

JEA - COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Compulsory education is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people and the continued prosperity of our nation. Maintaining regular student attendance is necessary to achieve the goal of an educated citizenry.

Compulsory Attendance Ages

Under state law, full-time attendance at school is required of every child between the ages of 6 and under 18, unless the student has received a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Excusable Absences from School

A child's absence from school is excused when the absence is for one of the following reasons:

- I. Personal illness;
- II. An appointment with a health professional that must be made during the regular school day;
- III. Observance of a recognized religious holiday when the observance is required during the regular school day;
- IV. A family emergency;
- V. A planned absence for a personal or educational purpose which has been approved; or education disruption resulting from homelessness, unplanned psychiatric hospitalization, unplanned hospitalization for a medical emergency, foster care placement, youth development center placement, or some other out-of-district placement that is not otherwise authorized by an IEP or other education plan or Superintendent's agreement.

Adult Responsibility for School Attendees

Parents or other adults having control of a child of compulsory attendance age are responsible for ensuring that child attends school as required by law. The Board expects school administrators and staff to work with families in an effort to ensure compliance.

Exceptions to the Compulsory Attendance Requirement

A student may be excused from compulsory attendance at school if the student meets the requirements in one of the following sections:

- I. The student has:
 - I. Reached the age of 16 years of age;
 - II. Obtained permission to leave school;
 - III. Been approved by the principal for a suitable program of work and study or training;

IV. Met with the Superintendent/designee to discuss the decision to withdraw from school;

V. Obtained permission to leave school from the Board or its designee; and

VI. Agreed in writing with that student's parent/guardian and the Board or its designee to meet annually until that student's 18th birthday to review that student's educational needs.

If a request to be excused from school is denied pursuant to this section, the child's parent may appeal to the Commissioner of Education.

II. The student has matriculated and is attending an accredited, post-secondary, degree-granting institution as a full-time student. An exception to the compulsory attendance law under this paragraph must be approved by the Commissioner of Education.

III. The student is enrolled in an online learning program or course of study.

IV. A student 18 years of age or older who has not graduated from high school or obtained an equivalency diploma, and who wishes to withdraw from school shall meet with the Superintendent/designee to discuss the decision to withdraw from school.

Alternatives to Attendance in Public School

A child shall be excused from attending a public day school if that person obtains equivalent instruction as allowed by law.

Equivalent instruction alternatives are as follows:

- I. A private school approved for attendance purposes pursuant to state law and regulations;
- II. A private school recognized by the Department of Education as providing equivalent instruction;
- III. A home instruction program that complies with state law and regulations;
- IV. Any other manner arranged by the Board and approved by the Commissioner of Education; or
- V. Pursuant to 20-A MRS Sections 5104-A or 8605 (approved alternative education program or adult education program).

A child shall be credited with attendance at a private school under Paragraphs A or B only if the legally required certificate from the private school is filed with the child's school unit.

Legal Reference:

- 20-A MRS §§ 5001-A et seq.; 5051 et seq.; 2901; 5104-A; 8605
- Ch. 125 and 127 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Cross Reference:

- [JFC - Dropout Prevention Committee](#)
- [JHB- Truancy](#)

- [IHBG - Home Instruction Program](#)

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