

New Castle County Vocational Technical School District Attendance Policy

School attendance has been identified as an important issue by our administrators, faculty, and the employers who support our cooperative work and career programs. We are concerned about students who miss too many school days, even when absences are legitimately excused. Attendance and achievement are clearly linked, and poor attendance often leads to poor grades and failure.

Since our schools utilize a Block Schedule, with many students in 90-minute classes that end after 90 days or one semester, class attendance becomes even more crucial to student success. Each class missed in a semester course is equivalent to missing two class periods. Therefore, students cannot afford to be absent from class without experiencing consequences to their learning and their grades.

The NCCVT School District places a high priority on instructional time in which a student is actively engaged in learning while in attendance in the classroom or lab. All teachers are encouraged to incorporate formative assessments in their grading policies for work completed while students are in class. Much emphasis is placed on these learning applications during class time, as well as summative assessments, homework, and make-up work grades.

The NCCVT District Attendance Policy places a high level of responsibility on the student, enhances employability, and supports new learning. The policy emphasizes our commitment of fairness, consistency, and accountability. The essential elements of the NCCVT School District Attendance Policy are:

1. Teachers and building administrators will maintain an accurate record of student daily and class attendance, absence, and tardiness.
2. When a student is absent from school, parents/guardians will be notified by the school, either personally by phone or through the Alert Now telephone system by 11:00 a.m.
3. Upon returning from absence, a student must submit a written note from a parent/guardian explaining the reason for each absence to the Attendance Office at which time, the attendance monitor will amend the student's attendance record using the appropriate attendance code. If a student does not present a note containing one of the legal excuses within three (3) days of returning to school, the absence will be unexcused and disciplinary consequences may result.
4. All notes are retained on file by the Attendance Office for the current year's absences.
5. Periodic notice in the form of emails, phone calls, Home Access Center (HAC), comments on Interim Progress Reports, and Report Cards will be given to parents and students regarding cumulative absences, **excused or unexcused**, and the potential for student failure. A letter to parents/guardians will be sent at ten (10) and fifteen (15) cumulative daily absences per semester.
6. When a student reaches (10) cumulative absences in a semester, the guidance counselor will schedule an appointment with the student. When a student reaches fifteen (15) cumulative absences, building-level intervention will take place.
7. Once a student has reached twenty (20) cumulative daily absences per semester, the student will receive a failing grade for all courses taken during that semester (in a full-year course, the student would receive a failing grade for that semester only.) The student remains in the classes for the semester and is expected to complete the curriculum.
 - If the student earned a passing grade in a course, the grade would be replaced with a 69.
 - If the student earned a failing grade in a course, that grade would stand.

8. Students wishing to file an appeal must secure an appeal form from their counselor and have it completed and returned to the Principal/designee no later than five (5) days following the last day of the 1st semester. Students must have all 2nd semester appeals into the Principal prior to the last day of school. IF A STUDENT FAILS TO APPEAL, THAT STUDENT WILL RECEIVE A FAILING GRADE FOR ANY COURSES TAKEN DURING THAT SEMESTER.

CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES FOR APPEAL

A student who has been given a failing grade due to excessive absences may appeal that action in accordance with the following:

1. The student must have a passing grade in the class(es) being appealed.
2. A student is eligible to file an appeal form with the Principal/designee when a student's absences reach twenty (20). The appeal form will be accepted up to five days following the last day of the semester. Second semester appeals must be submitted prior to the last day of school. Forms are available in the Attendance and Guidance offices.
3. The appeal must state the reasons for the appeal. Additional documentation may be presented at that time.
4. The Principal/designee may expedite appeals for students who have documented medical/legal absences and/or extenuating/extraordinary circumstances causing the excessive absences. Improvement in the student's attendance throughout the semester may be taken into consideration in the appeal process.
5. If necessary, a hearing will be scheduled with the Attendance Review Board after receipt and consideration of the appeal.
6. The student and a parent/guardian must attend the appeal hearing. Any deviation must be approved by a building administrator.
7. The Attendance Appeal Committee will notify the student and parent of the Committee's decision in writing. This decision will be final.

