

Q&A

Attendance

Attendance FAQ's

1. What do I have to do if my child is absent from school?

When your child is absent from school, you must send a parent note within 5 days of your child's return to school. You must put your child's name, the reason for the absence, the date of the absence and your name to verify that it was a parent/guardian that is verifying the absence. You should send a doctor's note if your child saw a doctor, nurse practitioner or dentist licensed in the state during the absence. A doctor's note has no deadline and can be submitted to the school anytime during the school year to validate an absence. According to Louisiana R.S. 17:226, a doctor's excuse is one that the student's illness is substantiated in writing by a physician, nurse practitioner or dentist licensed to practice in the state of Louisiana.

2. What does it mean to "verify" my child's absence?

When a student is absent, parents are required to send a note to the child's homeroom teacher or the school's attendance clerk in order to validate **the reason for the child's absence**. We call this process *Absence Verification*.

3. What happens after I have sent a "parent" note to validate the reason for my child's absence within 5 days of my child's return to school or a doctor's note?

The homeroom teacher or the school attendance clerk will proceed to mark your child's attendance record with an "Excused" or "Unexcused" absence according to the State Dept. of Ed. Code and District policies.

4. What happens if I forget to send a note to validate my child's absence on the day of his/her absence?

You may send a "parent" note to verify your child's absence up to 5 days after your child has been absent. Absences that are not verified by a parent note with the time allowed will be permanently considered "unexcused" absences. Unexcused absences due to non-verification cannot be overwritten or changed beyond 5 days after a child returns from an absence unless a doctor's note or a note indicating an extenuating circumstance as described by state law (R.S. 17:226) is submitted.

5. How many absences can my child have in on school year?

While we know students do become ill and are unable to attend school, the total number of absences a student can miss per year in Lafourche Parish in order to earn grades and/or credit is *eleven* (11). Only absences validated with a doctor's excuse or for extenuating circumstances as described by Louisiana Law (R.S. 17:226) are exempted excused and do not count toward these eleven (11) days.

6. What if my child's absences do not fall under any of the excused absences categories?

For any other extenuating circumstances, the student's parents or legal guardian must make a "formal appeal" in accordance with the due process procedures established by the local board. You may appeal to the principal first and may further appeal to a District Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance whose decision is final.

7. I thought “truancy” indicated that a child skipped/ditched school.

In accordance with Louisiana law (R.S. 17:221) every parent, tutor or other person residing within the state of Louisiana having control or charge of any child from that child’s fifth birthday until his 18th birthday shall send such child to a public or private day school, unless the child graduates.

In accordance with Louisiana law (R.S. 17:233), any pupil who is absent from school for 5 days within a school semester without a valid excuse, or who is tardy to school (not tardy to class) or leaves school (checks out) before the end of the school day 5 times within a school semester without a valid excuse, is “truant”. The parent/guardian is accountable, as well as the student, for truancy.

8. What about coming in late (tardy) or leaving early for an appointment (tardy)?

According to Louisiana law (R.S. 17:233) a student who comes in late or leaves early for an appointment without a valid excuse 5 times in a semester is “truant”. The “*Compulsory Education Law*” (R.S. 17:221) therefore requires a student to attend a *full* day every day.

9. What is the process for a child with more than 3 unexcused absences?

For grades K-8, you will receive a letter from the school upon the 3rd (third) unexcused absence and you are required by law (R.S. 17:233) to sign the letter and return it to the school within days as proof of receipt. High school students will begin receiving letters after the 5th (fifth) unexcused absence but a signature will not be required. Additional letters for grades K-12 will continue to be sent home to the parent. On the 10th unexcused absence you may be sent a notification to appear with your child in truancy court in front of a School Attendance Review Committee consisting of representation from the District Attorney’s Office, School board, F.I.N.S. (Families in Need of Services) and Sheriff’s Office. This is called the D.A.T.E. (District Attorney’s Truancy Enforcement) Program. Continued unexcused absences after that may result in the issuance of a truancy CITATION to appear in formal court in front of a judge.

10. What can I do if my child needs to be out of school for a length of time?

You must first contact the school. Depending on the circumstances, the school will decide if it is necessary to further contact the Department of Child Welfare and Attendance at the central office for assistance or Pupil Appraisal if homebound instruction is necessary.

11. Why is attendance such a big issue?

Regular attendance is vital to a student’s success in school. The student, who is frequently absent, misses social interaction and direct instruction from his/her teachers even though written work can be made up. Any day or hour absent is a missed learning opportunity. Attendance is a key predictor of dropouts. Dropouts create economic loss and jeopardize future work force since only 31% of dropouts keep a job more than a year.

12. What about homework, if my child is absent can I request homework to be sent home?

Students are given the opportunity to makeup schoolwork missed due to illness or a valid excused absence upon their return to school.

13. When would I know if my child is retained due to attendance?

The office of Child Welfare and Attendance will review the total number of parent notes, suspensions **AND** unexcused absences at the end of the course to determine promotion or retention as it pertains to excessive absences.