

TENNESSEE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMISSION		
ATTENDANCE		6200
ADOPTED: April 9, 2021	REVISED: July 13, 2021	MONITORING: Review: Annually

Attendance is a key factor in student achievement and therefore, students are expected to be present each day school is in session. Each authorized charter school shall oversee the entire attendance program which shall include:¹

- (1) All accounting and reporting procedures and their dissemination;
- (2) Alternative program options for students who severely fail to meet minimum attendance requirements;
- (3) Ensuring that all enrolled children attend school;
- (4) Providing documentation of enrollment status upon request for students applying for new or reinstatement of driver's permit or license; and
- (5) Notifying the Department of Safety whenever a student age fifteen (15) or older with a driver's permit or license withdraws from school.²

Student attendance records shall be given the same level of confidentiality as other student records. Only authorized school officials with legitimate educational purposes may have access to student information without the consent of the student or parent/guardian.³

Absences shall be classified as either excused or unexcused as determined by the school leader or his/her designee. Excused absences shall include:

- (1) Personal illness;
- (2) Illness of immediate family member;
- (3) Death in the family;
- (4) Extreme weather conditions;
- (5) Religious observances;⁴
- (6) Travel days for postsecondary visits;⁵
- (7) Pregnancy;
- (8) School sponsored or school endorsed activities;⁶
- (9) Military active duty/deployment (as outlined below);⁷
- (10) Summons, subpoena, or court order;
- (11) Circumstances which in the judgment of the school leader create emergencies over which the student has no control; or
- (12) Participation in an activity or program sponsored by 4-H.

The school shall be responsible for ensuring that:⁸

- (1) Attendance is checked and reported daily in the Commission's student information system;

- (2) Daily absentee sheets contain sign in/sign out sheets and indicate students present or absent for the majority of the day;
- (3) All student absences are verified;
- (4) Written excuses are submitted for absences and tardiness;
- (5) System-wide procedures for accounting and reporting are followed; and
- (6) Students and families are notified annually of all attendance procedures.

Truancy. On or before the beginning of each school year, the school leader shall notify parents (or legal guardians or person having control) of students in writing that the parent/guardian has a duty to monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school. The notice shall include language that if the student accumulates five (5) days of unexcused absences during the school year, then the student is subject to the school's progressive truancy interventions and that continued unexcused absences may result in a referral to juvenile court.⁹

Students shall be present at least fifty percent (50%) of the scheduled school day in order to be counted present. Students receiving special education services, or who have a 504 Plan, may attend part-time days, alternating days, or for a specific amount of time as indicated in their Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan.¹⁰ If a student is required to participate in a remedial instruction program outside of the regular school day where there is no cost to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the school system provides transportation, unexcused absences from these programs shall be reported in the same manner.¹¹

Accumulation of Five (5) Unexcused Absences

Students who accumulate five (5) days of unexcused absences shall be reported to the school leader or designee who will, in turn, provide written notice to the child's parent, guardian, or other person having control of the child that the child's attendance at school is required by law. The school leader or designee shall send a new notice after each successive accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences.⁶

After a student has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences during the school year, and after given adequate time (as determined by the school leader or designee) to turn in documentation to excuse those absences or request an attendance hearing, the school leader or designee shall begin implementation of the school's progressive truancy intervention plan, beginning with Tier I. The school's progressive truancy intervention plan shall be implemented prior to the filing of a truancy petition in juvenile court or a criminal prosecution for educational neglect. The progressive truancy intervention plan must be designed to address student conduct related to truancy in the school setting and minimize the need for referrals to juvenile court.

Progressive Truancy Intervention Plan¹²

Each authorized charter school shall adopt a policy setting forth its progressive truancy intervention plan which shall, at minimum, include the following:¹³

Tier I shall include schoolwide, prevention-oriented supports.

Tier II shall be implemented upon a student's accumulation of five (5) unexcused absences. Each authorized charter school Tier II progressive truancy plan shall include, at a minimum:

- (1) A conference with the student and the student's parent/guardian, or other person having control of the student;
- (2) An attendance contract, to be signed by the student, the parent/guardian, or other person having control of the student, and the attendance supervisor or designee. The contract shall include:
 - a. A specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student;
 - b. The period for which the contract is effective; and
 - c. Penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court; and
- (3) Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings, which may be with the student and the parent/guardian, or other person having control of the student, to discuss the student's progress;
- (4) An individualized assessment by a school employee of the reasons a student has been absent from school; and
- (5) If necessary, referral of the child to counseling, community-based services or other in-school or out-of-school services aimed at addressing the student's attendance problems.

