

Latest interpretation of 90 percent rule impossible

Excused absences aren't really excused anymore. Talk of the campus has been about the newest interpretation of the 90 percent rule.

The district has been advised by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) that the state law requiring at least 90 percent attendance by students applies to any absence from the classroom during regular class activities.

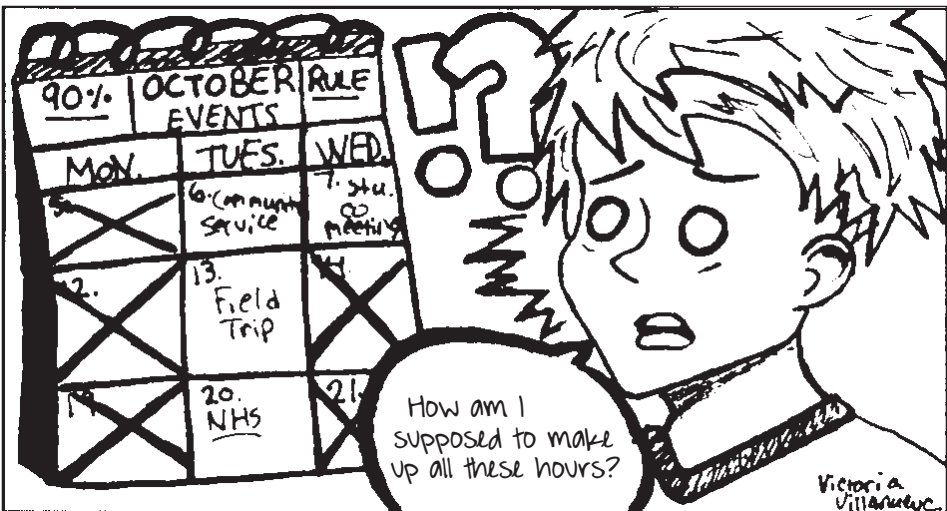
For every class period missed, students are required to make up that class with seat time for 45 minutes. That adds up to eight hours for every missed day.

Students are allowed to miss eight days in the first semester and 10 days in the second semester. Exceeding the number requires students and their parents to face an attendance review committee to appeal for credit.

The district continues to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities while still complying with the new interpretation.

According to the National Federation of State High School Associations, more than 805,000 Texas students participated in sports in 2014. The United States Census Bureau also reported that six of 10 children participate in extracurricular activities.

The same consequences apply for any absence. If a student ditches, it is



unexcused. If a student is out with student council at a community service project, it is also considered unexcused under the new interpretation.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students who participate in extracurricular activities have a 15 percent higher classroom attendance rate than students who choose not to be involved.

Often, many of the students who participate in extracurricular activities and sports are at the top of their class. They know how to keep up with missed work.

An "excused" absence now requires students to make up class hours to receive credit for a class. This is an inconvenience

not only for students, but the teachers and administration.

It's beneficial to the district because it receives more funding for attendance rates. However, the primary burden is on the teachers and administration who now must submit documentation to prove that the student, who was absent, made up the work. There's just not enough time in the day.

The district should return to the old interpretation of the law. Hopefully, parents will respond and speak up. Their children support the school through hard work and long hours toward their extracurriculars, and now they're being punished for it.

staff editorial