physician must be aware that homebound instruction is not equal to instruction in the school and is provided to help keep a student abreast of their studies until their return to school.

## **JE-6 ATTENDANCE and CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE**

Excessive absence of students may limit academic progress. Data supports that poor classroom attendance leads to poor classroom performance. Upon recommendation of the teacher, a student who is persistently absent and who is academically behind will be referred to the Student Assistance Team. Both classroom performance and attendance history will be used in the discussions and determinations of a Plan of Action. (State Board Policy 2510 prohibits retention based solely on attendance.)

## **JE-7 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ATTENDANCE**

### **JE-7.1 Attendance Director**

The **Attendance Director** shall be responsible for coordinating the entire county attendance program and the provisions contained in this policy and state law. **Schools may set up a program of incentives and sanctions to encourage responsible attendance. Incentives could include and not limited to: a letter from the building administrator for perfect attendance, attendance commendation certificates, school recognition for perfect attendance each marking period, end of the year ceremony for students with perfect attendance, consideration of students with good attendance for special privileges and activities that are unavailable to all students.** In addition to the procedures regarding course credit and promotion outlined above, the Attendance Director by law shall receive referrals from school principals regarding attendance problems and shall provide the following appropriate follow-up activity.

According to West Virginia school law (18-8-4) in the case of **five (5) consecutive or ten (10) total unexcused absences of a child during a school year**, the Attendance Director shall serve written notice to the parent, guardian or custodian, of such child that the attendance of such child at school is required and that within ten days of receipt of the notice the parent, guardian or custodian, accompanied by the child, shall report in person to the school the child attends for a conference with the principal or other designated representative of the school in order to discuss and correct the circumstances causing the unexcused absences of the child; and if the parent, guardian or custodian does not comply with the provisions of this article, then the Attendance Director shall make complaint against the parent, guardian, or custodian before a magistrate of the county.

The Attendance Director shall file with the county Superintendent and county Board of Education, at the close of each month, a report showing activities of the school attendance office and the status of attendance in the county at the time. (WV Code 18-8-4)

Students enrolled and making satisfactory progress in a course leading to a general educational development certificate (GED) are eligible for a Proof of Enrollment and / or reinstatement of driver's license.

**SATISFACTORY PROGRESS** will be defined as follows:

- a. Student is enrolled in the Hancock County Schools Adult Basic Education Classes.
- b. Student has completed all necessary testing for proper placement.
- c. Student has completed 54 hours of instruction

### **JE-7.1b Unexcused Absence Procedures**

#### **Procedure for 3-5 Unexcused Absences**

- **Report generated by Attendance Director will be sent to each building Principal for review.**
- **Upon recommendation of building Principal a letter will be sent concerning the unexcused absences.**
- **Parent may contact school or attendance office for any appeal or clarifications of attendance history.**

#### **Procedures for absences beyond 5 days**

- **Referral will be made to one or more of the following\*:**
  - **Attendance Director Conference (CA-2)**
  - **Juvenile Mediation**
  - **Pre-Petition to DHHR**
  - **Magistrate Court (Parents)**

**\*Level of intervention will be determined by past history of attendance.**

### **JE-7.1.c HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

The attendance director shall serve as the liaison for homeless children and youth as defined in W.Va. Code §18-8-4. As defined in H. R. 1 (No Child Left Behind), as the liaison for homeless children and youth, the attendance director is required to:

- (1) Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services.
- (2) Ensure that parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- (3) Ensure that parents or guardians are informed of, and assisted in accessing, all transportation services for their children, including to the school of origin.

- (4) Help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes, and provide the youth with notice of his or her right to appeal the school district's decision.
- (5) Immediately assist in obtaining immunizations or record of immunizations or other medical records for those students who do not have them, and assure that students are enrolled in school while the records are being obtained.

### **JE-7.2 PRINCIPALS**

Principals or designated assistant principals shall be responsible for coordinating school attendance, which includes the collection of accurate, up-to-date records of daily school and class attendance. Designee is also responsible of making appropriate referrals to the County Attendance Director. Each school will be responsible for providing incentives for daily school attendance. Each school shall provide parents and students with written statements regarding attendance procedures. In addition, the Hancock County School Attendance Policy can be found in the student's Handbook that is provided to each student at the beginning of the school year. If lost, a copy of the policy will be provided as needed.

Principals shall be responsible for sending letters to parents notifying them of excessive absences. Parents then have the right to appeal any discrepancies they may see in the letter concerning the number of absences.

### **JE-7.3 TEACHERS**

Teachers are expected to promote excellent attendance and to follow all provisions outlined in this policy. Teachers are expected to keep up-to-date, accurate attendance records for each of their classes, recording tardies, absences, and school related absences.

### **JE-8 MAKE-UP WORK**

All students will have the opportunity to make up work. The following provisions shall be made in all schools:

- a. It is the responsibility of the student upon returning to school to contact the teacher for make-up work and to complete all work within the time period allotted.  
*For absences anticipated to extend beyond two days, parents may notify the school & request make-up work. The school shall provide the make-up work within 24 hours.*
- b. It is the responsibility of each teacher to provide make-up work and to inform students of the procedures to be followed in obtaining and completing work.
- c. A student shall be given the number of days missed to complete all make-up work. (Example: A student that misses 2 days of school will be given 2 days to complete make-up work.) **5 days will be the maximum number of days allowed to complete make-up work. An extension will not be granted if additional days are missed within the time period allotted.**
- d. If a student arrives late to school, he/she is responsible for contacting the teacher that day to take any test scheduled or submit any work due that day.
- e. Failure of the student to contact the teacher or make up the work within the time allotted will result in a "0" grade for work not completed.
- f. A teacher should use professional judgment in granting exceptions to these rules if he/she determines a student's special individual needs warrant considerations.

