

SECTION II: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

This section contains important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements.

Take a moment with your student to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. For guidance on a particular topic, please contact Scott Castleberry, Executive Director of Student Services or Laura Sunosky, Director of Student Services at 281-577-8600.

ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day’s learning on the previous day’s, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student’s mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws—one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit—are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

Compulsory Attendance

Students with Disabilities

If a student with a disability is experiencing attendance issues, the student’s ARD committee or Section 504 committee will be notified, and the committee will determine whether the attendance issues warrant an evaluation, a reevaluation, and/or modifications to the student’s individualized education program or Section 504 plan, as appropriate.

Age 19 and Older

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 19th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. If a student 19 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the district may revoke the student’s enrollment. The student’s presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See policy FEA.]

Between Ages 6 and 18

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 19 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their student is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument.

A student will be required to attend any assigned accelerated instruction program, which may occur before or after school or during the summer, if the student does not meet the passing standards on an applicable subject area state assessment.

Prekindergarten and Kindergarten

Students enrolled in prekindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school and are subject to the compulsory attendance requirements as long as they remain enrolled.

Compulsory Attendance-Exemptions

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days including one day travel to and one day travel from;
 - To be considered a religious holy day, the day should be one generally recognized by the student’s religious denomination as a holy day that is required to be observed by all members of that denomination. Church retreats, mission trips, and individual religious rites (baptisms, christenings, bar mitzvahs, etc.) are not considered holy days.

- Required court appearances including one day travel to and one day travel from;
 - A court appearance is considered to be required if the law or the court mandates an appearance by the student in a criminal, civil or traffic matter. **Important:** Absences to meet with probation officers and other absences related to court-ordered activities *outside* the courtroom do not qualify as required court appearances.
- Participation in a mentorship to complete requirements for the Distinguished Achievement Program;
- School sponsored activity with a professional NCISD staff member;
- Sounding Taps at a military honors funeral (6th through 12th grade only);
- College or university visits for the purposes of visiting to determine the student’s interest in attending the institution (11th and 12th grade only, maximum 2 days per year), provided:
 - The board has authorized such excused absences under policy FEA(LOCAL);
 - The principal has approved the student's absence; and
 - The student follows campus procedures to verify the visit and makes up any work missed.
- Activities related to obtaining the student’s United States citizenship;
- Taking part in the student’s own United States naturalization oath ceremony including one travel day to and one travel day from;
- Service as an election clerk (maximum 2 days per year);
- Visitation with an active duty parent/guardian who has been continuously deployed for at least four months and is on leave outside of where they regularly reside (maximum 10 days per school year); and
- If student is in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services and misses school to participate in an activity required under a court-ordered service plan; or any other court-ordered activity provided it is not practicable to schedule the student’s participation in the activity outside of school hours;
- Absences resulting from a serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment that makes a student’s attendance infeasible, with certification by a physician;
- A student who is 15 years of age or older (one day) to obtain a learner license and one day to obtain a driver’s license, provided that the board has authorized such excused absences under policy FEA(LOCAL). The student will be required to provide documentation of his or her visit to the driver’s license office for each absence and must make up any work missed.
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, if the student comes to school or returns to school on the same day as the appointment. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student’s arrival or return to campus; and
- If a student 17 years of age or older is pursuing enlistment in a branch of the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the absence does not exceed four days during the period the student is enrolled in high school and the student provides verification to the district of these activities.

Compulsory Attendance-Failure to Comply

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student who is absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction, termed “accelerated instruction” by the state; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action

Age 19 and older

After a student age 19 or older incurs a third unexcused absence, the district will send the student a letter as required by law explaining that the district may revoke the student’s enrollment for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking a student’s enrollment, the district may implement an attendance improvement plan.

Between 6 and 18

When a student between ages 6 and 18 incurs unexcused absences for three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, the law requires the school to send a notice to the parent

The notice will:

- Remind the parent that it is the parent's duty to monitor the student's attendance and to require the student to attend school;
- Request a conference between school administrators and parents; and
- inform the parent that the district will initiate truancy prevention measures and request a conference between school administrators and the parent. These measures will include an attendance improvement plan, school-based community service, or referrals to either in-school or out-of-school counseling or other social services. Any other measures considered appropriate by the district will also be initiated.

The truancy prevention facilitator for the district is:

Laura Sunosky
Director of Student Services
21580 Loop 494, New Caney, TX 77357
lsunosky@newcaneyisd.org
281-577-8600

If you have questions about your student and the effect of his or her absences from school, please contact the facilitator or any other campus administrator.

A court of law may also impose penalties against student's parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student is absent without excuse from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If a student in grades 9 to 12 incurs unexcused absences on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the District, in most circumstances, will refer the student to truancy court. If a student in grades K-8 incurs unexcused absences on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the District, in most circumstances, will refer the parent/guardian to law enforcement.