Tier III:

If the truancy interventions under Tier II are unsuccessful and the student continues to accumulate additional unexcused absences, Tier III shall be implemented. Tier III may consist of one (1) or more of the following interventions:

- (1) School-based community services;
- (2) Participation in a school-based restorative justice program;
- (3) Referral to a school-based teen court; or
- (4) Saturday or after school courses designed to improve attendance and behavior.

Tier III interventions shall address student needs in an age-appropriate manner.

In-school or out-of-school suspension shall not be used as part of the progressive truancy plan.

If the progressive truancy plan is unsuccessful with a student and the school can document that the student's parent or guardian is unwilling to cooperate in the truancy plan, or that the interventions of the progressive truancy plan have failed to meaningfully address the student's school attendance, the school leader or designee, after written notice to the parent, guardian, or other person having control of the student, shall report the student's absences to the appropriate judge having juvenile jurisdiction in that county.

Military Service of Parent/Guardian. School leaders shall provide students with a one (1)-day excused absence prior to the deployment of and a one (1)-day excused absence upon the return of

a parent/custodian serving active military service. School leaders shall also allow up to ten (10) excused cumulative absences per year for students to visit a parent/guardian during a deployment cycle. The student shall provide documentation to the school as proof of his/her parent's/guardian's deployment. Students shall be permitted to make up schoolwork missed during these absences.¹⁴

Attendance during Postsecondary Visits.¹⁵ Any high school student wishing to participate in a postsecondary school visit during the school year shall submit to the school leader or designee prior notice from his/her parent/guardian specifying the date of the school visit. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student shall be responsible for facilitating any postsecondary school visits and for ensuring the safety of the student during the visit.

The school leader or designee shall count a student present for no more than two (2) days each school year for students participating in a postsecondary school visit. The student shall be counted present for the day of the postsecondary school visit and shall not be counted present during any travel days.

In order to be counted present for the school day missed, the student shall submit to the school leader or designee a signed letter or form from a campus official verifying that the visit to the postsecondary school occurred. The student shall complete any school work missed due to the student participating in a postsecondary school visit.

Make-up Work. The school shall adopt a policy regarding make-up work for students who are absent from school.

State-Mandated Tests/End of Course (EOC) Exams. Students who are absent the day of the scheduled TN Ready/EOC exams must make up the exam.

Credit/Promotion Denial.¹⁶ The school shall adopt a policy addressing how attendance will be utilized as a criteria for denial of credit or denial of promotion. Additionally, the policy shall allow a student the right to an appeal as outlined in the attendance hearing section of this policy.

Driver's License Revocation.² More than ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) total reported unexcused absences by a student during any semester renders a student ineligible to retain a driver's permit or license, or to obtain such if of age. In order to qualify for reclaiming a driver's permit or license, the student must make a passing grade in at least three (3) full unit subjects or their equivalency at the conclusion of a subsequent grading period.

Attendance Hearing. The school shall adopt a policy for attendance hearings that complies with all Commission policies as well as all state rules and regulations. This includes affording students with more than five (5) unexcused absences the opportunity to appeal and must, at minimum, provide written or actual notice to the student or their parent/guardian and the opportunity to be heard. The appeal process for determining unexcused absences is ancillary to the truancy process.¹⁷

Legal References:

- ¹ TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17(3); T.C.A. § 49-6-300
- ² T.C.A. § 49-6-3017
- ³ T.C.A. § 10-7-504; 20 U.S.C. § 1232g
- ⁴ TRR/MS 0520-01-03-.03(16); T.C.A. § 49-6-2904
- ⁵ The school leader/designee shall have discretion to determine appropriate documentation required for a travel day to be counted as an excused absence.
- ⁶ TN Department of Education, *Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual* (2017)
- ⁷ T.C.A. § 49-6-3019
- ⁸ T.C.A. § 49-6-3007; TN Department of Education, *Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual* (2017)
- ⁹ T.C.A. § 49-6-3007
- ¹⁰ TN Department of Education, *Student Membership and Attendance Procedures Manual* (2017)
- ¹¹ T.C.A. § 49-6-3021
- ¹² T.C.A. § 49-6-3007; T.C.A. § 49-6-3009
- ¹³ T.C.A. § 49-6-3007; T.C.A. § 49-6-3009
- ¹⁴ T.C.A. § 49-6-3019
- ¹⁵ State Board Policy 4.100
- ¹⁶ T.C.A. § 49-2-203(b)(7)
- ¹⁷ TRR/MS 0520-01-02-.17

Cross References:

- LEA Policy 4.100
- LEA Policy 4603 Promotion and Retention, Grading, and Assessment
- LEA Policy 1801 Special Education
- LEA Policy 1802 ADA and Section 504