

Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy—Additional Information

The *Student Attendance and Engagement Policy* has been in effect since October 1, 2017. The purpose of this release is to provide clarity on issues brought forward in the early implementation of the policy, specifically with respect to how the policy relates to student suspension.

Out-of-school suspensions related to student loss of credit in multiple courses

As the *Operational Guide* indicates, out-of-school suspensions may be considered in the case of students who have lost credit in all but one course (see page 13). Out-of-school suspensions should only be used in cases where no other options are available to support the student's learning in school, and when the student is disrupting school operations or otherwise engaging in unacceptable behaviour.

The provisions in the Education Act continue to apply to any out-of-school suspensions, including the provisions allowing students and/or parents/guardians to request a review of the suspension.

Recording an absence as a result of an out-of-school suspension

As communicated by the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions following their October 2017 meeting, if a student is suspended from school, they will be marked absent. However, whenever a student is suspended for more than ten school days, the Education Act requires every reasonable effort be made to provide alternative arrangements for the education of the student. Further, in making any decision about a loss of credit, principals are expected to use their professional judgment and take into consideration the overall welfare of the student. The policy also requires documented interventions before a loss of credit can occur. If the student is making efforts to complete their school work and improve attendance in response to the interventions, that should be considered by the principal.

The principal should also take into consideration the fact that a student is unable to attend school during a suspension and that a suspension is a response to unacceptable behaviour. As such, loss of credit due to time missed for suspension would not be an appropriate response to unacceptable behaviour.

If a decision is made to overturn a suspension, it is erased from the student's record and the days cannot be counted toward a loss of credit.

Recording Loss of Credit

Once the principal has made the decision to issue a loss of credit to a student per the *Attendance Policy*, the teacher must enter the CL (credit lost) code in their Gradebook or PowerTeacher Pro—not only for the final reporting term (F1), but for the current reporting term and any upcoming reporting terms. Loss of credit is part of the student’s permanent record and must be “permanently stored” in the student’s Historical Grades page in PowerSchool. Principals should ensure that CL codes are properly recorded. Students who are issued a loss of credit should be withdrawn from the course.

Delegation of principal’s responsibilities related to attendance

Principals may delegate their responsibilities related to monitoring attendance, and responding to attendance issues, to vice-principals, teachers, or other appropriate staff. The principal is responsible for the final decision regarding loss of credit and may not delegate decisions about loss of credit to other staff.

Updated Information

The FAQ section of the *Student Attendance and Engagement Policy* website has been updated to provide additional clarity: www.ednet.ns.ca/student-attendance-and-engagement-policy/faq.