

Compulsory Attendance and Attendance for Credit vs. Attendance Accounting

Compulsory Attendance

Texas requires a child who is at least six years of age, or who is younger than six years of age and has previously been enrolled in first grade, and who has not yet reached his/her 18th birthday to attend school for the entire period the program is offered unless exempt by *TEC 25.086*. While students are not required to enroll in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten, once enrolled the students are required to attend school. *TEC 25.085* and Board Policy FEA (LEGAL)

The parent/guardian commits an offense of criminal negligence under *TEC 25.093* if voluntary absences for 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period or three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period from school. An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500. *TEC 25.093*, Family Code 51.03(b)(2), and Penal Code 12.233

A child not exempt from compulsory attendance laws may be excused for temporary absence as the result of, but is not limited to: 1) personal illness; 2) religious holy day; 3) health care appointment; 4) documented juvenile court proceeding; and 5) Board-approved extracurricular activity. [*TEC 25.087* and Board Policy FEB (LEGAL)] Absences for vacations, business trips, babysitting, working, and other such reasons shall be considered unexcused. If a parent elects to take a student out of school for one of these reasons or questions whether or not an absence will be considered excused or unexcused, the parent is encouraged to contact the attendance office prior to the absence in order to make an informed decision (when there is an option regarding the child missing school). Students will not be given assignments in advance for prearranged absences.

A parent/guardian of a school-age child has the responsibility to require that his/her child attend school regularly. When sickness or another reason necessitates an absence, a note signed by the parent/guardian or phone call explaining the reason for the absence is required prior to or when the student returns to school. If a student fails to submit a note from the parent or the school does not receive a phone call from the parent, the absence will be considered unexcused.

When a student's absence for personal illness exceeds five (5) consecutive days, the student must return to school with a statement from a physician or health clinic verifying the illness or other condition requiring the student's extended absence from school. A student who has been absent a total of eight (8) cumulative days will be required to bring a note from a physician or health clinic verifying the illness or other condition. In either of the above instances, all future absences will also require a note from a physician or health clinic or the student may be taken to school within the first hour of the school day to be assessed by the nurse in an effort to determine whether any symptoms of communicable illness exist that would prevent the student from attending class. Once a student is required to provide a note from a health care professional for future absences, failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence. **Therefore, any time a student is absent and is seen by a health care professional, a note from the health care professional is always in the best interest of the student so that the absence can be specified as either a doctor (or health care) appointment (full day) or health care appointment (partial day) rather than for personal illness.**

Attendance for Credit

In addition to the statute related to compulsory attendance, a student must also be in compliance with the attendance for credit statute which states that the student must be in attendance for at least 90% of the days a class is offered in order to gain credit or be promoted. **All absences, excused and unexcused, are counted for the purpose of determining attendance for credit.** For each course/class in which a student falls below the 90% threshold, a review of the record will be conducted and the student may be required to complete a plan created by the principal in order to gain credit or be promoted. Once a student falls below the 75% threshold, an Attendance Review Committee must meet to develop a plan for the student to complete in order to gain credit or be promoted. *TEC 25.092* and Board Policy FEC (LOCAL)

Attendance Accounting

In an effort to ensure parents are adequately notified of all absences, report cards for students in Katy ISD will reflect all absences that affect either compulsory attendance or attendance for credit issues. The total number of absences for secondary students depicts the number of class periods affected by absences, not the number of days since attendance for credit deals with each course/class individually. All absences, including those for health care appointments for which the student cannot be penalized under compulsory attendance or for District incentives such as exemptions and perfect attendance, are counted on the report card because these absences are not exempt from attendance for credit.