

Descriptor Term:	Descriptor Code:	Issued Date:
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ATTENDANCE AND GRADING	Rescind:	Issued:

Board Policy

There is a plethora of educational research that shows the strong relationship between student attendance and academic success. The Board acknowledges that students need to be in school and engaged in learning with their teachers and peers for 180 days of instruction per year. Excessive absences or tardiness erode this understanding and lead to incomplete and unsatisfactory work, a reduced capacity to meet curricular standards, and lower course grades. Parents/guardians are partners with the school and faculty ensuring that students attend and arrive in class on time every day of the 180 day school year. Therefore, parents should contact the school immediately when a child does not attend school. **School personnel and teachers (to include substitutes or other personnel covering classroom instruction) shall contact parents, as soon as possible, but no later than the end of the school day when a child does not attend class.**

The Board acknowledges that academic achievement entails many components and those academic credentials should reflect more than just the product of quizzes, examinations, and papers. These alone do not adequately prepare students for the challenges awaiting them after graduation. An additional essential component of academic excellence is the development of good work habits necessary to successfully compete in an increasingly competitive work force. Attendance is the cornerstone for the development of such good work habits. The Board believes that the Department must place great emphasis on student attendance and do everything possible to ensure students come to school every day. For this reason, the following definitions and policy are established.

A. Definitions

1. **Compulsory School Attendance:** “Any parent, guardian or other person having control or charge of any child who is at least five (5) years of age and has not reached the age of sixteen (16), not exempted under the provisions of this Article, shall send the child to a full-time day public or private school for which such schools are in session, except that the starting date of school for children five (5) years of age...” (GCA Title 17, 6102)
2. **Non-Compulsory Attendance:**
Student of noncompulsory age, who has not reached the age of majority (age 18), can be withdrawn from the Department of Education, provided that:
 - Student/parent or guardian completes the withdrawal process of intent to terminate school enrollment and
 - Student/parent or guardian has been provided counseling from the School Guidance Counselor (SGC) regarding the negative impact of not completing their education requirements.

- The parent or guardian/School Guidance Counselor/school principal or assistant principal must acknowledge the intent to withdraw on a standardized withdrawal form stating negative impact of not completing their educational requirements.
 - The Student Support Services Division in consultation with school administrators shall develop a standardized withdrawal form.
3. **Absence for the School Day:** Students are absent during a school day when they are not present for:
- a. Elementary School – Half the instructional day
 - b. Middle School -Half the instructional day
 - c. High School – for more than one-half of the regularly scheduled contact hour(s)

In cases when students return to school past the defined absence, the administrator shall have the discretion to revise the record of absence during that school day.

The above policy is referenced in the Student Discipline Manual.

4. **Contact hours:** The above are total instructional minutes in a class period and may be further defined in Board Policy 300 series. Note: Students who are on approved field trips are to be marked as present during the time the field trips are occurring. However, students shall be given the opportunity to make up the work they miss while on field trips in order to receive credit for the assignments.
5. **Truant:** a pupil found to be away from school without a reasonable and a bona fide excuse from a parent. (17 GCA 6401 (c))
6. **Habitual Truant:** a pupil who has incurred twelve (12) or more unexcused absences in a school year, and is compulsory attendance age. (17 GCA 6402). School Attendance Officers will investigate Office Truancy Referral Form and ensure that Habitual Truants are referred to the Superior Court of Guam.
7. **Excused Absences:** Absences incurred for any of the following reasons are to be considered excused. These types of absences should be appropriately considered when calculating a student's grade(s).

An absence is excused when it is occasioned by:

- a. Illness of the student. However, student absent for three or more consecutive days due to illness are required to present written certification from a physician attesting to the nature of the illness and the duration for which the student should be excused from school. In addition, school administrators may require written certification from a physician for any number of days of absences due to illness if a student's past attendance records show patterns of illness or reasons for the absences due to illness which the administrator finds questionable.
- b. Scheduled medical or dental visits.

