

NOTE: Colorado school boards are required by law to adopt a policy on this subject and the law contains some specific direction as to the content or language. This sample policy contains the content/language that CASB believes best meets the intent of the law. However, the board should consult with its own legal counsel to determine appropriate language that meets local circumstances and needs.

Student Absences and Excuses

One criteria of a student's success in school is regular and punctual attendance. Frequent absences may lead to poor academic work, lack of social development and possible academic failure. Regular attendance is of utmost importance for school interest, social adjustment and scholastic achievement. No single factor may interfere with a student's progress more quickly than frequent tardiness or absence.

According to state law, it is the obligation of every parent/guardian to ensure that every child under their care and supervision receives adequate education and training and, if of compulsory attendance age, attends school.

Continuity in the learning process and social adaptation is seriously disrupted by excessive absences. In most situations, the work missed cannot be made up adequately. Students who have good attendance generally achieve higher grades, enjoy school more and are more employable after leaving school. For at least these reasons, the Board believes that a student must satisfy two basic requirements in order to earn full class credit: (1) satisfy all academic requirements and (2) exhibit good attendance habits as stated in this policy.

Excused absences

The following shall be considered excused absences:

1. A student who is temporarily ill or injured or whose absence is approved by the administrator of the school of attendance on a prearranged basis. Prearranged absences shall be approved for appointments or circumstances of a *serious nature only* which cannot be taken care of outside of school hours.
2. A student who is absent for an extended period due to physical, mental or emotional disability.
3. A student who is pursuing a work-study program under the supervision of the school.
4. A student who is attending any school-sponsored activity or activities of an educational nature with advance approval by the administration.
5. A student who is suspended or expelled.

As applicable, the district may require suitable proof regarding the above exceptions, including written statements from medical sources.

If a student is in out-of-home placement (as that term is defined by C.R.S. 22-32-138(1)(e)), absences due to court appearances and participation in court-ordered activities shall be excused. The student's assigned social worker shall verify the student's absence was for a court appearance or court-ordered activity.

Unexcused absences

An unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not covered by one of the foregoing exceptions. Each unexcused absence shall be entered on the student's record. The parents/guardians of the student receiving an unexcused absence shall be notified orally or in writing by the district of the unexcused absence.

In accordance with law, the district may impose appropriate penalties that relate directly to classes missed while unexcused. [*Optional language:* Penalties may include a warning, school detention or in-school suspension. Academic penalties, out-of-school suspensions or expulsion shall not be imposed for any unexcused absence.]

The administration shall develop regulations to implement appropriate penalties. [*Optional language:* The school administration shall consider the correlation between course failure, truancy and a student dropping out of school in developing these regulations and shall implement research-based strategies to re-engage students with a high number of unexcused absences.]

Students and parents/guardians may petition the Board of Education for exceptions to this policy or the accompanying regulations provided that no exception shall be sustained if the student fails to abide by all requirements imposed by the Board as conditions for granting any such exception.

Students with excessive absences may be subject to judicial proceedings.

Chronic absenteeism

When a student has an excessive number of absences, these absences negatively impact the student's academic success. For this reason, a student who has 15 total absences in a school year, whether the absences are excused or unexcused, may be identified as "chronically absent" by the principal or designee. Absences due to suspension or expulsion shall not be counted in the total number of absences considered for purposes of identifying a student as "chronically absent."

If a student is identified as "chronically absent," the principal or designee shall develop a plan to improve the student's attendance. The plan shall include best practices and research-based strategies to address the reasons for the student's chronic absenteeism. When practicable, the student's parent/guardian shall participate in the development of the plan.

Nothing herein shall require the principal or designee to identify a student as "chronically absent" prior to declaring the student as a "habitual truant" and pursuing court proceedings against the student and his or her parents/guardians to compel the student's attendance in accordance with state law.

Make-up work

Make-up work shall be provided for any class in which a student has an excused absence unless otherwise determined by the building administrator or unless the absence is due to the student's expulsion from school. It is the responsibility of the student to pick up any make-up assignments permitted on the day returning to class. There shall be one (1) day allowed for make-up work for each day of absence.

Make-up work shall be allowed following an unexcused absence or following a student's suspension from school with the goal of providing the student an opportunity to keep up with the class and an incentive to attend school. This work may receive full or partial credit to the extent possible as determined by the building administrator.

Unless otherwise permitted by the building administrator, make-up work shall not be provided during a student's expulsion. Rather, the district shall offer alternative education services to the expelled student in accordance with state law. The district shall determine the amount of credit the expelled student will receive for work completed during any alternative education program.

Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as the appearance of a student without proper excuse after the scheduled time that a class begins. Because of the disruptive nature of tardiness and the detrimental effect upon the rights of the non-tardy student to uninterrupted learning, appropriate penalties may be imposed for excessive tardiness. Parents/guardians shall be notified of all penalties regarding tardiness.

In an unavoidable situation, a student detained by another teacher or administrator shall not be considered tardy provided that the teacher or administrator gives the student a pass to enter the next class. Teachers shall honor passes presented in accordance with this policy. The provisions of this policy shall be applicable to all students in the district, including those above and below the age for compulsory attendance as required by law.

Adopted: October 1992

Revised: November 1996, July 1999, May 2003, September 2007, April 2009,
April 2010, December 2012, December 2013

LEGAL REFS.: C.R.S. 22-14-101 *et seq.* (dropout prevention and student re-engagement)
C.R.S. 22-32-109 (1)(n) (length of school year, instruction & contact time)
C.R.S. 22-32-109.1 (2)(a) (conduct and discipline code)
C.R.S. 22-32-138 (6) (excused absence requirements for students in out-of-home placements)
C.R.S. 22-33-101 *et seq.* (School Attendance Law of 1963)
C.R.S. 22-33-105 (3)(d)(III) (opportunity to make up work during suspension)
C.R.S. 22-33-108 (judicial proceedings to enforce school attendance laws)

C.R.S. 22-33-203 (*educational alternatives for expelled students and determination of credit*)

1 CCR 301-78 Rules 1.00 *et seq.* (*standardized calculation for counting student attendance and truancy*)

CROSS REFS.: IC/ICA, School Year/School Calendar/Instruction Time
JEA, Compulsory Attendance Ages
JF-R, Admission and Denial of Admission (Procedures for Students in Out-of-Home Placements)
JFC, Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts
JHB, Truancy
JK, Student Discipline
JKD/JKE, Suspension/Expulsion of Students
JLIB, Student Dismissal Precautions

NOTE 1: State law requires the local board of education to designate an attendance officer for the district to enforce the provisions of the compulsory attendance law, counsel students and parents, and investigate the causes of nonattendance and report those findings to the Board. C.R.S. 22-33-107 (1). State law allows the board by resolution to authorize one or more school employees to represent the school district in judicial proceedings to enforce compulsory attendance. C.R.S. 22-32-110 (1)(mm).

NOTE 2: Penalties for unexcused absences may be approved by the Board or administration.

NOTE 3: State law requires that the attendance policy specify the maximum number of unexcused absences that it takes to trigger enforcement of compulsory attendance. In determining that number, it may be helpful to refer to the rules of the State Board of Education, which define "habitual truant" as a child who has attained the age of 6 on or before August 1 of the school year in question and is under the age of 17 and who has 4 total days of unexcused absences from school in a month or 10 total days of unexcused absences during the school year. 1 CCR 301-78, Rule 2.00 (7). Districts must report the number of students identified as "habitually truant" to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), in accordance with the State Board of Education's rules regarding the calculation of student attendance and truancy, 1 CCR 301-78. CDE must then make this information accessible to the public by posting it on its website. The State Board's rules also specify how districts shall record and aggregate student absences.

NOTE 4: State law arguably requires boards to consider absences due to suspension or expulsion as excused absences. See C.R.S. 22-33-104 (4)(a). CASB recommends that the district's philosophy regarding make-up work be consistent throughout the attendance and discipline policies. In accordance with state law on educational opportunities during suspension, a student is entitled to full or partial credit to the extent possible for work completed satisfactorily. The objective should be to reintegrate the student back into the classroom and this objective should be considered when determining the amount of credit the student receives for the makeup work. See C.R.S. 22-33-105 (3)(d)(III). In accordance with state law on educational opportunities during expulsion, the school district shall determine the amount of credit the student shall receive toward graduation for educational services provided during the student's expulsion. See C.R.S. 22-33-203 (2)(a).

Educational services provided shall be designed to provide a second chance for the student to succeed in achieving an education. C.R.S. 22-33-203 (2)(b).

NOTE 5: State law provides that court proceedings to compel compliance with the compulsory attendance law shall only be used as a last-resort approach for addressing the problem of truancy. The district shall first have attempted other options for addressing truancy that employ best practices and research-based strategies to minimize the need for court action. Before initiating court proceedings, the district shall provide written notice to the student and his or her parent that the district will initiate court proceedings if the student doesn't comply with the compulsory attendance law. C.R.S. 22-33-108 (5).

Dolores School District RE-4A, Dolores, Colorado