INTERVENTION

Poor attendance is an indicator of larger, more complex issues of disengagement and student motivation, with school culture and structure contributing to both. Therefore, a continuum of building-level approaches and student supports in the school is essential. Although students and families must be held accountable, schools need to take a proactive approach in looking at what other factors contribute to attendance problems. To that end:

1. Student-centered intervention and support through the Guidance and Attendance offices will occur should a student reach (15) cumulative daily absences, **excused or unexcused**, in a semester.
2. Teachers may recommend a student for intervention based on chronic class absenteeism (e.g. late arrivals, early dismissals, cutting class). Recommendations should take the form of an email to the student's guidance counselor.
3. Intervention may consist of, but is not limited to, parent conferences, supplemental instructional programs, counseling, and referrals to external agencies or to support services within the district.

4. An Attendance Review Board will convene in each building to address chronic absenteeism and possible loss of credit in individual cases of 20 semester absences, subject to appeal. Review boards will be comprised of the principal or designee and a guidance counselor. Additional members may include the school psychologist, teacher, and/or other support services personnel as needed. Attendance Review Boards will be charged with the responsibility and given the authority to make recommendations regarding any student with chronic attendance issues.

EXCUSED ABSENCE

An excused absence is an absence for one of the reasons as listed below and for which a parent note or documentation is provided.

Reasons recognized as valid and necessary for legal excused absences are:

1. Illness of student, if necessary, attested by a physician's certificate.
2. Contagious disease within the home of a pupil.
3. Death in the immediate family or of a close friend.
4. Legal business.
5. Observance of a religious holiday.
6. Remedial health treatment such as medical or dental appointments.
7. Pre-arranged absence to visit a college or university.
8. Suspension/In-school Alternative.
9. School-sanctioned activities such as field trips, club activities, athletic events, and District-approved events.
10. Emergency situations as determined by the Principal.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

An unexcused absence is an absence:

1. Which is for a reason not listed as "excused."
2. For which the parental note of explanation was not provided by the third day of the student's return to school following the absence.

Note: Family vacations scheduled during the school year are discouraged and count towards the student's cumulative daily absences.

MAKE-UP WORK

Students will be held accountable for all assignments or tests missed due to excused **OR** unexcused absences from school. Building principals shall, in cooperation with classroom teachers, establish the procedures for makeup work and shall communicate such procedures to parents. Parents and students are encouraged to use the Home Access Center for course assessment information and to communicate with individual instructors.

Following an **excused** absence, the student will be allowed to make up all work missed, to take tests which were missed, and to submit any assignments which became due during the absence without penalty. Full or partial credit for assignments or tests missed due to **unexcused** absences is recommended and will be approved at the discretion of the instructor and/or administration. In the case of vocational skills or labs missed due to an absence, the instructor may substitute an alternative assignment. The awarding of partial

credit for make-up work after unexcused absences is to be no less than 50% of the original assessment's possible points.

On the day a student returns from an absence, he/she must contact his/her teachers to determine what needs to be done for make-up work. The time allowance for taking tests or turning in assignments shall be equal to the number of school days or number of class meetings missed. A teacher may extend the time allowance for making up work missed if the specific circumstances of the situation merit such action. The time allowances should not exceed more than double the days the student was absent. Tutoring/extra help is available after school and/or Saturdays to assist in this effort. **It is the student's responsibility to take advantage of opportunities provided by the teacher to make up work. Parents and students are encouraged to use the Home Access Center (HAC) for course assessment information and to communicate with individual instructors.**

EARLY DISMISSAL

If a student is to be dismissed from school prior to the end of the school day, a note indicating the reason for and time of the dismissal must be on file with the attendance officer no later than 8:30 a.m. on the day of the dismissal. No early dismissal will be granted without verification by the parent. (A phone number where parent can be reached must be on the note.) Every effort should be made to schedule appointments during non-school hours or on days when school is not in session. **Students that are 18 years of age may not sign themselves out from school.**

TARDINESS TO SCHOOL

All students are expected to be punctual to school. Students who arrive after the late bell are tardy. A student who is tardy or late to school should present a written explanation for the tardiness. An **excused tardy** is given when the student provides, at the time of the tardiness, a written note of explanation from the parent/guardian for reasons such as **personal illness, medical appointments, or appearance in court.** **Students should recognize that a written explanation from home does not automatically cause the tardy to be "excused."** An **unexcused tardy** will be given for such reasons as **car trouble, personal business, heavy traffic, child care, needed at home, etc.** Students tardy for unexcused reasons will be referred for disciplinary action.

