



## **Promotion/Retention in Regard to Attendance Policy**

### **Attendance and Excuses**

#### **I. Definitions**

- A. Attending School Regularly - Defined in NC State standard of 90% for satisfactory attendance. Students must meet the “90% rule” for the state of North Carolina, which requires students to be present 90% of the time in class in order for the student to get credit. A student must be in attendance for 162 days.
- B. Eligible Student - A student who is 18 years of age or older.
- C. Parent - The biological or adoptive parent, legal guardian or person acting in the absence of the parent or guardian or otherwise has legal custody or care and control of a child.
- D. Parenting Student - A student who is the mother, father, or legal guardian of a child.
- E. Unlawful Absence - An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful absences in NC State regulations.

#### **II. Guidelines**

- A. Students are expected to attend school and all classes regularly and punctually and may be excused from class or school only for reasons specified in NC State regulation, including lawful absences for pregnant and parenting students, or as authorized by the Superintendent or Principal.
- B. Students shall be considered “attending” school when the student is physically on school grounds or is participating in instruction, virtual instruction, or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location.

#### **III. Lawful and Unlawful Absences**

##### **A. Lawful Absence**

- 1. It is the responsibility of the student, parent, or guardian to ensure that the student attends school every day. North Carolina Law requires that children between the ages of 7 and 16 years must attend school. Thomas Academy will diligently adhere to the North Carolina Compulsory School Attendance Law, including N.C.G.S. 115-378. The Superintendent/Principal may excuse a student's absence for the following reasons, if adequate evidence is provided.
  - a) Death in the immediate family

- b) Illness of the student. The Principal may require a physician's certificate from the parent/guardian/teaching parent of a student including medical/dental appointments.
  - c) Court summons.
  - d) Hazardous weather conditions, which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
  - e) Work approved or sponsored by the school and accepted by the Superintendent or Principal as a reason for excusing the student.
  - f) Observance of a religious holiday.
  - g) State emergency.
  - h) Other emergency or set of circumstances, which, in the judgment of the Superintendent or Principal, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.
  - i) Health exclusion, which includes immunizations and other health related communicable diseases.
  - j) Suspension.
  - k) Lack of authorized transportation. Lack of transportation does not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
  - l) Absences related to pregnancy and parenting student related conditions.
2. Absences are coded lawful when a note or other documentation that supports the reason for the absence is submitted to the school.
- B. Pregnant and Parenting Students
- 1. A student's absence due to a student's pregnancy or parenting needs is a lawful absence as provided under this subparagraph.
  - 2. Schools will excuse all student absences due to pregnancy or parenting-related conditions, including for labor, delivery, recovery, and prenatal/postnatal medical appointments, including:
    - a) Providing at least 10 days of excused absences for a parenting student after the birth of the student's child.
    - b) Excusing any parenting-related absences due to an illness or medical appointment of the student's child, including up to 4 days of absence per school year for which the school may or may not require a note from a physician.
    - c) Excusing any absence due to a legal appointment involving the pregnant or parenting student that is related to family law proceedings, including adoption, custody, and visitation.
    - d) Excusing any parenting-related absence from a class due to use of a lactation space to nurse or to express breast milk.
  - 3. In addition to home and hospital services, the school may allow the student to:
    - a) Choose one of the following alternatives to make up work that the student missed:

- (1) Retake a semester.
- (2) Participate in an online course recovery program
- (3) Allow the student 6 weeks to continue at the same pace and finish at a later date
- (4) Participation in an Adult High School Diploma Program.

C. Unlawful Absence

An unlawful absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful is presumed to be unlawful and may constitute truancy.

D. Tardiness and Early Dismissal

1. Students reporting late to school/class are considered tardy.
2. Leaving school/class before the day/period ends is considered early dismissal.
3. School personnel will designate tardiness and early dismissal as lawful or unlawful.

E. Truant or Chronically Absent Student

A truant student or chronically absent student is a student who is unlawfully absent from school:

1. For more than 4 days in any quarter
2. For more than 9 days in any semester
3. For more than 18 days in any school year.

IV. Standards for Regular Attendance

- A. Students are expected to maintain satisfactory attendance at the NC state standard of 90%.
- B. In order to foster continuity of the instructional program, students should not exceed an absence rate of 10% of four days in a given quarter.

