

# **POLICY**

## **Board of Education Bernards Township**

**File Code: M 2430  
EXTRACURRICULAR ATTENDANCE**

The Board of Education recognizes the importance of athletic and extracurricular programs. The Board desires an atmosphere which will encourage all students to enroll and/or participate in one or more of these programs. The Board encourages activities which promote enjoyment, spirit, camaraderie, competition, commitment, and self-discipline. The Board recognizes that the primary mission of the school is to prepare students academically. The Board directs the administration and extracurricular advisors and coaches to ensure that academics remain the primary concern of students and to ensure that all parties' actions support these academic ends. The Board of Education requires that pupils enrolled in student athletic and/or extracurricular programs should make every effort to attend all scheduled meetings, workshops, practices, and events whether school is in session or on vacation. No student whose absence or excuse has been approved by the principal, Athletic Director or designated staff member shall be deprived of an award or eligibility to compete for an award due to his/her absences.

The Board shall require from the parent or guardian of each child or from an adult-emancipated student who has been absent from scheduled activity sessions for any reason, a written statement of cause for such absence or tardiness. The Board, through the school administration, reserves the right to verify such statements and to investigate the cause of each absence of more than three days' duration or repeated unexplained absence or tardiness.

For mutual guidance of parents, pupils, and school officials, the Board lists the following reasons as acceptable for excused absence or tardiness:

1. Exclusion from school of all persons with uncovered weeping lesions-whether or not the person has been screened for HIV;
2. The pupil's illness;
3. A death or critical illness in the pupil's immediate family;
4. Quarantine;
5. Observation of the pupil's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education;
6. The pupil's required attendance in court;
7. Interviews with a prospective employer or with an admissions officer or an institution of higher education required and restricted by it to a specific date;
8. Examination for a driver's license;

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9. Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day.

The Board of Education recognizes the importance of visitation to post-secondary institutions of learning and employment interviews. The Board regards these as excused absences when advanced written notice is provided to the coach/advisor or Athletic Director at least one week prior to the absence. The Board, through the school administration, reserves the right to reject requests where a pattern of excessive previous requests or unexcused absences exists. The Board, through the administration, also reserves the right to reject requests for student absences on competition and performance days and on critical meeting, rehearsal, and practice days.

Extracurricular advisors and athletic coaches shall establish the date, time, and location for the start of practices/try outs and a schedule of ensuing pre-season practices for all interscholastic athletic teams within the parameters of the NJSIAA and the Bernards Township Board of Education. The pre-season practice schedule will be provided to interested students at a pre-season meeting. All students must report to pre-season practices beginning with the first announced practice/tryout. Only the Board listed reasons for excused absence from practice will be allowed without permission in advance from the advisor, coach or athletic director. Failure to comply with this may jeopardize the opportunity for a student to try out for a team or participate in a sport.

No other reasons for student absence are deemed to be appropriate by the Board of Education. Where extreme extenuating circumstances create the necessity for a student absence due to any other reason, a written request must be submitted at least one week in advance to the coach/advisor or Athletic Director. This request must delineate the special circumstances which support the need for an excused absence other than the aforementioned Board-recognized reasons. Although academic work is not considered an acceptable reason for an excused absence, coaches and advisors are to recognize the importance of academic success, including standardized testing and to assist students in meeting academic demands.

The following guidelines are provided for disciplinary action for unexcused absences from scheduled athletic and/or extracurricular sessions:

1. Unexcused absence may result in extra work or in limiting participation for a reasonable period of time. Chronic unexcused absences may result, in dismissal from the program.
2. Disciplinary action of any kind is forbidden for excused absences. If skill, timing, or strength loss has occurred during the absence period which would adversely affect the safety or performance of the participants, a period of extra practice and limited participation may be advisable. Care must be exercised to insure this is not a form of punishment and consistently and reasonably applied to all.

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### **Conflicting School Sponsored Activities**

Coaches, teachers, and activity advisors should work together to assist the student to set priorities. In the case of an ongoing conflict, the student and parent should choose one activity; however, in isolated cases of scheduling conflicts, the coach, teacher, and advisors of the conflicting school sponsored activities should decide the matter, keeping in mind the student's best interests. The decision is to be made in a manner which does not place the student in jeopardy with one staff member versus another or in which a punitive situation may occur. Where such compromise is impossible, the matter may be referred to the building principal.

Students who wish to appeal a decision of an extracurricular advisor or coach must explain the appeal first to the advisor or coach. If the decision is not reversed, the student will meet with the assistant principal or Athletic Director to appeal the decision.

### **Time Commitment**

Generally, the commitment to participate on an athletic team will require five to six days per week of practice and/or events depending upon the sport. The commitment during the academic calendar year will not exceed 20 hours per week of time spent in practice, competition, meetings, and strength training. Travel and time spent dressing before and after events is not included in the time limits. Practices may be scheduled for up to three hours on a school day. During pre-season and non-school days multiple practices may be scheduled that are not to exceed five hours in total. Fall pre-season practices may accumulate up to 24 hours per week as per the NJSIAA guidelines for fall sports.

Practices and events other than tournaments or invitational multi-team meets are normally not scheduled on Sundays. However, a coach may schedule a practice on a Sunday with administrative approval for the purposes of try outs or preparation for tournaments or games played on a Monday.

**ADOPTED:** March 7, 2011