



Student Attendance and Engagement Policy

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Why a policy now? What happened?

Teachers want to see their students succeed and we know that student success is linked to regular student attendance. Yet too many students are missing too much school. More than 25 per cent miss more than 16 days each year.

We also know employers want students to learn good work habits in school that they will carry with them into the workplace.

What are my responsibilities as a parent?

We want students to attend school regularly, but we can't do it without the support of parents. As a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure your child attends school regularly and on time. For example:

- Whenever possible, schedule appointments/commitments for your child outside regular school hours.
- When your child is absent, we encourage you to notify the school and provide the reason and, when necessary, help your child catch up on missed work.

What will happen if my child misses a lot of school?

Communication between the family and school is key. Each situation is different and the supports, services, and approaches will be appropriate to the situation.

If you have kept the school well informed about an occasional absence that may be all that is needed.

In a situation where absenteeism is identified as a concern for a student's success, the school and, in some cases, community partners, can work with you to identify the reason for the absences and to provide support to improve your child's attendance.

In high school, students who miss class 20 per cent or more of the time are at risk of losing a credit. This is not done automatically, and is only intended as a last resort when every attempt has been made and documented to improve a student's attendance.

Why do I have to share personal information about the reason for my child's absence?

Parents should only share information they are comfortable sharing, but providing a reason for the absence helps schools understand how to best respond to a student's individual needs if supports are required, or the student is in danger of losing a high school credit.

What about school trips? School sports? School field trips?

Students participating in school activities like field trips and school sports will not be considered absent. However, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is meeting with the Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation and others so more school activities are scheduled outside of regular school hours.

What about illness? Extracurricular activities?

There are many valid reasons for missing school. An occasional absence, including those related to illness or extracurricular activities, should not have a significant impact on your child's learning.

You can complete an educational plan to outline how you will keep up or catch up on work during an extended absence, for example, participation in high-level events such as the Forum for Young Canadians or Canada Games, or extended absences related to illness, injury, or treatments. See page 8 of the [Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guide](#) for more information.

What should teachers and principals consider before making a recommendation and decision on loss of credit?

Principals and teachers should review each individual case, considering the overall welfare of the student and using their professional judgement to determine when loss of credit is appropriate. Guiding questions that can help support the recommendation and decision can be found on page 12 in the [Student Attendance and Engagement Operational Guide](#). Some examples of these questions include:

- What were the reasons for the student's absence(s)?
- Were the absences unavoidable or out of the student's control?
- What is the student's academic record?

I want to take my child on vacation. Does the policy take away my ability to do this?

While parents are encouraged to avoid scheduling commitments during regular school hours, parents continue to have the ability to make decisions about school attendance and family vacations. However, teachers aren't required to provide school work in advance. Students will be expected to catch up on missed work after they return.

What if the policy isn't working?

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will review the policy and operational guide at the end of the 2017–2018 school year, and adjust, based on lessons learned and feedback received. You can provide feedback at any time of the year by emailing attendance@novascotia.ca.