

Section II: Other Important Information for Students and Parents

Topics in this section of the Student Handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child has a question about a specific school-related issue. Where possible, the topics are also organized to alert you to the applicability of each topic based on a student's age or grade level. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact the campus office at (409) 246-3551.

Absences/Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day's learning on the previous day's, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws—one dealing with the required presence of school-aged children in school, e.g., compulsory attendance, the other with how a child's attendance affects the award of a student's final grade or course credit—are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

Compulsory Attendance

Age 19 and Older

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 19th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. If a student age 19 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the district may revoke the student's enrollment. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See policy FEA.]

Between Ages 6 and 19

State law requires that a student between the ages of 6 and 19 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument.

A student will be required to attend any assigned accelerated instruction program, which may occur before or after school or during the summer, if the student does not meet the passing standards on the state assessment for his or her grade level and/or applicable subject area.

Prekindergarten and Kindergarten

Students enrolled in prekindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school and are subject to the compulsory attendance requirements as long as they remain enrolled.

Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance

All Grade Levels

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days;
- Required court appearances;
- Activities related to obtaining U.S. citizenship;
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, if the student comes to school or returns to school on the same day as the appointment. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus; and
- For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state,
 - An activity required under a court-ordered service plan; or
 - Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

As listed in Section I at **Children of Military Families**, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments. [See page 24 for that section.]

Secondary Grade Levels

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided this has been authorized by the board under policy FEA(LOCAL), the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed.

An absence will also be considered an exemption if a student 17 years of age or older is pursuing enlistment in a branch of the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the absence does not exceed four days and the student provides verification to the district of these activities.

Absences of up to two days in a school year will also be considered an exemption for:

Kountze Middle School Student Handbook

- A student serving as an early voting clerk, provided the district's board has authorized this in policy FEA(LOCAL), the student notifies his or her teachers, and the student receives approval from the principal prior to the absences; and
- A student serving as an election clerk, if the student makes up any work missed.

An absence of a student in grades 6–12 for the purpose of sounding “Taps” at a military honors funeral for a deceased veteran will also be excused by the district.

Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance

All Grade Levels

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction, termed “accelerated instruction” by the state; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities

If a student with a disability is experiencing attendance issues, the student's ARD committee or Section 504 committee will be notified, and the committee will determine whether the attendance issues warrant an evaluation, a reevaluation, and/or modifications to the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan, as appropriate.

Age 19 and Older

After a student age 19 or older incurs a third unexcused absence, the district will send the student a letter as required by law explaining that the district may revoke the student's enrollment for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking a student's enrollment, the district may implement a behavior improvement plan.

Between Ages 6 and 19

When a student between ages 6 and 19 incurs unexcused absences for three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, the school will send a notice to the student's parent, as required by law, to remind the parent that it is the parent's duty to monitor his or her child's attendance and to require the student to come to school. The notice will also inform the parent that the district will initiate truancy prevention measures and request a conference between school administrators and the parent. These measures will include a behavior improvement plan, school-based community service, or referrals to either in-school or out-of-school counseling or other social services. Any other measures considered appropriate by the district will also be initiated.

The truancy prevention facilitator for the middle school campus is the counselor. If you have questions about your student and the effect of his or her absences from school, please contact the facilitator or any other campus administrator.

A court of law may also impose penalties against a student's parent if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student is absent without excuse from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If a student ages 12–18 incurs unexcused absences on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the district, in most circumstances, will refer the student to truancy court.

[See policy FEA(LEGAL).]

Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (Kindergarten–Grade 12)

Choose the first option if the district utilizes the "principal's plan" as authorized in law: To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student in kindergarten–grade 12 must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit or a final grade for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, that allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit or a final grade for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed the plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences. [See policy FEC.]

OR

Choose the following option if the district does not use the principal's plan and instead relies on the attendance committee for all attendance-related issues: To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or a final grade lost because of absences. [See policy FEC.]

All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

Kountze Middle School Student Handbook

- If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed above at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered extenuating circumstances for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will review absences incurred based on the student's participation in board-approved extracurricular activities. These absences will be considered by the attendance committee as extenuating circumstances in accordance with the absences allowed under FM(LOCAL) if the student made up the work missed in each class.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit or a final grade.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board by following policy FNG(LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit or a final grade will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

Official Attendance-Taking Time (All Grade Levels)

The district must submit attendance of its students to the TEA reflecting attendance at a specific time each day.

