



School District of Williamsburg County

"Imagine Greatness"

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Dr. Kelvin Wymbs, Superintendent

Memo

To: Principals, District Staff
From: Office of Assistant Superintendent of Teaching, Learning, & Leadership Support
Date: August 3, 2023
Subject: Policy on Attendance

Consistent student attendance is critical to academic achievement. Attendance is also essential to successfully completing the necessary credits for graduation and learning positive habits that contribute to personal and occupational success. State law requires that all students are in attendance at least 180 days.

Each school will establish an Attendance Intervention Team that monitors student absences weekly and provides intervention when necessary to prevent chronic absenteeism. At minimum, the team must include the PowerSchool Operator, Administrator, Behavior Interventionist, and Guidance Counselor.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that all school-age children attend school regularly to avoid truancy. Williamsburg County School District recognizes that there are many factors which contribute to student attendance and will make every effort to work with the student and his/her parent/guardian to ensure the student is in compliance with the attendance expectation.

I. Student Attendance:

A. *Lawful (excused) absences:* Students are considered lawfully absent from school, including absence for any portion of the day, under the following conditions. (Regulation 43-274)

1. Illness of the student. Attendance in school would endanger his or her health and/or the health of others.
2. Illness or death in the student's immediate family.
3. Observance of a religious holiday of the student's faith.
4. Activities that are approved in advance by the principal.

B. *Unlawful (unexcused) absence:* An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful are considered unlawful and may constitute truancy. (Regulation 43-274)

1. A student is absent without the knowledge of his or her parents
2. A student is absent without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his or her parents.

C. Suspension is not to be counted as an unlawful absence for truancy purposes.

D. *Documentation of Absences:* A student must present a written excuse signed by a parent/guardian, physician, or other appropriate person within three (3) business days after returning to school. The maximum number of days to be excused by parent note is no more than three (3). If a student fails to provide proper documentation, the absence will be considered unexcused. Course credit for absences in excess of five (5) days in a semester-long course or ten (10) days in a year-long course are subject to approval by the school district.

E. *Make up Work:* All students are expected to make up all work missed when a lawful absence occurs. Students tardy or late to class for lawful reasons will be given the same opportunity to make up work. A parent may provide up to three (3) parent notes excusing a student illness or an absence related to an immediate family member's illness or death. After three (3) parent notes have been received, any absences related to an illness must be supported by a physician statement/medical note to be considered lawful. Undocumented absences will be considered unlawful and will be coded as unexcused.

F. *Truancy:* When a student has three (3) consecutive unlawful absences or a total

of five (5) of unlawful absences, he or she is considered truant. The student and his/her parent/guardian are subject to punitive action – up to and including, a referral to Family Court in accordance with S.C. Code of Laws Section 59-65-50, a report filed against the parent(s)/guardian(s) with the Department of Social Services, and/or Juvenile Services for violation of compulsory attendance laws.

1. Habitual Truant- A student is considered “habitual” truant when he/she:
 - fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, and the parents/guardians
 - accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences
2. Chronic Truant- A student is considered “chronic” truant when he/she:
 - has been through the school intervention process
 - has reached the level of a “habitual” truant
 - has been referred to Family Court and placed on an order to attend school, but continues to accumulate unlawful absences.

II. Truancy Intervention Plan:

A. *Monitoring Truancy-* Parents/Guardians are notified via telephone when students are absent from school.

1. When a student accumulates three (3) consecutive or five (5) days of unlawful absences, parents/guardians and students will be notified by written communication from the school. The PowerSchool Operator conducts a truancy investigation. The Attendance Intervention Team may invite the student's parents/guardians to the school or schedule a telephone/virtual conference to discuss the importance of daily attendance and determine available courses of action to resolve the causes of unlawful absences.
2. Should unlawful absences continue, the parent/guardian will be notified by written communication from the school after two (2) or more additional unlawful absences, no later than the ninth (9) day of unlawful absence. Within this written communication, the school will provide information for scheduling a conference with the Attendance Intervention Team. Parents/guardians and the student will be required to attend a conference and collaborate with the Attendance Intervention Team to develop a written truancy intervention plan and attendance contract designed to improve student attendance and eliminate unlawful absences. Referrals to appropriate service providers and alternative school and community-based programs will be implemented when necessary. After all parties sign these documents, copies will be provided to the parents/guardians and the student.
3. If unlawful absences continue, the parent will be notified by written communication after two (2) or more additional unlawful absences, no later than the twelfth (12) day of unlawful absence. Parents/guardians will be required to schedule another conference with the team. Parents/Guardians and the Attendance Intervention Team will work together to indicate why the plan was unsuccessful and amend the truancy intervention plan as needed. The team will share information with the parents/guardians about the criteria for Homebound service and determine if the student qualifies for services given the situation surrounding his/her absences. After all parties sign the updated plan, copies will be provided to the parents/guardians and the student.

B. Consequences of Absenteeism

When a student accumulates a total of twenty absences, with at least five (5) of those absences being unlawful, or ten (10) consecutive unlawful absences, and multiple attempts to provide intervention are unsuccessful, then, in accordance with SC Code 59-65-50, the student will be referred to Family Court for non-attendance. This action will be confirmed in a letter that indicates additional consequences issued by the school which may

include denial of high school credit for the courses in which the student is currently enrolled.

III. High School Credit

A. Attendance Requirement for Credit

1. Students enrolled in a course for high school credit cannot accumulate more than three (3) unexcused absences in a quarter-long course, five (5) unexcused absences in a semester-long course or ten (10) unexcused absences in a year-long course in order to receive credit. In order to receive one Carnegie unit of credit, a student must be in attendance at least 120 hours, per unit, regardless of the number of days missed, or must demonstrate proficiency as determined by Williamsburg County School District.

B. Attendance Recovery

1. Students are allowed to recover five (5) unexcused days for quarterly courses, ten (10) unexcused days for semester courses, and twenty (20) days for year-long courses. One absence per course is made up by one (1) hour of seat time. **These numbers are without regard of the number of lawful absences that a student has.**

C. Attendance Requirement for Credit

1. Students whose absences are approved should be allowed to make up any work missed in order to satisfy this requirement. Examples of makeup work may include:
 - after-school and/or weekend make-up programs that address both time and academic requirements of the course(s)
 - extended-year programs that address both time and academic requirements of the course(s)
2. All make-up work must be completed within thirty days from the last day of the course(s) or within ten days from a student(s) return to school.
3. Make-up requirements that extend beyond thirty days due to extenuating circumstances must be completed prior to the beginning of the subsequent new year.

Sources:

[Chapter 43.pdf \(scstatehouse.gov\)](#) p.138-141

[SC State Register Vol. 38, Issue 6. June 27, 2014](#)

[Code of Laws - Title 59 - Chapter 65 - Attendance Of Pupils \(scstatehouse.gov\)](#)