Attendance for Credit

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, which allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed the plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. [See policy FEC.]

With the exception of absences due to serious or life-threatening illness, all absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed above at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered extenuating circumstances for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.

- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board by following policy FNG(LOCAL).

Documentation after an Absence

When a student is absent from school, the student—upon arrival or return to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law. An email from the parent may be accepted, but the district reserves the right to require a written note.

The campus will document in its attendance records for the student whether the absence is considered by the district to be excused or unexcused.

NOTE: Unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the district is not required to excuse any absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence. A campus administrator may excuse up to 5 absences per semester with a parent note.

An excuse must be submitted to the school within three days following the absence(s). The student's assistant principal may grant an extension of this deadline if there are extenuating circumstances. All notes are retained on file and become evidence in any Attendance Review and/or court hearing. Excessive (more than five per semester) parent/guardian notes will be reviewed by the Attendance Review Committee. The excuse must contain the following:

- Date excuse is written
- Full name of student
- Student ID number
- Date(s) absent
- Reason for absence on each date
- Signature of parent/guardian
- Telephone number of parent/guardian

An excuse may be submitted via Family Access, emailed to the attendance clerk via the campus webpage or a student may turn in excuse notes before class begins on the day they return to school from an absence. Time out of class to clarify absences will not be permitted. If students do not bring a note on the day they return, they will have two additional days to complete this required documentation

Excused Absences

A note must be provided for an absence to be excused.

- Personal illness
- Funeral
- Emergency in immediate family
- Illness of the student's child
- Sent home by school nurse
- Authorized school-sponsored activities: A student may receive excused absences for participating in off-campus school related activities. Without the permission of the student's assistant principal, a student will not be permitted to participate in activities that would result in the student being absent from any class more than ten (10) times a school year (Aug.- May).

- Ongoing medical or psychiatric treatment (chemotherapy, radiation, dialysis, etc. with a doctor note indicating specific timeframes and anticipated absences)
- Olympic-caliber competition [with application approved by principal; up to ten (10) days per school year]
- Homeland security and visa appointment (passport/INS/visa/residency; with documentation requiring appearance and proof of attendance)
- Any other absences considered to be exemptions from compulsory attendance

Unexcused Absences

An absence for any reason other than those listed above under "EXCUSED ABSENCES" shall be classified as unexcused. Absences that are initially classified as unexcused may be changed to excused if the parent/guardian sends or emails a note stating the reason, within three school days after returning from the absence. The campus administrators may review reasons of extenuating circumstances other than those above and determine that they, also, may be excused.

Doctor’s Note after an Absence for Illness

Within three days of returning to school, a student absent for more than five consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s extended absence from school. Otherwise, the student’s absence may be considered unexcused and, if so, would be in violation of compulsory attendance laws.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s absence from school in order to determine whether the absence or absences will be excused or unexcused.

Certification of Absence Due to Severe Illness or Treatment

If a student is absent because of a serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment that makes a student’s attendance infeasible, a parent must provide certification from a physician licensed to practice in Texas specifying the student’s illness and the anticipated period of absence related to the illness or treatment.

Tardiness

A student who is tardy to school or to class may be assigned disciplinary action in accordance with the District’s Code of Conduct.

Official Attendance Time

The District must submit attendance of its students to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reflecting attendance at a specific time each day.

Infinity Early College High School takes official attendance every day at 8:45 AM. All other secondary campuses take official attendance every day at 10:10 AM. Official attendance times at elementary campuses vary and are listed below.

	Pre-K AM - 5th Gr	Pre-K PM
Bens Branch Elementary	9:45 AM	
Brookwood Forest Elementary	10:00 AM	12:30 PM
Dogwood Elementary	9:30 AM	
Kings Manor Elementary	9:25 AM	
New Caney Elementary	9:20 AM	
Oakley Elementary	9:30 AM	12:30 PM
Porter Elementary	9:30 AM	12:30 PM
Robert Crippen Elementary	9:40 AM	
Sorters Mill Elementary	9:45 AM	12:15 PM
Tavola Elementary	9:35 AM	
Valley Ranch Elementary	9:20 AM	

College Visits

High school students who meet the following criteria will be allowed to have two (2) excused days of absence for a college visit during their junior and senior years:

1. The student must have passed the required parts of the STAAR/EOC test for the previous year.
2. The student must be on track to graduate on time.
3. The student is classified as a junior or senior based upon credits earned.
4. The student is passing all course work.
5. The student has no truancy or other attendance problems.
6. The student is not in a DAEP placement or assigned to a JJAEP.