Official attendance is taken every day at 9:30 a.m., which is during the third instructional hour as required by state rule.

A student absent for any portion of the day, including at the official attendance-taking time, should follow the procedures below to provide documentation of the absence.

Documentation after an Absence (All Grade Levels)

When a student is absent from school, the student—upon arrival or return to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is age

Kountze Middle School Student Handbook

18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law. A phone call from the parent may be accepted, but the district reserves the right to require a written note.

The campus will document in its attendance records for the student whether the absence is considered by the district to be excused or unexcused. **NOTE:** Unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the district is not required to excuse any absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence.

Doctor's Note after an Absence for Illness (All Grade Levels)

Within 3 days of returning to school, a student absent for more than 3 consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school. Otherwise, the student's absence may be considered unexcused and, if so, would be considered to be in violation of compulsory attendance laws.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's absence from school in order to determine whether the absence or absences will be excused or unexcused.

[See policy FEC(LOCAL).]

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

Attendance Plan (Policy and Procedures): Kountze High School

Campus Expectation

Consistent student attendance for all classes is critical for student achievement and success. The primary responsibility for school attendance rests with the parents and students themselves. The schools will assist parents and students in meeting this responsibility.

Students at Kountze High School will be required to attend 90% of their classes to achieve credit, as stated in section 25.092 of the Texas Education Code (TEC). Lectures, class discussions, guided practice, student participation, and teacher follow-up are essential. It is imperative for students to be in their classrooms. Students will be held accountable for their absences.

Attendance State Laws

There are two state laws referenced in section 25.092 of the Texas Education Code (TEC), one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit. They are discussed below:

○ ***Compulsory Attendance***

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 18 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 18th birthday is required to attend each school day. If a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, however, the district may revoke the student's enrollment. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing.

Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days;
- Required court appearances;
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship;
- Service as an election clerk; and
- Documented health-care appointments, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders.

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed. Students cannot go to the same college both days unless approval by the principal.

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction termed “accelerated instruction” by the state; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent and the student may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, or
- Is absent on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

○ ***Attendance for Credit***

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, which allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. ***This plan will consist of an intensive review of the material covered during the class as well as a comprehensive project/portfolio of work that substantiates relative mastery of the subject matter.*** If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed the plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. [See policies at FEC]

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- All absences will be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered days of attendance for this purpose.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district. For a student transferring into the district after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
- In reaching a decision about a student’s absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board of trustees by filing a written request with the superintendent in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

Truancy Prevention and Intervention

○ **Attendance Contracts**

- Attendance contracts will be required of students who have excessive (10% or more) absences from the previous school year.
- Students who are on attendance contracts will be closely monitored for absences. When the student has accrued ten absences, either excused or unexcused, the principal may require doctor's notes for any additional absence.

○ **Poor Attendance Behavior Intervention Plan**

- On the third unexcused absence within a four-week period, students will be required to participate in the intervention plan established by the campus.

Attendance Documentation

The attendance clerk will attempt to contact parents by phone for each day the student is absent as well as to verify notes brought by students to leave campus during the school day (all notes should be turned into the attendance office at the beginning of the school day to give time for the attendance clerk to verify).

Contact by the attendance clerk does not constitute appropriate documentation for the absence.

• **PARENT NOTE AFTER AN ABSENCE**

When a student must be, absent from school (whether for one class or all day), the student—upon returning to school prove a note with the student's name and date of absence, signed by the parent. This can be done before class begins, during lunch, or at the end of the school day. The note must include the date; student name and; date of the absence; the specific reason for the absence(s); and

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

the doctor or parent signature with a current & valid phone number. No more than three absences per semester will be considered excused if accompanied only by a parent.

- **DOCTOR'S NOTE AFTER AN ABSENCE FOR ILLNESS**
Upon return to school, a student absent for three (3) or more consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's absence from school. [See FEC(LOCAL).]

