

**RULES
OF
THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**CHAPTER 0520-01-02
DISTRICT AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

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0520-01-02-.17 STATE ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES.

- (1) Children entering kindergarten shall be five (5) years of age on or before August 15. However, a child does not have to enroll in school at five (5) years of age, but enrollment must occur no later than the beginning of the academic year following the child's sixth (6th) birthday.
- (2) Any transfer student applying for admission who was legally enrolled in an approved kindergarten in another state and who will be five (5) years of age no later than December 31 of the current school year shall be enrolled.
- (3) Pursuant to the Tennessee compulsory attendance law, all children must attend school between the ages of six (6) and seventeen (17), both inclusive. T.C.A. §§ 49-6-3001 and 49- 6-3005 provide that the following children may be exempt from the compulsory attendance law:
 - (a) Children mentally or physically incapacitated to perform school duties, with the disability attested to by a duly licensed physician in all cases;
 - (b) Children who have completed high school and hold a high school diploma or other certificate of graduation;
 - (c) Children enrolled in and making satisfactory progress in a course of instruction leading to a high school equivalency credential approved by the State Board of Education;
 - (d) Children participating in a program of hospital or homebound instruction administered or approved by the LEA;
 - (e) Children six (6) years of age or under whose parent or guardian have filed a notice of intent to conduct a home school as provided by T.C.A. § 49-6-3001 or who are conducting a home school as provided by T.C.A. § 49-6-3050;
 - (f) Children enrolled in a home school who have reached seventeen (17) years of age; and

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- (g) Children who have attained their seventeenth (17th) birthday and whose continued compulsory attendance, in the opinion of the local board of education in charge of the school to which the children belong and are enrolled, results in detriment to good order and discipline and to the instruction of other students and is not of substantial benefit to the children.
- (4) Local boards of education may admit students from outside their respective local school district at any time.
 - (a) Local boards of education may arrange for the transfer of students residing within their district to other school districts by establishing agreements with other local boards of education for the admission or transfer of students from one (1) school district to another.
 - (b) The receiving board of education may set a time before or during the school year after which it will not accept transfer students. The receiving board of education may charge the non-resident student tuition to attend.
 - (c) If a local board of education otherwise permits non-resident students to transfer into its schools, it may not discriminate against any students solely on the grounds of their race, sex, national origin, or disability, nor may it charge such students a tuition over and above the usual tuition for students without disabilities.
- (5) Each local board of education shall adopt an attendance policy in accordance with the State Board's School Attendance Policy 4.100 that is firm, but fair; includes effective accounting and reporting procedures; accounts for extenuating circumstances; includes appeal procedures; and establishes and maintains alternative programs for students who fail to meet minimum attendance requirements.
 - (a) The policy shall address the excusing of absences in accordance with the State Board's School Attendance Policy 4.100.
 - (b) The policy shall address unexcused absences in accordance with the State Board's School Attendance Policy 4.100.
 - (c) The policy shall align with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [found at 42 U.S.C. §§ 11431, et seq.].
 - (d) Local attendance policies shall not be used to penalize students academically.
 - (e) The attendance policy adopted by the local board of education shall be posted at each school, and school counselors shall be supplied copies for discussion with students.
 - (f) The policy shall be referenced in all school handbooks. All teachers, administrative staff, and parents/guardians shall be provided copies of the policy.
- (6) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 49-6-3009, each local board of education shall adopt a progressive truancy intervention plan for students who violate compulsory attendance requirements prior to the filing of a truancy petition or a criminal prosecution for educational neglect. These interventions must be designed to address student conduct related to truancy in the school setting and minimize the need for referrals to juvenile court.
- (7) Whenever possible, attendance issues should be resolved at the school level. To ensure due process, local boards of education must adopt a policy that affords students with excessive (more than 5) unexcused absences the opportunity to appeal. Such policy must,

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at minimum, include written or actual notice to the student or their parent/guardian and the opportunity to be heard. The burden of proof rests on the student or their parent/guardian. The appeal process for determining unexcused absences is ancillary to a truancy decision rendered by a juvenile court judge as described in T.C.A. § 49-6-3010.

- (8) LEAs are encouraged to develop truancy boards, youth courts, or other alternative programs to serve as an intervention for students with excessive absences. These may be in addition to, or a part of, the progressive truancy intervention plan required by T.C.A. § 49-6-3009.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 49-6-3002, 49-6-3005, and 49-6-3009, Executive Order No. 14 of 2020 (and applicable, subsequent Executive Orders addressing COVID-19 relief), and Public Chapter 652 of 2020.

Administrative History: (For history prior to June 1992, see pages iii through ix). Repeal filed March 16, 1992; effective June 29, 1992. New rule filed December 23, 2014; effective March 23, 2015. Emergency rules filed April 16, 2020; effective through October 13, 2020. Emergency rules expired effective October 14, 2020, and the rules reverted to their previous statuses. Amendments filed August 20, 2020; effective November 18, 2020.