

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School

Policy S34: Attendance Policy

Adopted: July 21, 2022

Amended: August 17, 2023

Amended: July 25, 2024

Purpose: Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School (SGSC) believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, provides opportunities for important communication between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance for the benefit of the student.

Policy Statement: It is the policy of SGSC to expect students to be punctual and present for the entire school day. By September 1 of each school year, or within 30 days of a student's enrollment, Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School will notify parents of the school's attendance policies and procedures. SGSC Parents, Guardians, and Students shall operate under the following guidelines:

The School Day - The official SGSC school day shall begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 3:10 p.m. Students must be in their assigned classroom by the beginning of the official school day to be considered on time. *Students ARE NOT allowed to enter or be left at school before 7:30 a.m.*

Tardies - A student is considered tardy when he/she fails to arrive to their assigned classroom by the start of the official school day. In the event that a student is tardy he/she: **MUST** be signed in by a parent or legal guardian at the front office, or If the student has driven to school he/she **MUST** sign themselves in at the front office.

- **Excused Tardies** - For a tardy to be classified as Excused the reason for late arrival must be the result of any reason listed herein as an accepted excuse for absence. In the event of a doctor or dental appointment or court ordered appearance, an appointment card or other form of verification should be presented to the office to be kept in your child's file.
- **Unexcused Tardies** - Tardies due to oversleeping, missing the bus, car trouble, or any other reason not classified as an Excused Tardy shall be Unexcused.

Early Dismissals - In the event that a student leaves the school after 11:30 a.m. but prior to regular dismissal time, it shall be classified as an Early Dismissal. Any student leaving the campus early must sign out with the front office otherwise the student will be considered absent. Any student who leaves campus without properly checking out will receive disciplinary action. *High school students that miss 10 or more days in a course will not receive credit for the course.*

Absences - A student shall be marked absent as follows:

1. If the student does not come to school for the day,
2. If the student is checked out of school before 11:30 a.m.,
3. If the student is checked in to school after 11:30 a.m., or
4. If the student accumulates 5 unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals, the time out of school due to unexcused tardies and early dismissals will be counted as one (1) unexcused absence.
5. High School absences will be handled on a period-by-period basis. *High school students that miss 10 or more days in a course will not receive credit for the course.*

Absences will be designated as Excused or Unexcused. The student must return with a written note within 3 days of each absence that is signed and dated by a parent, guardian, or doctor.

Excused Absences - State law governs Excused Absences from school Absences shall be considered Excused as defined by law and the rules of the Georgia Board of Education. Absences in the following circumstances shall be considered excused:

1. Personal Illness of the student (A parent/guardian note will be accepted for illness for up to 3 absences, however if your child has more than 3 absences for illness a doctor excuse will then be required for the absence to count as an excused absence.);
2. Instances where attendance by the student would endanger the health of the student or others
3. Serious Illness or Death in the immediate family;
4. Recognized Religious Holidays observed by the faith of the student;
5. Court Order or an order by a government agency, including Pre-induction Physical Examinations for service in the Armed Forces, mandating the absence from school;
6. Voter Registration or Voting, which shall not exceed 1 day, for students eligible to vote in a public election;
7. A student whose parent or legal guardian is serving in military service in the armed forces or the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences, up to 5 days per school year to visit with the parent or legal guardian prior to the parent or legal guardian's deployment or during such parent's or legal guardian's leave.
8. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
9. Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the School Administration to have merit based on circumstances.

Additionally, students shall be marked present and not counted as absent in the following circumstances:

1. Students serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly shall be counted as present for days missed from school for such service;
2. Foster Care students shall be credited as present and shall not be counted as absent for any day, portion of a day, or days missed when attending court proceedings related to the students foster care.
3. Students who successfully participate in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program shall be counted as present and given full credit for the school day during which he/she served in the STEP program. No student shall be permitted to be absent from school to participate in the STEP program for more than 2 school days per year.

Unexcused Absences - Absences shall be considered Unexcused any time a student is out of school for any reason that does not qualify as an Excused Absence as defined above.

Truancy State law requires school attendance for all students between the ages of 6 and 16 years with penalties including fines and/or prison against the parent and the students non-compliance. Truancy is any intentional or unauthorized absence from compulsory education. School days missed as the result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused absences for the purposes of determining truancy. Truancy is a serious offense that requires stern corrective action on the part of SGSC and the parent/guardian. A truant student will be referred to the School's Attendance Protocol Committee and the Attendance Protocol Committee or other designated truancy officer of the student's home county.

Extended Excused Absences - When a student misses 10 or more days of school due to illness the absences may be classified as Extended Excused Absences. In such instances the student may qualify for Hospital/Homebound services. For a complete description of eligibility

see the SGSC Hospital/Homebound Services Policy.

Notification and Actions - In the event of excessive tardies, early dismissals, and absences the following notifications and actions shall occur:

Tardies and Early Dismissals

Five Total of any combination of Tardies and/or Early Dismissals – Letter of Notification to the student's Parent/Guardian(s).

After a student accumulates 5 tardies and/or early dismissals, the total time out of school due to tardies and early dismissals will be counted as one (1) absence.

Unexcused Absences

- At 2 unexcused absences, the teacher or designated school official will contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) to inquire about the reason for absences. The school shall document their efforts in Infinite Campus (IC) and two attempts through different methods of communication shall be made on the same day. This provision shall apply to both consecutive and non-consecutive absences.
- At 3 unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home to the parents/guardians to notify them of the current attendance status, as well as remind them of the attendance policy and next steps. This letter will be emailed and sent home with the student. This communication will also be documented in IC.
- At 5 unexcused absences, the school will send a certified letter to invite the parent/guardian of the student to a scheduled, mandatory meeting with the local Department of Juvenile Justice official(s), the School Resource Officer, and the Principal, as well as any others that may be invited. During this meeting, the school will discuss the student's attendance, grades, behavior, etc. Support and interventions to help improve attendance may be provided. Parents/guardians will be notified of the different charges that a student or parent/guardian could face - including fines and jail time - for the truancy.
- **7 Unexcused Absences** - Letter of Notification to the student's Parent/Guardian(s) that 3 more unexcused absences may result in withdrawal from Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School. Additionally, the school will notify the parent of the need for a meeting to discuss the absences, and the family will be referred to DFACS.
- **10 Unexcused Absences** – A student and/or guardian will be referred to court for truancy prosecution. At this time, the school may also withdraw the student from the school. A high school student who has missed 10 days of a course during the semester will fail the course and not receive a credit for the course. Students that miss 10 consecutive days of school - without excuse or communication - are automatically withdrawn from the school. Withdrawn students are not excused from compulsory attendance laws and should re-enroll in the school or another school as soon as possible.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. 40-5-22, in addition to the penalties set forth herein, a student shall not be authorized to receive a driver license if he or she has been withdrawn from school

*If a student is withdrawn for lack of attendance and all attempts to secure proof of transfer to another school or to receive a homeschool declaration fail within 45 days of the withdrawal, then the student/parent will be referred to the Department of Family and Children Services and local law enforcement/juvenile court system (based on state truancy laws). Students withdrawn for lack of attendance are eligible for re-enrollment in accordance with the *Southwest Georgia STEM*

Charter School Enrollment Policy.

Grievance Process

Any grievance related to this policy may be addressed through the process outlined in the *Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School Parent and Student Complaints and Grievances Policy*, which can be found on the school website, Parent/Student Handbook, or requested from the front office.