

Regulation JEA

Las Cruces Public Schools

Related Entries: JEA, JKD, JKD-R, IKE, IKE-R
Responsible Office: Associate Superintendent for Instruction

COMPULSORY STUDENT ATTENDANCE

I. PURPOSE

To establish responsibility for recording and excusing student absences and to outline procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and for follow-up with students and parents in accordance with requirements set forth in 22-8-2 [NMSA 1978].

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. *“Attendance” means* students who are in class or in a school-approved activity. If a student is in attendance up to one half the total instructional time during a school day, the student will be counted as having attended one-half of a school day. If the student attends school for more than one-half of the total instructional time, the student will be counted as having attended for the full day (6-10-8-7 NMSA 1978)
- B. *“Hazardous weather conditions” means* weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school, as defined and/or approved by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee.
- C. *“Immediate family members” means* the child, spouse, father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, siblings, step-siblings, half-siblings, grandparents, mother-in-law, father-in-law, foster parents, guardians, and others who reside in the same household with the student.
- D. *“Long-term illnesses” means* acute or chronic health-related problems that require a student to be out of school more than three consecutive days, as verified by a health-care professional’s written note to the student’s school.
- E. *“Recurring illnesses” means* any medical or mental conditions that requires a student to see a health care professional on a recurring basis with standing appointments; and, that such appointments occur at least once per month.
- F. *“Short-term illnesses” means* any medical or mental conditions that keep a student out of school for three or fewer consecutive days, as verified by the parent.
- G. *“School-sponsored/school sanctioned activities” means:*
 - 1. Events or activities sponsored or held by school clubs, athletics, extracurricular or curricular classes;
 - 2. School coordinated visits to college/university campuses on officially designated visitation days or on alternate visits when the student has applied for admission to that particular college/university.
 - 3. Days in which a student is suspended, short-term, from school.

- H. “*Work*” means employment in a gainful trade or occupation or engagement in an alternative form of education to which the parent/guardian consents, and which is approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

III. PROCEDURES: RECORDING ABSENCES

A. All Schools:

Each classroom teacher shall be responsible for taking daily student attendance.

B. Elementary Schools:

Each teacher is responsible for recording the attendance of students in his/her class each day. Teachers or the attendance secretary at each school shall enter the information into the district’s daily attendance system.

C. Middle School and High Schools:

1. Each teacher is responsible for recording the attendance of students in his/her class. Teachers record attendance directly into the district’s period attendance system.
2. Attendance documentation shall be retained in the school for the current school year. A back-up copy of all attendance records shall be maintained electronically by the LCPS Information Operations office for a period of three (3) school calendar years.

IV. PROCESS AND CONTENT

A. Student absences shall be considered **excused** if they fall within the following reasons and students provide verification (see IV.B below):

1. Short-and long-term mental and physical illnesses;
2. Recurring illnesses;
3. Observance of religious holidays;
4. Bereavement;
5. As required by law, disciplinary actions or short-term suspensions;
6. Required court proceedings;
7. School-sponsored/school-sanctioned activities, including school sports participation, field trips and academic competitions;
8. Hazardous weather conditions;
9. Work approved or sponsored by the school (i.e., service learning, EXCEL activity).

