

RESOLUTON NO. 4

SYNOPSIS

Resolution No. 4 from the Kittatinny Board of Education (Sussex County) proposes **new** language to NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education* (P&P) supporting the belief that attendance regulations should include state-excused absence(s) for students who are completing steps necessary to enter the skilled trades profession/union. The resolution indicates that entry into these trades by high school students is paramount to the continuation of a diverse, independent, and self-reliant society. As such, students should have the opportunity to complete these requirements without the fear of violating local school attendance and graduation requirements resulting from necessary absences to pursue skilled trades after high school.

BACKGROUND

New Jersey compulsory education laws, *N.J.S.A.* 18A:38-28 through 31, require that all children between the ages of six and sixteen regularly attend school. For students to learn and achieve, attendance in school is critical. The New Jersey Department of Education (Department) indicates that chronic absenteeism, defined by *N.J.A.C.* 6A:32-8.6 as a student's absentee rate being equal to or greater than 10 percent, is a primary cause of low academic achievement and a powerful predictor of a student's risk of dropping out of school. See [Guidance for Reporting Student Absences and Calculating Chronic Absenteeism](#)¹.

Accordingly, the Department has promulgated regulations, available at *N.J.A.C.* 6A:16-7.6, that require each district board of education to develop, adopt, and implement policies and procedures regarding student attendance.

The regulations prescribe specific types of absences that are deemed state-excused absences. State-excused absences are not counted as either a day in attendance or as an absence for the purpose of chronic absenteeism calculations. Pursuant to *N.J.S.A.* 18A:36-33.1 and *N.J.A.C.* 6A:32-8.4(e), there are currently seven permissible reasons for a state-excused absence. They are:

- (1) Religious observance;
- (2) College visit(s), up to 3 days per school year for students in grades 11 and 12;
- (3) "Take Our Children to Work Day";
- (4) Participation in observance of Veterans Day;
- (5) Participation in district board of election membership activities;
- (6) Closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school; and
- (7) Participation in one "civic event" for students in grades 6-12 – which can only be applied to an event sponsored by a government entity, a community-based organization, or a nonprofit entity. The civic event is required to incorporate an element of service learning and address a public issue or concern.

The state-excused absence, excusing an absence for attendance at certain “civic events,” is recent, having been signed on January 16, 2024, by Governor Murphy. This new law, codified at *N.J.S.A. 18A:36-33.1, et. seq.*, promotes the belief that student attendance at civic events creates an opportunity for students to engage in democracy, be educated outside of a classroom, and support student interest in public service and community work.

Kittatinny seeks state-excused absences to permit students to complete/satisfy requirements to enter a skilled trade profession. In drafting a response to this resolution, NJSBA consulted with Kittatinny and conducted independent research to determine that the following may be necessary activities for high school students pursuing skilled trades. However, NJSBA was unable to determine a consistent duration to complete necessary activities. The activities identified are representative of career or technical requirements that may require time away from school as follows:

- (1) Trade School or Technical College Visit: students may need to tour a vocational/technical school to explore various skilled trade programs.
- (2) Apprenticeship or Job Shadowing: students may be invited to spend time shadowing a skilled tradesperson.
- (3) Industry Expos & Career Fairs.
- (4) Hands-on Workshop or Training Program: students may have opportunities to participate in a hands-on workshop at a community college or trade school.
- (5) Union or Trade Organization Events: local unions may have events where students can learn about apprenticeships and/or attend union offered seminars.

RELEVANT NJSBA POLICY

NJSBA's P&P File Code 5113 states:

The NJSBA believes that local districts should adopt attendance policies and regulations with clear incentives and sanctions to reduce the amount of time lost through student absenteeism, tardiness and class cutting.

The NJSBA believes the New Jersey Department of Education student attendance regulations should include a limited number of state-excused absences per school year for students who seek to participate in activities related to military enlistment that require absence from classroom instruction.

Additionally relevant is File Code 6142.12 which states, in pertinent part:

The NJSBA believes that local boards of education should place emphasis on career awareness and supports integrating career education throughout the curriculum.

The NJSBA believes that students should have access to a wide array of programs that promote career awareness and develop workplace readiness skills as well as trade and technical skills for specific career paths. Local boards of education, county vocational school boards of education and representatives from business and industry should work

collaboratively to plan and develop and deliver programs that meet the needs of students in the most effective and efficient manner.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with P&P File Codes 6142.12, NJSBA believes school districts should emphasize career awareness and ensure that students have access to diverse programs that promote career exploration, workplace readiness, and trade and technical skills. Accordingly, by enabling students to explore skilled trades without negatively impacting attendance or graduation requirements, school districts help students make informed decisions about their futures.

Moreover, current state-excused absences for college visits and “take your child to work” day further demonstrate support for students in career related activities and post-secondary educational exploration. This support, however, should not be limited to college-bound learners.

