



## Polk County Schools Attendance Policy

The Polk County School District takes pride in offering quality education to all students, and believes that regular school attendance is an important part of educational success.

Florida Law requires all children between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school regularly. Students between 16 and 18 years of age must regularly attend school unless the parent and the student have formally terminated school by completing the *Declaration of Intent to Terminate School Enrollment* form and participated in an exit interview. Legal actions may be taken against the parent and/or the student for non-attendance.

Additional information is available on the Polk County Schools website:

<http://www.polk-fl.net/parents/studentsservices/attendance.htm>

### Quick Guide for Absences and Expectations:

Excused Absences	Expectations for absences to be excused
Personal Illness	-Parent note &/or call for days absent
Family death/illness	-Parent note &/or call for days absent
Chronic/long-term illness	-Medical documentation
Parent trips	-Pre-approved by Principal
Educational trips	-Pre-approved by Principal
School sponsored activity	-Pre-arranged by administration -Student to be marked present
Judicial action	-Copy of subpoena or summons -Notice of juvenile detention
Military dependents visits in time of combat duty	-Approved by principal
Religious holidays	-Prior written notice to principal or teacher
Excessive Absences	Interventions/Consequences
Parent notes accepted for the first 10 days of illness. Once the student has reached 10 absences for the school year (regardless of excused or unexcused) absences must require a doctor's note for excusal.	-Letter sent to parent requiring doctor's note for additional absences to be excused - <i>Medical Documentation for Absences from School</i> form for chronic/long-term illness
5 unexcused absences in a 30 calendar day period	-Letter sent to parent to contact school about reason for absences -Parent meeting may be scheduled with Problem Solving Team -Attendance contract
10 unexcused absences in a 90 calendar day period	-Letter sent to parent scheduling a meeting with the Problem Solving Team -Attendance contract

15 unexcused absences in a 90 calendar day period (truancy)	-Letter sent to the parent scheduling a meeting with the Problem Solving Team -Attendance Contract -Possible referral to Youth and Family Alternatives for truancy -Possible pursuit of parental prosecution for non-attendance -Possible suspension of driver license privileges
50% or more of day absent unexcused	-Counted as one unexcused absence for truancy purposes

**Polk County Schools Attendance Policy (NEOLA POLICY):**

<http://www.neola.com/polk-fl/>

**ATTENDANCE**

The educational program offered by this District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the schools during the days and hours that the school is in session. Students between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years of age must regularly attend school and are subject to all required intervention and related enforcement procedures unless the parent and the student have formally terminated school enrollment by completing the Declaration of Intent to Terminate School Enrollment form and have participated in an exit interview. School attendance shall be the responsibility of parents and students. Absences shall be reported to the school attendance office by the parent or adult student as soon as practicable.

In accordance with statute, the Superintendent shall require, from the parent of each student of compulsory school age or from an adult student who has been absent from school or from class for any reason, a statement of the cause for such absence. The School Board reserves the right to verify such statements and to investigate the cause of each single absence.

In addition, educators have the responsibility to encourage regular attendance of students, maintain accurate attendance records, and follow reporting procedures prescribed by the Superintendent. Schools will record absent and tardy students in the automated student attendance recordkeeping system.

Provision shall be made for promoting school attendance through adjustment of personal problems, education of parents, and enforcement of the compulsory attendance laws and related child-welfare legislation. Accordingly:

- A. absences must be reported to the school by the parent or adult student as soon as practicable; Failure to report and explain the absence(s) shall result in unexcused absence(s). The final authority for determining acceptability of the reason for the absence(s) shall rest with the principal.
- B. teachers shall record absentees each period of the school day and report absences, excused and unexcused, as required by the school;
- C. insofar as possible, parents should be contacted each time their child has an unexcused

absence, or an absence for which the reason is unknown, to prevent the development of patterns of nonattendance;

- D. when a student has at least five (5) unexcused absences or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month, or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a ninety (90) calendar day period, the teacher shall report to the Principal that the child may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. Unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, the Principal will refer the case to the school's child study team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. If the child study team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential resolutions. If the problem is not resolved, the child study team will implement interventions as provided in F.S. 1003.26.

## **Excused Absences**

The Board considers the following factors to be reasonable excuses for time missed at school:

- A. Personal illness of the student (medical evidence will be required by the Principal for absences exceeding ten (10) days during the school year. After ten (10) parentally approved excused absences, a doctor's verification will be required. A Medical Documentation for Excessive Absences form will be used for documentation of a student's ongoing treatment for a medical condition.
- B. Court appearance of the student.
- C. Medical appointment of the student.
- D. Pregnancy related issues (see also Policy [5751](#)).
- E. An approved school activity (absences recorded but not reported).
- F. Insurmountable conditions. Insurmountable conditions are extreme weather conditions, communicable disease outbreaks, and local conditions determined by the School District which, after taking into account the material circumstances, would render impracticable a student's attendance at school. (F.A.C. 6A-1.09513)
- G. Other absences with prior approval of the Principal.
- H. Attendance at a center under Children and Families Services supervision or the Department of Juvenile Justice supervision.
- I. Significant community events with prior permission of the Principal.
- J. Religious instruction or holiday.
- K. Illness or death in the immediate family.
- L. Trips with parents shall be prearranged and approved by the school administration. If such trips are not prearranged, the absences shall not be excused unless the trip was necessitated by an emergency. The Principal will make the final determination.

Absences not included in excused absences listed above shall be unexcused.

If the absences are excused, all educational requirements for the course shall be met before a passing grade and/or credit is assigned.

Students may not be given excused absences to remain out of school for the purpose of working, unless the job is an integral part of the student's instructional program.

## **Habitual Truancy**

Whenever any student has a total of fifteen (15) days of unexcused absence from school during any ninety (90) calendar day period, with or without the knowledge or consent of the parent, s/he will be considered habitually truant. The Board authorizes the Superintendent to inform the student and his/her parents of the record of excessive absences as well as the District's intent to notify Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, if appropriate.

Students who have reached the age of fourteen (14) and completed the eighth grade may be issued a certification for employment by the Office of the Superintendent based upon family need if recommended by the student's principal.

The Superintendent is authorized to file a truancy petition under F.S. 984.151 if a student has accrued at least five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown within a ninety (90) calendar day period or has had more than fifteen (15) unexcused absences in a ninety (90) calendar day period.

## **Make-Up for Absences**

For excused absences, the student shall have a reasonable amount of time, no fewer than the number of days absent plus two (2) to complete and hand in work for credit, to complete make-up work for excused absences. Principals may grant extensions to the make-up time limit for extenuating circumstances.

For unexcused absences, work missed during the student's first three (3) days of unexcused absences during a semester is expected to be made up. This includes absences caused by an out-of-school suspension. The right of students to make up work on the fourth unexcused absence and all other days of unexcused absences per semester may be denied.

## **Discipline**

Unexcused tardiness, lateness, absence, or truancy shall not be grounds for suspension from school but may result in detention or placement in existing alternative programs.

Any student who fails to attend any regularly scheduled class and has no excuse for absence should be referred to the appropriate administrator. Disciplinary action should include notification to parents or guardians.

A student's grade in any course is based on his/her performance in the instructional setting and shall not be reduced for reasons of conduct. If a student violates the attendance or other rules of the school, s/he should be disciplined appropriately for the misconduct, but his/her grades should be based upon what the student can demonstrate s/he has learned.