

Policy Title: Absence and Tardy

Responsible Area: Instructional Policy

North Carolina State law requires that we collect and act on certain attendance information, including the number of absences for each child and whether those absences were excused. In addition to our legal obligation, the administration and staff of MDCS are committed to the belief that a child must be at school for the entire school day to receive the full benefit. Missed instructional time is often irreplaceable, even if the “work” is made up. There is no substitute for participating in the teachable moments which can only occur when a teacher and students are working together.

Excused absences can only be given for:

- a. Illness
- b. Death of an immediate family member
- c. Medical or dental appointment
- d. Religious observance
- e. Student is involved in a court proceeding
- f. Inclement weather

Travel that has educational value can sometimes be counted as an excused absence. The School Director must pre-approve all educational absences.

To qualify:

- Parents need to make written request to the classroom teacher and school director for an excused absence in advance. Requests should be made at least three weeks in advance of the trip.
- The teacher will discuss expectations of the student while gone, i.e. journaling, reading, trip report, or other assignments the teacher deems appropriate.
- The request should include the following information:
 - Date of trip
 - Location of trip
 - Homework from the classroom (as appropriate)
 - Date of return
- Approval must be **received** two weeks prior to the first day of the absence

After any absence, parents or guardians should send a signed note to the teacher the day they return to school telling him/her the date of the absence and why the child was absent. If excuses are not received on this time frame, the absence will be considered unexcused.

Unexcused absences will result in the following actions from MDCS director:

After 3 unexcused absences the office will notify the parent by phone or in writing of the absences.

After 6 unexcused absences the office will notify all adults responsible for transporting the child to school in writing of the absences and request a meeting to create a plan to address the

attendance issue. In keeping with case law, separate letters will be mailed to each adult. The district attorney will receive copies of the letter. After 10 unexcused absences the office will follow the same notification procedure used for 6 unexcused absences. Pursuant to NC GS 115C-378, a meeting will be held to determine if the parent/guardians have made a good faith effort to address the continuing attendance issue. If the school director believes this is not the case, legal action will be taken. Per MDCS Student Conduct Policy, students with ten or more unexcused absences will be considered for an out of school suspension of a period of one day up to the remainder of the school year.

The above procedures are taken from NC GS 115C-378. The school director should follow any additional steps required by the statute and remain abreast of any changes to the law.

Tardiness

A student will be marked tardy if they arrive later than 8:15. If tardy, parents should sign the child in at the office and fill out a tardy slip. The criteria for excused absences will be used to determine if a tardy is excused. Should tardiness be a continued problem, Mountain Discovery Charter School will invite parent/guardian(s) and the student for a Tardiness Mediation Session in order to resolve the problem. Conferences will be sought once a student has 10 unexcused tardies. Per MDCS Student Conduct Policy, students with 20 or more unexcused tardies will be considered for an out of school suspension of a period of one day up to the remainder of the school year.

Early Check-Out

Students may **only** be checked out before the regular school dismissal time for the reasons listed as excused absences. If a parent/guardian checks a student out early for any other reason, the student will be given an unexcused absence for that school day.

Promotion

Any child with 10 or more unexcused absences may be retained in his/her current grade level. A committee comprised of the classroom teachers, school director, and parent will make this decision.

Approved by the Board of Directors on June 18, 2004
Amended by the Board of Directors on July 6, 2005
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