## **JE-9 EXCEPTIONS TO FULL DAY INSTRUCTION**

All Hancock County students are required to complete a planned education program of studies (Career Majors) for graduation. The program of studies (Career Major) enables students to prepare for a career with a technical high school certificate, advanced post secondary training in a technical field, or a four-year professional degree at a college or university.

Attendance for all four years during grades 9-12 is important to attain full benefit from the educational programs offered in Hancock County. All students are scheduled for the full instructional day for all four years.

A twelfth grade student attaining his/her program of studies (Career Major) maintaining a 2.0 average in both core classes and career major classes and with the approval of his/her parent or guardian may apply for short day scheduling if the student is:

- A) Engaged in post secondary study at an approved institution. The student must show verification of enrollment and time schedule of classes.
- B) Engages in the fulfillment of spousal duties as either the husband or wife in a legal marriage.
- C) Actively participating in child-rearing activity as the father or mother of such child.
- D) Become regularly employed as a full or part-time employee, or engage in the operation of a business venture or entrepreneurial enterprise.
- E) Participate in some activity or course of conduct which will, or is calculated to enhance the attainment of the student's personal career goals.

*\* For rare extenuating circumstances, the Superintendent may use his/her discretion to recommend a student for short-day status not meeting all of the qualifications of this policy.*

Students applying for short day must first meet with his/her high school guidance counselor to ascertain program of study (Career Major) completion. The student must complete an application and return completed application to the guidance counselor. Parent or guardian must sign application form in the presence of the high school guidance counselor. ~~Upon approval of the principal, the application will be forwarded to the superintendent for board approval.~~ The principal will sign the application verifying that the student is eligible, that the information is accurate and the application is complete. The principal will forward the application to the Superintendent or designee, for board approval. Application will be reviewed only during the first two board meetings of each semester.

## **JE-10 ANNUAL REVIEW / EVALUATION / WVDE Revision Approval**

- A) Attendance Director and School Attendance Designees shall conduct a review of Attendance at the conclusion of each NINE WEEK grading period.
- B) Attendance Director and School Attendance Designees shall conduct an end of year review of Attendance and Policy to determine effectiveness and shall report to the Hancock County School Board in a regular meeting during the month of June.
- C) Each revision to the county attendance policy must be approved by the West Virginia Department of Education.

MANDATORY ATTENDANCE STANDARDS as an ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES for the ENFORCEMENT of current ATTENDANCE POLICY

In accordance with this Guideline, the following definitions apply to UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:

1. Habitual Truant is defined as a student accumulating FIVE (5) to TEN (10) unexcused absences in one school year.
2. Chronic Truant is defined as a student accumulating more than TEN (10) unexcused absences in one school year.

Any student in violation of the above truancy standards will be Referred to Juvenile Mediation, DHHR (Pre-Petition) or Summoned to Magistrate and/or Juvenile Court. There are students whose attendance may be irregular but they are still able to score satisfactorily on quizzes and tests. However, such students fail to experience the interaction necessary to grasp the complete concepts of materials presented during daily class and they risk developing poor attendance habits that may be detrimental as the student prepares for the world of work. Thus, the following attendance standards shall also apply:

Secondary Schools (Grades 9-12)

- A. Ten (10) days will be the total maximum days absent allowable per semester without intervention.
- B. Students absent over the limit set forth above will be referred to the Student Assistance Team (SAT). The SAT will discuss student ACADEMIC and ATTENDANCE issues. As a result of the SAT students must attend restitution in order to meet minimum contact hours. Such make-up sessions will be held after the regular school day and/or Saturday and must be arranged with the building principal. Failure to make arrangements for restitution will result in a referral to Juvenile Mediation/Juvenile Court/Magistrate Court.

Secondary Schools (Grades 9-12)

- A. Any student who exceeds the maximum allowable days in two consecutive semesters will not be permitted to make up time without formal intervention.
- B. For an absence to be considered MEDICALLY EXCUSED, the parent or guardian must provide the school a written notification from a doctor stating the child was unable to attend school due to their medical condition. This must be written on the doctor's letterhead or prescription form.
- C. If restitution or remedy is necessary, the student's grade will be incomplete until the restitution or remedy is completed. Restitution will be completed to the satisfaction of the school administration.

SAT Conference Process

- A. Student / Parent/ Teacher(s) Conference (SAT)
- B. Discussion of Academic and Attendance Issues (Tardy problems).
- C. Medical documentation.
- D. Amount of Restitution Time to be completed.
- E. Schedule of Restitution Time.
- F. Further Interventions if necessary.

## FINAL EXAMS

To prepare high school students for future educational goals, it is highly recommended that they take final exams.

As an INCENTIVE for excellent attendance, high school students, who have two (2) absences or fewer; will have the option of taking final exams. Any final exam taken as an option will not negatively affect the final grade in the class. With WRITTEN PARENTAL PERMISSION, the principal may excuse qualifying students from taking final exams.

Students who miss more than two (2) days in a semester will be required to take a comprehensive final exam of material covered in that semester, which will count as 15% of the final grade. For the purpose of determining who is required to take the final, three (3) tardies in any class will count as one (1) absence in that class.

Other than school-related activities, late or non-running busses, and death in the immediate family (refer to JE – 3 b), no other excuse, excused or unexcused, will be accepted for determining which students are required to take the final exams.

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