



GUIDELINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT ATTENDANCE PILOT

Introduction

The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board (CCRSB) recognizes that regular student attendance and punctuality are among the necessary essential components for student success. CCRSB is committed to full implementation of sections 24 – 26, 38 and 116 of the Nova Scotia Education Act which clearly defines student attendance as a responsibility that is shared among parents/guardians, students, teachers, Principals, and the school board.

Effective September 1, 2011, CCRSB implemented the Nova Scotia High School Credit Attendance Pilot in grades 10 to 12. This a two-year pilot, running from September 1, 2011 to June 30, 2013, where a high school student may lose eligibility to be granted credit for a course if he/she is not present in class for at least 80% of the course.

While it is important to ensure that there are clear consequences for absenteeism, it is equally important to ensure that there is due process with checks and balances along the way to ensure the appropriate use of this tool and to ensure that the tool does not unintentionally punish or further disenfranchise students who, for a variety of complex reasons, find it very difficult to attend class. (pg. 13)

Students must take responsibility for their learning and the learning process is as important, or perhaps more so, as achieving the grade at the end of the course. It is through the learning process that students build their problem solving abilities, their critical thinking skills, and their abilities to work in a team environment, as well as other critical employability skills they will need in the labour market. (pg. 13)

- *Minister's Response to Promoting Student Engagement: Report of the Minister's Working Committee on Absenteeism and Classroom Climate*

Procedures

1. The school must ensure systematic school-wide or individual interventions that support student engagement, attendance, and academic success are in place.
2. The school must ensure the interventions take into account the personal, social, and cultural/racial experiences which impact student engagement and success at school.
3. The school must ensure that documented evidence of support occurs before any student is deemed ineligible for credit.
4. Support interventions designed for the identified student are determined at the school site, but must consider the use of in-school suspension support, Program Support, Guidance support, for example, and other interventions that may be unique to the particular school.
5. The school must ensure attendance is taken period-by-period for each credit course.
6. The school must ensure students are required to provide excuses for all classes for which they are absent. A written note, email, or verbal contact by parent, indicating the reason for the absence, is expected within five (5) school days of the student returning to school.
7. The school must ensure clear communication to students and parents/guardians that a student who reaches 20% absenteeism in a course may lose eligibility for the credit regardless of their academic achievement in that particular course. ***This applies to excused and unexcused absences except those noted in Procedures # 12.***
8. The school must ensure that communication with a student and his/her parents/guardians is systematic and documented by the teacher and/or administrator. **Please note half-credit course attendance is in parentheses.**

STEP 1

If a student accumulates 6(3) absences:

- a. Contact the parents/guardians by telephone or letter mailed to the home or by email. The preferred method of communication is direct telephone contact by the teacher. The subject area teacher must meet with the student to determine the

causes and/or needs of the student and provide appropriate support at the classroom level.

- b. If a parent/guardian initiates contact with the school and provides excuses for the student's absences (as per Procedure # 6), the requirement for contact under this step is considered fulfilled.
- c. Document the date and time of this meeting or parent contact in PowerSchool logbook, including a description of the proposed support or other action.

STEP 2

If a student accumulates absences in the range of 10 (5) to 14 (7):

- a. Arrange a meeting with parents/guardians, administration, course teacher (understanding the course teacher may not be able to attend due to the scheduled meeting time), guidance counsellor (or other supports as determined at the school) and student to create a shared/joint solution to the attendance issue.

In preparation for this meeting, if matters indicate the need, school administration will discuss the case with the appropriate Coordinator (Student Services, African-Nova Scotian Cultural Services, First Nations Cultural Services, Assessment, Literacy, Mathematics, or French).

- b. Send a letter or email to the parent/guardian documenting:
 - The meeting was held and a plan of support will be actioned; or,
 - The parent did not attend and the plan of support being taken.
- c. Possible solutions could include, but are not limited to:
 - Student meeting with school administration to determine the cause of the continued absences and to determine specific solutions;
 - Attendance Contract;
 - Continue to provide support at the classroom level;
 - Refer the student to the guidance counsellor or other appropriate in-school support;

- Refer the student to an in-school support team comprised of an administrator, the course teacher, guidance counsellor, Program Support Teacher, and appropriate support personnel who will determine interventions required by the student.
- d. Document the date and time of meetings in PowerSchool (*Attendance Pilot* under *Administration*) logbook, including a description of the proposed support or other action.

STEP 3

If a student accumulates absences in the range of 16 (8) to 18 (9) the Principal will:

- a. Send a letter or email to the parents/guardians indicating there is a danger of the student not qualifying for the credit and outlining what must happen to prevent this consequence. Copy the Family of Schools Supervisor on the letter.

At this step, a telephone conversation will be satisfactory as long as it is direct communication documented in PowerSchool logbook. To be clear, a message left does not fulfill this stipulation.

- b. Review the planned supports and interventions taken to date and consider whether additional or different support is required.
- c. If required, consult with the Family of Schools Supervisor.
- d. Document the above in PowerSchool logbook.