10. When a student is not physically in the classroom but remains under the direct supervision of the school district, the absence(s) shall be documented as excused and are not counted as part of the 90 percent attendance calculation. School-sponsored/school sanctioned absences include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Standardized testing;
 - b. School sports participation
 - c. Field trips and academic competitions
 - d. Health center, nurse, counseling/guidance and administrative office visits;
 - e. In-school suspension;
 - f. Principal-approved student government and/or student council activities.
 11. Bus suspensions – when a student has had his/her school bus riding privileges suspended and the student is unable to find alternative transportation to school.
- B. All excused absences for illnesses shall be verified** by a parent or other adult who is legally responsible for the care of a student, or by the school authority responsible for the absence. Verification shall be provided to the school within three (3) school days of the absence. If verification of the absence is not presented within three school days, the absence shall be coded as unexcused.
1. Long-term illnesses shall be verified in writing by a community health-care professional (doctor, dentist, optometrist, mental health counselor, etc.) or school nurse.
 2. Recurring illnesses shall be verified in writing by a community health-care professional (doctor, dentist, mental health counselor, etc.) that the absence is recurring and necessary.
 3. Short-term illnesses shall be verified in writing by a parent, community health-care professional (doctor, dentist, optometrist, mental health counselor, etc.) or school nurse.
- C. It shall be the responsibility of the student to make up any and all schoolwork he/she missed due to absence, regardless of the reason for the absence.**
1. **When an absence is excused**, the teacher shall provide the student with resources in order to learn the material missed during the absence. This may include the actual class work assigned during the student's absence, or an alternate assignment to cover the same material. It shall be the student's responsibility to learn the missed material, including completing alternate assignments deemed appropriate by the teacher. A short-term suspension is considered to be an excused absence. (For suspensions, refer to LCPS Regulation JKD-R.) Students will have the same number of days that they were sick or suspended to turn in make-up work. For absences at the end of the semester, students will have until the final day of the semester to turn in make-up work.

2. **When the absence is unexcused**, the student shall still be responsible for making up the work so that continuing effective course participation is possible. Students shall have three school days from the date of their return to school to make up missed work. The missed work shall be graded and the final assignment grade shall be reduced by 25 percent.

D. Other Absences

1. Any absence for any reason other than those specified in Item IV.A. above may be considered either excused or unexcused, prior to the absence, by the school principal or his/her designee.
2. Normally, requests for family travel are not considered as excused absences. However, in cases of unusual family circumstances, a student's absence may be deemed excused at the discretion of the principal or his/her designee based upon the following considerations:
 - a. Recommendations from the student's teacher(s) concerning the possible effect of an anticipated absence on the student's academic progress and the options available for make-up work.
 - b. Number of excused or unexcused absences the student has accumulated to date during that grading period.
 - c. Purpose, significance and duration of the travel.
3. Absences for participation in student-related (but not school-sponsored) events and activities, including, but not limited to 4H, rodeo, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, shall not be considered excused absences unless such absences have been pre-approved by the principal or his/her designee.

V. MONITORING ATTENDANCE

- A. Student absences shall be reported to the student's parents/guardians on the student's quarterly report card.
- B. Each school, in collaboration with other school district offices and outside agencies, shall develop and implement a continuum of interventions designed to support regular school attendance. (LCPS Regulation IKE-R).
- C. Elementary School (including preschool, Head Start and kindergarten):
 1. At the beginning of each school year, each elementary school principal shall request that parents/guardians of students who attend that school notify the school when the student is to be absent for any reason on any given school day.
 2. Whenever possible, parents of elementary school children shall be contacted by noon of each first day of absence, if the parents have not previously notified the school of the absence.

3. Elementary school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both excused and unexcused, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the school principal or his/her designee, students who have not been present ninety (90) percent of instructional days by the end of the second quarter of a school year may be referred to appropriate school district staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance (LCPS Regulation IKF-R).
4. An unexcused absence of two or more classes up to fifty (50) percent of an instructional day shall be counted as one-half day absence, and the unexcused absence of more than fifty (50) percent of an instructional day shall be counted as one full-day absence.
5. If a student's attendance rate drops below ninety (90) percent in any class during any grading period, the student's excused and unexcused absences shall be reviewed by a school attendance review committee to determine if interventions are necessary.

D. Middle Schools:

1. Middle school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both excused and unexcused, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the principal/designee, students who have been absent ten (10) days by the end of the second quarter of a school year may be referred to appropriate staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance.
2. An unexcused absence of two or more classes up to fifty (50) percent of an instructional day shall be counted as one-half day absence, and the unexcused absence of more than fifty (50) percent of an instructional day shall be counted as one full-day absence.
3. If a student's attendance rate drops below ninety (90) percent in any class during any grading period, the student's excused and unexcused absences shall be reviewed by a school attendance review committee to determine if interventions are necessary.

E. High Schools:

1. In order for a student to receive credit for a class, he/she must be in attendance for a minimum of ninety (90) percent of the days the class is offered or has received approval of an appeal for credit (see V.F).
2. High school students with excessive absences and/or tardies, both excused and unexcused, may be referred for appropriate intervention. At the discretion of the school principal/designee, students who have been absent for ten (10) days by the end of the second quarter may be referred to appropriate school district staff and/or outside agencies for intensive interventions designed to increase regular attendance (LCPS Regulation IKF-R).

