STEAM Absence Exemption

Work-Based Learning and Youth Organization Activity Exemptions

Toby Behrends • Bureau Valley CUSD 340

Beginning with the 2026-27 school year, as pursuant to 105 ILCS 5/10-19.05, students may receive attendance credit and have their participation counted toward the calculation of clock hours of schoolwork when participating in approved work-based learning experiences including those connected to youth organizations, competitions, exhibitions, or conferences. These experiences must support student learning and align to district expectations for instructional time.

Eligible Activities

Students may request approval for an instructional time exemption for participation in a youth apprenticeship, work-based learning experience, or supervised career development experience in the following types of activities:

- Career & Technical Student Organizations (CTSO) events: Future Farmers of America (FFA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), Business Professionals of America (BPA), Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), SkillsUSA, Technology Student Association (TSA), Science Olympiad, and Educators Rising
- FFA events (local, state, or national FFA)
- 4-H events (local, state, or national 4-H)
- Youth organization competitions (local, state, or national)
- Youth organization exhibitions (local, state, or national)
- Youth organization conferences (local, state, or national)

The student and the student's parent or guardian are responsible for obtaining coursework that is missed while the student participates in one of the above-mentioned activities.

School District Requirements

School district attendance policies must be updated, added to a district's student handbook, and publicly posted to reflect the activities allowed to be counted toward the calculation of clock hours of schoolwork no later than the beginning of the 2026-27 school year. These policies must include an approval process for students and provisions for students to make up missed coursework.

Please see the model district language **below** and policy form linked. This model can be used as a resource for districts as they develop their own policies.

Policy form

Approval Process

Approval must be secured in advance for the absence to qualify as instructional time and to be coded as Present – Engaged Elsewhere in Work-Based Learning.

1. **Submission Timeline**
   Students and families must submit the STEAM Absence Exemption – Instructional Time Approval Request Form at least five school days prior to the first day of participation.
2. **Evidence of Participation**
   Students must attach documentation to verify participation. Acceptable evidence includes:
   - Event registration or confirmation
   - Competition or conference schedule
   - Youth organization documentation (e.g., CTSO, FFA, 4-H)
   - Results, ratings, certificates, or supervisor logs
   - Employer or advisor program verification

   Failure to provide required evidence may result in the absence exemption being revoked.
3. **Learning Outcomes/Competencies**
   Students must identify the learning outcomes or competencies to be demonstrated through participation in the activity. These outcomes must align with district expectations for work-based learning.
4. **Supervising/Approving Educator**
   A licensed educator must review and approve the learning outcomes and verify that the experience represents legitimate work-based learning. The educator must affirm supervision and competency verification.
5. **Teacher and Coach Notifications**
   Students and parents/guardians are responsible for notifying all teachers and relevant activity sponsors or coaches of the anticipated absence.

- Student must obtain missed assignments.
- Teachers will provide reasonable opportunities to complete missed work without penalty.
- The form requires signatures from each teacher and coach acknowledging the planned absence.

6. **Principal Review and Final Approval**
   The building principal provides the final decision:
   - Approved
   - Approved with conditions
   - Not approved

   The district will record the absence as Present – Engaged Elsewhere in Work-Based Learning for approved requests.

Impact on Athletics and Activities

Participation in approved work-based learning activities may require students to miss athletic practices or events.

- These absences are excused under this policy.
- Coaches and sponsors will sign the form to acknowledge notification.
- No punitive attendance consequences may be imposed for an approved work-based learning absence. However, failure to meet expectations regarding notifications to teachers/coaches or makeup work could impact future approval requests.
- IHSA or organization eligibility rules may still apply.

Makeup Work

- Students are responsible for obtaining and completing all missed assignments.
- Teachers will provide reasonable opportunities without academic penalty.

Kankakee Area Career Center

Bloomington Township

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