- c. Death in the immediate family. Immediate family is defined as mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, guardian or caretaker, brother, sister, stepbrother or stepsister, spouse, grandparent, and child. (5 GCA 5601 (g))
- d. Required appearances at court or other legally related proceedings.
- e. Lack of available bus transportation, provided the student relies on bus transportation to go to school.
- f. Off-island travel, which has the prior approval of the school administrator. Off-island travel where the absences of the child exceed 25 or more days, the parents shall withdraw their child from school. (1 GCA 715.12 (m))
- g. Natural catastrophe or disaster.
- h. Participation in authorized school related activities or compliance with administrative actions taken by the school, such as field trips, conferences called by administrators or counselors, suspensions, going home because of illness or injury, etc.
- i. Observance of holidays recognized by a religion of which the student is a member. Parents shall present evidence of religious affiliation.
- j. Students having, or suspected of having, a communicable disease (defined by Center for Disease Control) or infestation which can be transmitted are to be excluded from school and are not allowed to return to school until they no longer present a health hazard. Examples of communicable diseases and infestations include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo and scabies. Students are allowed a maximum of three excused days absence for each infestation and must be cleared by the school health counselor. Upon return to school, students diagnosed with a communicable disease require clearance from a medical doctor or health professional.

The school administrator shall have the discretion to decide whether an absence is considered as excused. A child who is absent (excused) shall be given the opportunity to make up the work missed in class.

- 8. **Tardiness:** A student who is 15% or less late from the start of their regularly scheduled class period for secondary students and at the beginning of the instructional day for elementary.

(Any high school student who has three unexcused tardiness within a semester from a course shall equal one unexcused absence from that course for that semester. Any student late without a valid excuse from the school administrator or their designee shall be considered as an unexcused tardiness.)

The school administrator shall have the discretion to decide whether tardiness is considered as excused.

School personnel shall do everything possible to keep students in class and at school every day. Students shall not be sent out of class unless their behavior is an endangerment to themselves or others. Where applicable, students who have been externally suspended shall be offered an opportunity to participate in an alternative to suspension program and the days not considered absent. However, if they do not attend, the assigned days will be considered a suspension and days counted as absent (excused).

The Student Discipline Procedural Manual can be referenced to further clarify definitions and language addressed in this section.

B. Grading and Absences for High School

Grading (High Schools): High school students who incur unexcused absences in twelve percent (12%) or more of the days of a course during the fall or spring semester cannot receive a passing grade for that course for that semester. Consequently:

- If the course occurs on a daily basis (e.g. five days a week, 90 days a semester), students who incur 11 days of unexcused absences in the course cannot receive a passing grade for that course for that semester.
- If the course does not occur on a daily basis due to block scheduling, students cannot receive a passing grade in it if the number of days of unexcused absences they incur in the course during a semester, when divided by the number of days during which the course is scheduled for the semester, results in twelve or more percent (12%) of the course's days being missed for unexcused reasons.

Students who are unable to receive a passing grade because of this policy shall receive a “no credit” (NC) grade on their academic record if their academic performance for that semester would otherwise enable them to receive a passing grade. However, a notation shall be made in their records of what their passing grades would have been if they have not received NC grades. NC grades shall be recorded as earning zero (0) grade points on students' records for the semester in which NC grades are obtained. Students who earn NC grades may retake and be graded for the courses in which NC grades were received during any semester after the one in which the NC was received. The grade to be recorded on a student's cumulative record for such a retaken course shall be the average of the original grade which would have been received if a NC grade had not been obtained and the grade earned from the retaken course, provided a NC grade is not again received in the retaken course.

Students whose academic performance for a semester does not enable them to receive a passing grade are to receive the failing grade indicated by their work instead of an NC grade for that semester.

Students who are under the compulsory education age are required to attend school full-time, notwithstanding their inability to receive a passing grade in any course.

Upon enactment of this policy, the Superintendent shall establish uniform procedures across elementary, middle, and high schools for tracking student attendance.

ADOPTED: Board of Education 12/13/88

AMENDED: 01/11/89; 02/08/94; 11/07/97

07/30/99 (By Governor of Guam)

03/20/12 (By the Guam Education Board)