

BCPS Attendance Policy

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The Burke County Board of Education and school officials believe that regular and punctual attendance significantly affects educational achievement and success. Daily attendance is encouraged and stressed at all grade levels in the Burke County Public Schools. The board further believes that all students must graduate in order to meet the demands of the Twenty-First Century. With the combined effort of students, parents, community, and school personnel this objective will be attained.

The primary responsibility for school attendance rests with students and parents; however, schools must properly record absences and tardies, notify parents when needed, and discourage excessive absences.

Students are entitled to make up any work they have missed due to an absence. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements to acquire missed assignments. Generally, such work would be made up within a time period equal to the length of the absence.

The board and school officials seek full cooperation from parents and students in promoting good attendance and punctuality. Students who drive and parents who transport students are expected to be punctual on a daily basis; therefore, excessive tardiness or early dismissals will not be tolerated. Schools are encouraged to develop expectations and incentives for attendance and punctuality. Parents are asked to schedule medical and dental appointments after school hours except in cases of emergency. They are also asked to schedule family vacations during school vacation periods.

Because quality instructional time is a top priority for the Burke County Public Schools, student errands away from the school are discouraged unless the absence has been authorized by the principal/designee. To protect the instructional day, students will not be excused from regular schoolwork to take private lessons in music, art, dance, or any other area without prior approval of the principal.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

The school principal or designee has the right to excuse a student temporarily from attendance on account of sickness or other unavoidable cause. Below are the valid/lawful excuses for temporary nonattendance of a student at school.

1. **Illness or Injury:** When the absence results from illness or injury which prevents the student from being physically able to attend school.
2. **Quarantine:** When isolation of the student is ordered by the local health officer or by the State Board of Health.

3. **Death in the Immediate Family:** When the absence results from the death of a member of the immediate family of the student. For the purpose of this regulation, the immediate family of a student includes, but is not necessarily limited to, grandparents, parents, brothers, and sisters.
4. **Medical or Dental Appointments:** When the absence results from medical or dental appointment of a student.
5. **Court or Administrative Proceedings:** When the absence results from the attendance of a student at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the student is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.
6. **Religious Observance:** When the student is absent due to a religious observance in accordance with local school board policy.
7. **Educational Opportunity:** When it is demonstrated that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity, such as travel. Approval for such an absence must be granted prior to the absence.

The school principal may excuse temporary or occasional absences for other reasons in accordance with local school board policies, provided that the student has been in attendance for at least one-half of the school day.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences for reasons other than those listed above will be deemed unexcused. Unexcused absences include, but are not limited to missing the bus, oversleeping, car trouble, or babysitting. Schools may develop specific consequences related to such absences. Absences caused by infestation of lice generally will be coded as unlawful if the absence lasts more than one day beyond the identification of the problem, or if more than three infestations occur during the school year.

NOTIFICATION OF EXCESSIVE ABSENCES (K-12)

The principal and his/her staff take appropriate action to prevent excessive absences and/or provide counseling for students with a history of excessive absences. Parents must be notified of their child's excessive absences, whether excused or unexcused, and the teacher/counselor/attendance counselor/principal shall then work with the student and his/her family to analyze the causes and determine the steps to eliminate the problem.

The school will notify parents of excessive unexcused absences under the following conditions:

1. **After the third unexcused absences:**
 - a. The principal or his designee shall notify the parent/guardian within five days and shall request an immediate conference.

- b. If unable to contact the parent/guardian, and/or if the principal deems it necessary he/she shall refer the matter to the school attendance counselor for immediate investigation.
2. **By the sixth unexcused absence:**
 - a. The principal shall notify the parent/guardian by mail that he/she may be prosecuted under the General Compulsory Attendance Law if these absences cannot be justified.
 - b. A copy of the notice will be directed to the attendance counselor, who will work with the student and family to remedy the problem. If warranted, the attendance counselor/principal may take legal action.
3. **After the tenth unexcused absence:**
 - a. The principal shall review any report or investigation and shall confer with the student and his/her parent/guardian if possible to determine whether the parent/guardian has received notification and made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal determines that the parent/guardian has not complied, the district attorney will be notified regarding possible action against the parent/guardian.
 - b. If the principal determines that the parent/guardian has not made good faith effort, the principal may file a complaint with the juvenile intake counselor that the child is habitually absent from school without a valid excuse.

HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance is an essential element in the learning process. The primary responsibility of school attendance rests with students and parents. Because students daily receive 90 minutes of instruction in each class, good attendance is crucial. Based on these considerations, students missing more than seven (7) days per semester will not receive credit for the course and No Credit (NC) will be recorded for the grade.

Students with extenuating circumstance may file an appeal with the school attendance appeals committee prior to the completion of the course if the student makes a "C" or above on the final exam and earns a passing grade for the course. No Credit (NC) will be recorded if the student does not meet both stipulations. Under certain circumstances students could be required to make-up time for their absences. The required time to be made up and the procedures to follow will be determined by the school attendance appeals committee. If a student is awarded credit for a course by the school attendance appeals committee the student's grade will be what was assigned by the student's teacher.

EXEMPTION FROM EXAMS

A student may be exempt from an exam in any course where an End-of course Test, either state mandated or local option, is not required if:

1. The student has an “A” average in the course and has no more than three (3) absences.
2. The student has a “B” average in the course and has no more than two (2) absences
3. The student has a “C” average in the course and has no more than one (1) absence.

** (Any student has the option to take any exam from which the student is exempt. Each individual teacher will inform students how the test will impact their final grade.)

*** (Days of in-school suspension and completion of BATS (Burke Alternatives to Suspension) do count the student as present; however, the student is not eligible for exam exemption.)