On October 2, 2018, NJSBA issued a report from the Task Force on Educational Opportunities for the Non-College-Bound Learner. The [report](#)¹, in addition to other recommendations, determined that district schools must raise student awareness of all careers and the broad variety of career pathways through meaningful experiences and exposure. *See* Task Force on Educational Opportunities for the Non-College Bound Learner Report, available [here](#)², at page 81.

The skilled trades activities indicated above can be analogized to college visits and/or military enlistment activities and therefore should be given similar support as it is a serious and significant post-graduation option for non-college bound learners. Students who are dedicated to this path may require time outside of the classroom to determine the type of trade they wish to pursue whether it be through trade or technical college visits, apprenticeships or job shadowing, expos or career fairs, or even hands on workshops or training.

NJSBA recently [supported](#)³ a December 2024 [bill](#)⁴ that permits excused absence for students participating in college visits, visits to post-secondary technical institutions, and military recruitment-related activities, indicating that the state should promote equitable treatment of graduating students by not limiting state-excused absences to college-bound post-secondary education opportunities.

Permitting state-excused absences for this purpose demonstrates support for students who wish to plan their individual futures, whether it be attending college, enlisting in the military, or preparing for a skilled trade career, without jeopardizing academic standing. NJSBA policies support all students in their post-graduation endeavors.

However, understanding the importance and correlation between school attendance and student achievement, there should be a balance in the number of days which are state-excused. This

¹ Available at <https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/07-Non-College-Bound-Learner-FR.pdf>

² Available at <https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/07-Non-College-Bound-Learner-FR.pdf>

³ Available at https://www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/NJSBA_Position_S-3902-3-3-25.pdf

⁴ Available at https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S4000/3902_R1.PDF

balance is likewise reflected in the cap placed upon the number of state-excused college visits, currently set at three per school year. Accordingly, while support for this resolution is consistent with NJSBA's historical beliefs, as well as the State's support for student interests in skilled trades, consideration should be given to a cap or other limit on the number of days that are state-excused for skilled trade career exploration.

STATEMENT OF REASONS

The NJSBA supports the recognition of students' civic duties and exploration of post-secondary opportunities. As such, the NJSBA supports state-excused absences which support student efforts to pursue skilled trades post high school. State-excused absences for this purpose will:

1. Acknowledge the importance of career awareness and integration of career education by allowing excused absences for skilled trade related activities indicated above.
2. Improve retention and graduation rates as students feel supported in exploration of future career paths.
3. Promote equitable treatment by not limiting state-excused absences to college-bound post-secondary education opportunities, civic activities, or family/religious obligations.

However, the excused absence should have some limits, similar to those for college visits. Limiting the number of excused days for this purpose recognizes the correlation between attendance and achievement, while also supporting non-college bound students.

RECOMMENDATION

The Resolutions Subcommittee recommends approval of this resolution with the following substitute language which would create additional policy language to be included in NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education* in File Code 5113:

The NJSBA believes students should be permitted a limited number of state-excused absences for participation in activities related to pursuing a skilled trade post-graduation.

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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**ANNUAL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
May 10, 2025**

**The following resolution was received from the
Kittatinny Regional High School Board of Education (Sussex):**

- WHEREAS, The school to work pipeline is an important and significant path to creating opportunities for qualified and interested applicants to become familiar with and knowledgeable about the opportunities presented by the skilled trades professions for the young women and men of New Jersey and is essential to the preservation of building a strong, self reliant multi-talented democratic society; and
- WHEREAS, The decision by these young women and men forgo secondary education opportunities and directly enter the workforce in a skilled trades profession strengthens our nation and diversifies our workforce to better address the challenges ahead for our great nation for the good of their communities and our country should be supported by public schools; and
- WHEREAS, The requirements needed for their successful transition from High School into the The Skilled Trades Profession or Skilled Trades Union will require them to be absent from school; and
- WHEREAS, Unexcused absences count negatively on a student’s record and could put them in jeopardy of losing academic credit for graduation and School Districts with high levels of chronic absenteeism can be negatively impacted and identified in the annual NJ School Performance Report; and
- WHEREAS, There is no legal provision in law or administrative code excusing required absences from school for young women and men who have chosen to enter a Skilled Trades Profession and are absent from school due to these obligations; and
- WHEREAS, The Delegate Assembly is the official policy making body of the New Jersey School Boards Association; and

WHEREAS, Education related policies resulting from prior Delegate Assembly and Board of Directors actions are codified in the NJSBA's Manual of Positions and Policies on Education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Kittatinny Board of Education proposes the following new language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and inclusion in the Manual of Positions and Policies on Education and referred to the New Jersey Department of Education:

The NJSBA believes entering the Skilled Trade professions by the young women and men of New Jersey is paramount to the continuation of a diverse, independent and self reliant society and an additional state-approved excused absence category should be added to the State's regulations affording students the opportunity to complete the procedural steps mandated and required for enrollment in the Skilled Trades Professions or Skilled Trades Unions; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be placed on the agenda for consideration at the May 10, 2025 Delegate Assembly.

Adopted at a regular meeting of the
Kittatinny Regional School Board of Education
on February 20, 2025

Kathleen Kane
Interim Business Administrator/
Board Secretary
