



GUIDELINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT ATTENDANCE PILOT

Introduction

The Chignecto-Central Regional School Board 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 is implementing 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.

- *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. The school must ensure attendance is taken period-by-period for each credit course.

5. 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 three school days of the student returning to school.
6. 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 Number 10.

7. 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 brackets.**

STEP 1 – Communication #1

If a student accumulates 3(2) absences, the teacher will:

- a. Contact the parents/guardians by telephone or letter mailed to the home or by email. The preferred method of communication is telephone. Meet with the student to determine the causes and/or needs of the student and provide appropriate support at the classroom level.
- b. Document the date and time of this meeting, including a description of the proposed support or other action.

STEP 2 – Communication #2

If a student accumulates 6(3) absences, the teacher will:

- a. Contact the parents/guardians directly by telephone and follow up with a letter mailed home signed by the school administration. A conversation must be held with the parent/guardian, not only message left.
- b. Meet with the student to determine the cause of the continued absences, continue to provide support at the classroom level, **and** refer the student to the guidance counsellor.
- c. Document the date and time of this meeting, including a description of the proposed support or other action.

STEP 3 – Meeting #1

If a student accumulates 10(5) absences, the principal (or designate) will:

- a. 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 supports required by the student. The teacher will document the date and time of this meeting, including a description of the proposed support or other action.
- b. Arrange and document a meeting with parents/guardians, administration, course teacher, guidance counsellor and student to create a shared/joint solution to the attendance issue and to describe the planned supports as designed by the school support team (e.g. attendance contract, etc.)

STEP 4 – Communication #3

If a student accumulates 14(7) absences the principal will:

- a. Send a registered letter (with proof of delivery receipt) 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.
- b. Send a copy of the letter to the Family of Schools Supervisor. The Family of Schools Supervisor will discuss the case with the appropriate Coordinator, as deemed necessary (Student Services, African-Nova Scotian Cultural Services, First Nations Cultural Services, Assessment, Literacy, Mathematic, or French).**
- c. Instruct the school support team to review the supports in place and determine if additional or different support is required. The teacher will document the date and time of this meeting, including a description of the proposed support or other action.

STEP 5 – Communication #4

If a student has reached 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 all documentation 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. Upon successful review by the Family of Schools Supervisor, the principal will send a registered letter (with proof of delivery receipt) 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 Number 10.***
 - c. Send a copy of the parent letter and all documentation to the Family of Schools Supervisor.
 - d. 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.
8. The school must ensure they communicate clearly to students and parents/guardians excusable and inexcusable absences both may be counted in the 20% threshold. These guidelines recognize that there may be extenuating circumstances where the principal will be required to make a reasonable judgement on an absence(s). The only absences excluded from this calculation are listed in Number 10.
9. 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.
10. 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 days allowed are five (5). Immediate family is defined as parent/guardian, step-parent, spouse, sibling, grandparent, aunt, and uncle. Immediate family shall be determined in particular cultural contexts, as required.
 - 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.

11. 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

12. 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.

13. Appeal Process – Communication #5:

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 Board must notify the student, the student's parents, 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.