STEP 4

If a student has reached and/or exceeded the maximum number of absences under the 20% threshold making them eligible to lose a credit due to accumulated absences, the Principal will:

- a. Send hard copy or scan and email all documentation (Quick Look up and all log entries in *Attendance Pilot* in PowerSchool) of interventions and record of communication to the Family of Schools Supervisor for review. The review constitutes an examination of all supporting documentation to ensure due process has been served and appropriate supports were put in place.
- b. **SUCCESSFUL REVIEW** - Upon successful review by the Family of Schools Supervisor, the Principal will send a letter which indicates the student does not qualify for the credit due to accumulated absences and that describes the appeal procedure in place. ***This applies to excused and unexcused absences except those noted in Procedures # 12.***

- c. Send a copy of the parent letter and all documentation to the Family of Schools Supervisor.
 - d. UNSUCCESSFUL REVIEW - If the review determines due process was not served or appropriate supports were not put in place, the Family of Schools Supervisor will contact the Principal to determine next steps in the support plan for the student.
9. The school must ensure they communicate clearly to students and parents/guardians that excusable and inexcusable absences both may be counted in the 20% threshold. The only absences excluded from this calculation are listed in Procedures # 12.
10. The threshold of 20% is considered a minimum. These guidelines recognize that there may be extenuating circumstances whereby a student has had absences (that are not otherwise excluded) which reached or exceeded the 20% threshold but in the Principal's opinion a loss of a credit is not yet an appropriate response. There must be general consistency in application of recognizing and addressing exceptional circumstances.
11. The school must ensure that they clearly communicate to students and parents/guardians there are several circumstances and designations for which a student will be marked present in a course. These include:
 - a. Student is present in class.
 - b. Student was in the office or accessing student services support during class.
 - c. Student was on a school authorized field trip, job placement, participating in a school team activity, or another school sanctioned activity.
12. The school must ensure clear communication to students and parents/guardians that there are several circumstances for which a student will be marked absent from a course due to special circumstances but that such absences shall **not** be used in the calculation of the 20% threshold. These include:
 - a. When a student is absent due to a death in the immediate family, the maximum of excluded days of absence to equal up to five (5) per death. Immediate family includes parent/guardian, spouse, sibling, child, grandparent, aunt, and uncle. Immediate family members may be determined by individual circumstances including but not limited to cultural contexts.
 - b. When a student is absent due to a verifiable religious observance.
 - c. When a student is absent as a direct result of legal obligations which are supported by court subpoenas or appropriate documentation.

- d. When a student, with a chronic illness, has an appointment(s) with a physician who is a specialist, (medical or dental), or mental health care professional who is a specialist. Principals must receive proof of appointment in advance of any such absence.
- e. When a student is a participant in a provincial, national, or international sporting, fine arts, or leadership event (excluding team tryouts and practices) or when a student is absent as a result of participation in an educational opportunity as deemed appropriate by the school administration.
- f. When CCRSB/private contractor is unable to provide conveyance.
- g. When a student is suspended out-of-school.
- h. In the case of a chronic illness, disability, pregnancy, or recovery from a serious illness or injury where school attendance is negatively impacted, the Principal will consult with the Family of Schools Supervisor.
- i. No other absences unless it is a unique situation which has been specifically approved by the Family of Schools Supervisor.

13. When a student loses eligibility to be granted credit for a course, the student’s transcript will be marked with a code that indicates, “Student ineligible to receive credit for course due to non-attendance.”

14. In determining the 20% threshold, the school must ensure that calculations are based on the following:

- a. The number of missed periods which qualify for being included in the 20% threshold in relation to the number of total periods for the course based on 110 hours (6600 minutes) for a full credit and 55 hours (3300 minutes) for a half credit. The following chart has this information for a number of possible configurations.

Length of Period	Total number of possible periods for 110 hours/6600 minutes	Total number of periods missed at 20%	Total number of possible periods for 55 hours/3300 minutes	Total number of periods missed at 20%
75 minutes	88	18	44	9
70 minutes	94	19	47	10
60 minutes	110	22	52	11
55 minutes	120	24	60	12

Figures have been rounded

15. The school must ensure clear communication to students and parents/guardians that the student or the parents/guardians may appeal the loss of credit eligibility.

16. **Appeal Process:**

The parent/guardian may appeal the loss of credit eligibility to the School Board Attendance Committee at the Family of Schools Office.

- a. The notice to appeal must be received by the Family of Schools Supervisor within seven (7) days of the student/parent receiving the decision. The notice may be verbal or in writing.
- b. The Family of Schools Supervisor will contact the parent/guardian to determine the basis of the appeal and whether the parent/guardian wishes to proceed with the appeal. The primary factor considered in determining an appeal is whether due process has been served, appropriate supports have been put in place, and that the school has considered all extenuating circumstances.
- c. Should the parent/guardian wish to proceed at this point the Family of Schools Supervisor will convene an appeal committee and will notify the parent/ guardian and the Principal of the date. The committee is comprised of the Family of Schools Supervisor, an elected Board member and a consultant from the Family of Schools Office.
- d. Within three (3) full days of the hearing, the Committee must notify the student, the student's parents/guardians, the student's teacher, and the Principal of its decision, which decision shall be final and binding. The decision must be in communicated in writing.