V. Verifying Absences/Tardiness

- A. A written explanation of each absence is required from the parent/guardian/teaching parent/eligible student.
- B. The Principal shall implement the following procedures for verifying student absences and tardiness.
  1. Unless the parent has notified the school of their child's absence, the parent will be notified, to the extent possible, by 10 AM of their child's absence each day the child is absent, unless the opening of school is delayed.
    - a) In the event of a delayed opening of one hour, the parent will be notified of a student's absence, to the extent possible by 11 AM.
    - b) In the event of a delayed opening of two hours, the parent will be notified of a student's absence to the extent possible by 12 noon.
  2. Notice of the student's absence must be made via phone, email, or text message.
  3. The Principal will ensure that the parents are notified of these absence procedures at the beginning of each school year.

4. Annually, the Principal shall designate the person(s) responsible for providing notice under this paragraph.
- C. A student absent from school shall present a note to the school Principal immediately upon returning to school.
1. The absence note shall be signed by the parent/guardian/teaching parent/eligible student and include the name of the student, the date of the absence, and the reason for the absence.
    - a) The absence note shall be submitted to the school Principal no later than five days after the student's return to school.
    - b) The absence note may be submitted in person or by electronic mail (e-mail) to the school Principal.
  2. Upon receipt of the absence note, the school will certify the absence as excused or unexcused.
  3. Absences not supported by a note will be considered unexcused and unlawful.
  4. If a student is absent for an extended period of due to illness, a written statement of explanation may be required from the physician no later than five days after the student's return to class.
- D. Any absence or tardiness not supported by a parent/eligible student note will be marked as an unlawful absence.

VI. Student Chronic Absenteeism

Based on the NC State Board of Education Policy ATND-004, student chronic absence is a risk factor for adverse student outcomes.

Student Chronic Absentee is a student enrolled in a North Carolina public school for at least 10 school days at any time during a school year and whose total number of absences is equal to or greater than 10% of the total number of days that the student has been enrolled in the school. ***Student chronic absence refers to missing an excessive number of school days for ANY reason (excused, unexcused, or disciplinary); that student is at risk of falling behind and not passing the school year.*** The faculty and staff of Thomas Academy will be ever vigilant to identify and assist students who have chronic absences by regularly contacting the parent/guardian/TPs. The Superintendent and Principal will notify Social Services and Juvenile Justice counselors when their assistance is required. **In order to learn and progress academically STUDENTS MUST BE IN ATTENDANCE.**

Chronically absent students in grades 6 - 12 can make up missed time by attending an after school homework club or in school required study hall sessions. In order for a student to attend the after school homework club, the student and parent must sign a contract denoting the rules and procedures for the homework club.

At more than 18 absences whether excused or unexcused in a year-long course and more than 9 absences in a semester-long course, a student may fail the course and be

retained. Students who have a chance, a grade 55 or above, to pass academically may be offered attendance recovery.

VII. Make-up Work

- A. It is the responsibility of the student or the student's parent/guardian/TP to request missed assignments for each unlawful absence.
- B. After 5 school days, and in normal circumstances, any missed assignments not turned in will be graded as a zero. Principal approval is required for any requests for credit for assignments not turned in after 5 days.
- C. Teachers will assist students in making up missed work for excused absences.
- D. Suspension/Expulsions: Make-up work will be allowed. See A. Lawful Absence, j.
- E. Make up work for pregnant and parenting students shall be provided as outlined in paragraph III-B.2.b of this rule.

VIII. Attendance Monitoring

- A. Recording Absences
  - 1. The homeroom teacher is responsible for recording the attendance of students in class. Teachers shall record absences in PowerSchool reporting system daily.
  - 2. Teachers shall maintain records in accordance with the applicable records retention schedule.
- B. Schools should utilize the interventions outlined in the attendance manual for students who are not meeting the attendance standard, without a documented and approved excuse.
- C. Students who have not shown improvement will be referred to JDD and DSS.
- D. Report cards will record the number of excused and unexcused absences and tardies.

IX. Parental Accountability

- A. Each person who has legal custody or care and control of a child who is five years old or older and under 18 shall see that the child attends school regularly during the entire school year, unless the child is otherwise exempted from attendance as provided by state law.
- B. Thomas Academy will hold the parent/legal custodian responsible for the attendance of a child and may file charges, as required by state statute, in district court against a parent/legal custodian who fails to see that the child receives instruction under the NC Compulsory Attendance Law.