

## STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS

### I. Student Attendance

Student attendance is a cooperative effort and the School Board involves parents and students in accepting the responsibility for good attendance. Parents/guardians are responsible for each child's regular and punctual attendance at school as required under provisions of the law.

Attendance will be taken by the teacher each day. At the elementary level, attendance will be taken once per day. At the middle and high school level, attendance will be taken in every class.

Parents/guardians will be alerted to student absences daily via an automated calling system. Parents/guardians are responsible for providing the school with a current, working phone number in order to receive automated calls.

### II. Notes for Absences

Parents of students who are absent must inform the school of the reason for the absence no later than upon the student's return to school. All absences will be recorded as "unexcused" until a valid written explanation for the absence has been received. With a valid note, absences will be excused for the following reasons: funeral of immediate family member, illness (including mental health and substance abuse illnesses), injury, legal obligations, medical procedures, religious observances, and military obligation.

Notes informing the school of the reason for the absence should be submitted the same day the student returns to school. Notes submitted more than five calendar days following the student's return to school will not be accepted, and the days absent will be permanently recorded as "unexcused."

Notes may be written by the parent/guardian for the first five consecutive days the student is absent, or the first ten cumulative days of absence per year. After five consecutive days or ten cumulative days of absence, only notes written by a medical or mental health professional, or an officer of the court, will be accepted. Absences not properly documented with a valid note will be permanently recorded as "unexcused."

In addition to the reasons listed above, students may also be excused for participation in a valid educational opportunity, such as travel or service as a legislative or Governor's page, with a note granting prior approval from the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee.

### III. Procedures for Excused Absences

Students with excused absences will be required to complete all missed assignments and assessments within a reasonable timeframe specified by the teacher(s). As a general guideline, students will be given no more than two days to complete assignments and assessments for each one day of absence. Students with excused absences will have their assignments and assessments graded in the same manner as other students.

Students whose absences are excused by reason of observance of a religious holiday will not be deprived of any award or of eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award, or of the right to take an alternate test or examination, which the student missed by reason of such absence, if the absence is verified in an acceptable manner.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit in any way the authority of any attendance officer or the division superintendent to seek immediate compliance with the compulsory school attendance law.

### IV. Procedures for Attendance Notifications and Interventions

Parents/guardians will be alerted to student absences daily via an automated calling system. School staff shall record each student's absences and record each absence as "excused" or "unexcused." Parents/guardians will be notified via letter when a student accumulates five unexcused or ten total absences (whether excused or unexcused) for the school year.

#### Unexcused Absences

##### A. Upon Five Unexcused Absences

If a student accumulates five unexcused absences for the school year, the principal or principal's designee shall make a reasonable effort to ensure direct contact is made with the parent, either in person or through phone conversation to obtain an explanation for the student's absences and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued absence. The principal or principal's designee, the student, and the student's parent will jointly develop an Attendance Plan to resolve the student's nonattendance. This plan will include documentation of the reason(s) for the student's absences, as well as action steps to be taken by the student, parent, and/or school staff to improve student attendance. This plan may include assignment to attend Saturday Academy to make up lost instructional time.

B. Upon Six Unexcused Absences

If a student accumulates six unexcused absences for the school year, the principal (or principal's designee) or the division attendance officer shall schedule an attendance conference with the student and the student's parent to resolve issues related to the student's nonattendance. Additional school personnel and/or community service providers may also be included in this conference. At the conference, the student's Attendance Plan will be reviewed and revised, as needed. This conference must be scheduled within ten school days and held within fifteen school days of the student's sixth unexcused absence.

C. Upon Seven Unexcused Absences

If a student accumulates seven unexcused absences, the principal or principal's designee shall notify the division attendance officer who will enforce the compulsory attendance rules by either or both of the following: (i) filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code §16.1-228 or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to Va. Code §§18.2-371 or 22.1-262. In filing a complaint against the student, the attendance officer shall provide written documentation of the efforts already undertaken to resolve the pupil's absence. If the student's parents have joint physical custody of the student and the school has notice of the custody arrangement, then both parents shall be notified at their last known addresses.