STUDENTS WHO DO NOT ATTEND AT LEAST HALF OF THE PERIODS ON A GIVEN DAY WILL BE MARKED ABSENT AND WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO PARTICIPATE IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES FOR THAT DAY (ATHLETIC EVENTS, SCHOOL DANCES, etc.).

ATTENDANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

PARENT

1. Provide written requests for early dismissal with telephone number for verification.
2. Provide written explanation for student absence by 3rd day of return to school.
3. Provide written excuse for late arrival at time of return to school.
4. Attend conference at school to discuss attendance problems.

STUDENT

1. Attend school regularly.
2. Be responsible to ask teacher to provide make-up for all assignments or tests missed due to absenteeism.
3. Provide written documentation when absent or tardy to school. Regardless of time of late arrival, students must sign in.
4. Must be in assigned class unless student receives prior approval in writing (hall pass) to be in another teacher's classroom.

TEACHER

1. Keep accurate daily attendance records through eSchool and check daily absenteeism form to determine class cuts.
2. Provide "cut" data to Student Advisor on "Cut" Referral Form.
3. Verify class absences on interim reports and report cards.
4. Attend conferences to discuss absenteeism and provide necessary data to appropriate personnel.
5. Obtain prior permission from the teacher whose class the student should attend before detaining a student for any reason.
6. Cooperate with homebound instructor in providing the necessary assignments for the student when requested.

ATTENDANCE MONITOR

1. Keep accurate attendance records through eSchool, amending student records as changes occur, i.e. absence notes, early dismissals, tardies, etc.
2. Retain student absence notes and other attendance documentation for the current year's absences.

PRE-ARRANGED ABSENCE

A pre-arranged absence is a student's absence from school or class for one or more days to visit a college or university or for other educational activities approved by the principal. The absence should be pre-arranged by writing the principal, giving full particulars of the absence. Approval for such absences should be sought, where practical, at least one (1) week prior to the date on which the absence is to occur. Upon the

development of a plan by the student and teacher for making up the assignments to be missed, the principal may then define the absence as “excused.”

TRUANCY

Truancy is defined as an absence from school or class not deemed necessary or legal (Delaware Code, Title 14, Chapter 27). Parents who allow their children to be truant are subject to a fine or, in default of payment of the fine, imprisoned for not more than two (2) days for the first offense and not more than five (5) days for each subsequent offense. Students truant from school will be referred for disciplinary action. (See Discipline Code.) A student is not considered truant if a parent, to ensure safety and welfare of the student, refuses to send the student to school.

**ALL ABSENCES ARE RECORDED AS DAYS MISSED FROM SCHOOL
and may be counted towards loss of credit.**

LATENESS TO CLASS

Students late to class should report to the teacher with whom they are scheduled for admittance to class. The teacher will determine the validity of the excuse and shall require written verification when appropriate. If a student is late to class three (3) or more times without sufficient reason, the teacher will issue a detention. Lateness of more than fifteen (15) minutes shall be counted as an absence; in addition, three (3) latenesses of fifteen (15) minutes or less shall be counted as an absence.

CUTS

A student is considered to be “cutting” class if he or she reports to school but does not attend a class for which he or she is scheduled and does not have the permission of either that subject teacher or other school personnel to be excused from that class. Students identified as “cutting” class will be referred for disciplinary action.

ADULT STUDENT

State law provides that a student reaches legal majority at age eighteen (18). The attainment of adult status provides that the student may assume responsibility for signing attendance notes and other matters pertaining to school activities; however, the Vocational-Technical District rules and regulations apply equally to adult students. Consequently, the school has the right to verify any attendance notes.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES DUE TO CUTTING

1. Every effort will be made by school personnel to notify the parent or guardian when a student is unexcused absent from class or career area due to cutting.
2. Teachers will issue detention(s) for each unexcused absence from class due to cutting.
3. When a student has received three (3) unexcused absences (cuts) from class or career area within one marking period, the teacher submits unexcused absence due to cutting as an infraction referral to the Student Advisor.

4. Referral to Student Advisor for disciplinary action and guidance counselor intervention. This referral will start a follow-up action between school personnel and the parent or guardian to help resolve this problem.

HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

In extraordinary circumstances or in cases of long-term illness, the school will provide an instructor to teach the student in the home and serve as a liaison between the school and the home to assure a continuity of instruction. Contact the Guidance Department to arrange homebound instruction.