Students must submit a written request at least two days prior to the day requested for a college visit so that eligibility criteria for an excused day of absence can be verified and approval granted prior to the student participating in a college visit. Approval will not be granted for a college visit on a day when major examinations are scheduled, and no partial days will be approved. If prior approval is granted, verification of the visit must be submitted for the absence to be recorded as excused. If the college visit cannot be made on the date specified on the approved written request, a new request form must be submitted for consideration.

Prearranged Absences

A student (or the student's parent/guardian) may notify the school of an absence that will occur in the future by completing the Pre-arranged Absences Notification Form. The principal shall explain to the student/parent ramifications of absences

Field Trip Absences

Students participating in a field trip during school hours will not be counted as absent. Work missed for such activities is eligible for make-up, as are days missed for UIL competitions. Prior approval must be given for all students participating in a field trip. Students who are failing any class or who have poor or unsatisfactory conduct/attendance may not participate in a field trip or UIL activity. It will be the responsibility of the teacher or coach sponsoring the field trip or UIL activity to check all forms and student eligibility prior to the trip. Students who are failing a class do not have permission to miss that class for a field trip or UIL activity during school hours.

Release of Students from School

Every attempt should be made to schedule appointments outside of the school day. There may be times, however, when an appointment must be scheduled during the school day. Before school on those days, the student must bring a note from a parent/guardian, containing:

1. A phone number where the parent or guardian can be reached for verification,
2. Name and phone number of the doctor or dentist.

Students will be given a release permit allowing them to leave class at the designated time. The student may not leave during a class period to get the note. The student should present the official permit to the teacher at the beginning of the period that is designated for his/her appointment. The student keeps this official permit and should return it to school signed by a representative of the physician's office. If a student leaves and returns to school during the same school day, the student is not considered absent for the day, only for those classes missed.

Early Release/Late Arrival Privileges

All early release permits must be carried by the student at all times and should be available for review upon request. Permits will be issued to students by their assistant principal. Students who are denied credit (due to attendance) in any class during the first semester will not be eligible for early release or late arrival privileges during the second semester.

Work Release Permits

Off-campus permits for Career Technical Education (CTE) students participating in a Career Prep off campus work release program will be issued by the CTE Career Prep teacher. Career Prep teachers will provide a list of approved students to the assistant principals. A permission slip must be on file with attendance granting permission for the student to leave campus during the school day.

Off Campus Athletics

Off-campus permits for students participating in off-campus credit programs will be issued by the campus. A permission slip must be on file with campus administration granting permission for the student to leave campus during the school day.

Leaving School Early Due to Illness

If a student becomes ill while at school, the student should get a permit from his/her classroom teacher to go to the clinic. Under no circumstances are students to leave school without proper authorization. A student leaving school for any reason must sign out in the office. Failure to follow the procedure will warrant disciplinary action for truancy.

Make Up Work for Absences

A student will be given the opportunity to make up work missed during absences and suspensions. It is the responsibility of the student to request and complete any assignments or tests missed because of absence. Students will be permitted one day for make-up work for each day of absence. If a student knows he/she is going to be absent for three or more days, a parent or guardian may contact the counselor prior to their absence for assignments. Students who miss class for an approved school activity are to notify the teacher in advance concerning the possibility of completing the tests/assignments before the class is missed.

If a student is absent, he/she has one (1) day for each day absent to turn in the work.

In the case of long-term assignment: Teachers may require long-term assignments i.e. research papers, projects, etc. (that were assigned prior to a student's absence) to be turned in on the day the student returns to school.

Requests for Assignments: On any three or more consecutive days of excused absences due to unforeseen reasons, a student may request assignments by contacting the office. Please allow 24 hours to pick up requests for assignment sheets, textbooks and materials. Teachers may require long-term assignments (that were assigned prior to a student's absence) to be turned in on the day the student returns to school. For additional information see grading policy.

Driver License Attendance Verification

A currently enrolled student seeking a driver's license shall submit the Texas Department of Public Safety Verification of Enrollment and Attendance Form (VOE), signed by the parent, to the campus at least 10 days before it is needed. The district will issue a VOE only if the student meets class credit or attendance requirements. The VOE form is available at: <https://www.tdlr.texas.gov/driver/forms/VOE.pdf>. Further information may be found on the Texas Department of Public Safety website: <https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/driver-license>.

ACCOUNTABILITY UNDER STATE AND FEDERAL LAW

New Caney ISD and each of its campuses are held to certain standards of accountability under state and federal law. A key component of the accountability requirements is the dissemination and publication of certain reports and information, which include:

- The Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) for the district, compiled by TEA, the state agency that oversees public education, based on academic factors and ratings;
- A School Report Card (SRC) for each campus in the district compiled by TEA based on academic factors and ratings;
- The district's financial management report, which will include the financial accountability rating assigned to the district by TEA;