D. Parental Cooperation in Remediating Excessive Unexcused Absences

It is expected that parents will cooperate with the division attendance officer and other school officials to remedy the student's attendance problem. Where direct contact with a parent cannot be made, despite reasonable efforts, or where parents otherwise fail to cooperate in remediating the student's attendance problem, the superintendent or the superintendent's designee may seek immediate compliance with the compulsory school attendance laws. The attendance officer, with the knowledge and approval of the Superintendent, shall institute proceedings against any parent who fails to comply with the requirements of the compulsory attendance laws. Where the complaint arises out of the parent's failure to comply with the requirements of § 22.1-258, the attendance officer shall document the school division's compliance with this Code section.

E. Partial Day Unexcused Absences

The actions outlined in sections A-D above may be implemented at the discretion of the principal or principal's designee if a student engages in a pattern of unexcused partial-day absences.

## Total Absences (Excused and Unexcused)

### A. Upon Ten Total Absences

If a student accumulates ten absences, for any reason, for the school year, the principal (or principal's designee) or the division attendance officer shall schedule an attendance conference with the student and the student's parent to address issues related to the student's nonattendance. Additional school personnel and/or community service providers may also be included. At the conference, the team will discuss the reason(s) for the student's absences and inform the parent of the consequences of continued absence. The principal (or principal's designee), the division attendance officer, the student, and the student's parent will jointly develop an Attendance Plan to resolve the student's nonattendance. This plan will include documentation of the reason(s) for the student's absences, as well as action steps to be taken by the student, parent, and/or school staff to improve student attendance. This plan may include assignment to attend Saturday Academy to make up lost instructional time. This conference must be scheduled within five school days and held within ten school days of the student's tenth total absence.

### B. Upon Fifteen Total Absences

If a student accumulates fifteen total absences for the school year, for any reason, the principal or principal's designee shall notify the division attendance officer who will schedule a follow-up attendance conference with the student student's parents, appropriate school personnel, and/or community service providers. At this conference, the team will review and revise the Attendance Plan, as needed.

## V. Consequences for Chronic Absenteeism or Truancy

### Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is defined as a student missing more than ten percent of scheduled school days for any reason. This is equivalent to missing more than eighteen school days in a school year.

A student who is chronically absent may be recommended for retention due to having missed too much instructional time. A middle or high school student who misses more than nine days for a semester course may fail the individual course due to having missed too much instructional time. The decision regarding retention and/or course failure due to absences will be made by the principal after reviewing the student's record and holding an Attendance Review Conference. The parent, student, student's teacher(s), and other appropriate school personnel (e.g., a school attendance team) will be invited to participate in this conference. The principal will take into consideration the total number of absences, reason(s) for the absences,

student and parent compliance with attendance conferences, and student and parent compliance with the student's Attendance Plan and interventions and action steps included in that plan.

The parent shall be notified in writing of the principal's decision regarding retention and/or course failure due to absences. Parents may appeal the principal's decision to the Superintendent or Superintendent's designee. The decision of the Superintendent or his designee is final.

### Truancy

Truancy is defined as accumulating seven or more unexcused absences. If a student is truant, the principal or principal's designee will notify the division attendance officer who will enforce the compulsory attendance rules by either or both of the following: (i) filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code §16.1-228 or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to Va. Code §§18.2-371 or 22.1-262.

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Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-254, 22.1-258, 22.1-260, 22.1-279.3, 46.2-323 and 46.2-334.001.

8 VAC 20-230-20.

8 VAC 20-730-10.

Cross Refs.:	IGAJ	Driver Education
	JED	Student Absences, Excuses, Dismissals
	JFC	Student Conduct
	JFC-R	Standards of Student Conduct