3. A student and the student's parent/guardian shall be provided written notice from the school district prior to and at such time as a student's attendance in any class drops below ninety (90) percent of the days the class is offered during any grading period.
 - a. Prior notice shall consist of letter(s) from the school district to the parent/guardian upon the third-, fifth- and seventh-absences during any grading period.
 - b. The written parent notification shall indicate the need to schedule a parent/teacher conference to discuss available interventions that address the student's attendance patterns and academic progress.
 - i. It shall be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the school to schedule such a conference.
 - ii. A translator shall be made available, at school district expense, at the conference, at the request of the parent/guardian.

F. High School Appeals:

1. Students who did not meet the ninety (90) percent attendance requirement must submit appeal packets to their school's attendance liaison in order to receive credit for the class in which they did not meet the minimum attendance requirement. The minimum attendance requirement does not impact the acceptance of credit awarded through alternative means, such as online courses, etc.
2. **Approved absences that are coded as "excused," as per section IV.A-B above, shall not be included when calculating whether a student has failed to meet the ninety (90) percent attendance requirement.** (Exception: students enrolled in alternative schools/programs may have to file an appeal based on the Principal's decision regarding the student's overall attendance based on excused and/or unexcused absences.)
3. Appeal packets, available in each high school guidance office, must be submitted to the school attendance liaison no later than ten (10) school days following the date the school district mails high school report cards to students. (Parents/guardians are responsible to ensure that a current address is on file at the school. The date that report cards are available is predetermined and posted on the school district's web page and included on the published school district calendar each semester.) Seniors are required to submit an appeals packet at least five (5) school days prior to the official last day for seniors.
 - a. The appeal packet must include:
 - i. A school credit appeal form with all requested information completed;
 - ii. An official school attendance report.

- iii. An absence justification form with written explanation of all absences not justified on the school absence report, along with all available documentation.
 - b. Students who do not submit an appeal packet within the guidelines enumerated above shall not be eligible to receive credit for any class for which their attendance is less than ninety (90) percent during a semester.
 - c. Once submitted, the appeal packet shall be considered complete and no changes will be accepted.
 4. A three-member committee at each high school shall review each student's appeal packet. This committee shall include the principal/designee and two other members.
 - a. In making a determination on the awarding of credit, the committee shall determine if absences are justified. The committee may request the student and parent/guardian to appear before the committee if there are questions concerning the appeal packet.
 - b. The committee's finding for each class appealed shall be either: 1) the credit is awarded due to extenuating circumstances; or 2) the credit is not awarded.
 - c. Students shall receive notification of the attendance review committee's decision within three school days of the committee meeting.
 - d. If a student is denied credit for a class by an attendance review committee, the student may file an appeal with the Superintendent. Such appeal shall be filed within five (5) school days of the receipt of the review committee's decision. Any high school senior whose appeal for credit is denied by the attendance review committee must present his/her appeal packet to the Superintendent or his/her designee at least three school days before the date of the scheduled graduation ceremony. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall hear the student's appeal and shall either: 1) award credit based on the appeal; or 2) deny credit. The decision of the Superintendent or his/her designee shall be final.

VI. REPORTING (NMAC 6-10-8)

- A. The school shall maintain class attendance records by class period for every instruction day for each student in each school or school program in the school district or charter school in a manner verifiable by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED).
- B. The Superintendent shall report absences with excused or unexcused identifiers through the district's student-teacher accountability reporting system and certify that the information is being reported consistently at intervals and in a manner as specified by NMPED.



Associate Superintendent for Instruction

May 7, 2014

Date Approved

History: Formerly Procedure 310, Revised 06.20.06, 10.28.93, 08.19.97, 11.03.05, 10.02.09, 12.02.09, 04.09.10, 06.21.10; 03.12.14; 05.07.14

Legal Reference: 22-12-2 NMSA, 22-12-6 NMSA, NMAC 6-10-8-7 and 6-10-8-8