- A temporary absence, or TA, occurs when the student attends the majority of the school day and upon return to the campus the student provides a doctor's excuse. A TA is not counted against the student's attendance record.
- **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION INFORMATION**
 - A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will be considered a forgery and the student will be disciplined.
 - Excuse for absence must be brought within (5) five days of the student's return. Excuses brought after (5) five days will not be considered and the absences will be recorded as unexcused.
 - Attendance is calculated per class period and each class is considered separately and independently for credit award/denial and truancy.

School-Related Activities

A student is not marked absent when he/she is involved in extra-curricular or other school-related activities such as field trips, athletics, etc., provided the attendance office and the teachers have been properly notified prior to a scheduled activity. These types of absences, sanctioned and approved by the Department of Education, are the only absences considered "excused".

Attendance Review Committee

Students who accrue absences in any period that exceed 10% of instructional days for the semester may be required to appear before the campus Attendance Review Committee. The attendance review committee (composed of a majority of teachers) will review the attendance of each student prior to credit denial. Written notification will be mailed to the permanent address on file.

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

Consideration will be given to documentation in the student's attendance folder, make up of missed assignments, and extenuating circumstances. The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and about ways to earn or regain credit.

For extenuating circumstances, the student MUST complete and submit an Attendance Waiver (form located in the Attendance office or website). The committee's decision on these matters is final and is only appealable to the Kountze ISD School Board. (*Texas Education Code 25.092*)

Waiver Deadline Dates:

- **Fall:**
 - **December 12, 2018**
- **Spring:**
 - **April 24, 2019**

Review for Extenuating Circumstances

If a student has a situation, where there are extenuating circumstances or reasons affecting regular classroom attendance, the student must complete and submit an **Attendance Waiver prior** to the review dates. This form is available in the attendance office on campus or the website. The student's case will be reviewed by the Attendance Committee to determine if the days accumulated due to excessive absences would be waived or reduced. Case reviews will only take place if the student's attendance situation is deemed unique (circumstances beyond which the student has control), and/or where the stated policy guidelines do not fully encompass that situation.

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- All absences will be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days.
- If makeup work is completed, absences for religious holy days and documented health-care appointments will be considered days of attendance for this purpose.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district. For a student transferring into the district after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.

Review Dates:

- **Fall: December 17, 2018**
- **Spring: May 01, 2019**

Kountze High School

Dr. Chet Deaver, Principal
PO Box 460 Kountze, TX 77625

Anglethia Collins, Assistant Principal
Phone: 409-246-3474 FAX: 409-246-8180

Attendance for Credit Warning Letter

October 15, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian of _____,

The Texas Education Code Section 25.092 states that a student must be in attendance 90% of the semester to retain course credit. By Texas State Law, a student who misses 10% or more of their classes (more than 8 days) is at risk of losing credit for that course even if they have a passing average unless he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, which allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student attends less than 75% of the days the class is offered in a semester (more than 19 absences), then they will be denied credit for the class in which they have excessive absences.

This letter is to inform you that your student has missed ____ **days of school** in one or more classes, and may exceed or has exceeded the state limit for absences (more than 8 days) in one or more classes.

If you believe your child has extenuating circumstances, please complete the Attendance Waiver, which can be obtained from the attendance office. Attach a copy of the documentation and explanation for the absences and returned to the attention of Lisa Collins.

Any other questions or concerns please call the high school office.

Respectfully,

Kountze High School Attendance Committee



Kountze Middle School

P.O. Box 460
Kountze, TX 77625

Phone: 409-246-3551
Fax: 409-246-8907

Dear Parent/Guardian,

TARDIES

Students who arrive on campus after the tardy bell for first period must report to the attendance clerk for a tardy pass and then to class. Students arriving more than 30 minutes late will be counted as absent for the first period. The student tardy policy applies to every class period.

A student who is tardy will be disciplined per semester according to the following: NO EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY:

1 st Offense - Documented Warning

2 nd Offense – Documented Warning with Parent Contact

3 rd Offense – 1 day In School Suspension (ISS)

4-9 th Offense – single day of ISS

Beginning with the 10th tardy and any subsequent tardy, student will receive 3 days of ISS

If a student has yet to receive a tardy for the semester, multiple tardies in the same day will automatically result in ISS for the remainder of the school day.

Excessive repeat violations can result in additional ISS and/or DAEP placement. Students must be conscious of attendance requirements associated with earned course credits and graduation.

[See Attendance for Credit on page 24.]

Thank you for your continued support,

James Stevenson