

FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	Reg. No. 400-98
Subject: STUDENT ATTENDANCE	Issued: 7/24/19
Preparing Office: Office of the Superintendent	Amended:

I. Policy 430

II. Philosophy and Rationale

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) recognizes that regular school attendance is vital for meeting the educational needs of all students. The responsibility for regular, daily punctual attendance is shared by the community, the home, students, and school personnel. Furthermore, consistent attendance leads to quality learning for all students.

III. General Procedures

A. General Regulations Attendance
COMAR 13A.08.01.01

Each child who resides in this state and is 5 years old or older and under 18 years of age shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction, during the school year, in the curriculum usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age.

B. Definitions

1. Absenteeism

- a. **Absent** - A student is considered absent when not physically present on school grounds and/or not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day.
- b. **Chronic Absenteeism** - The Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA) defines chronic absenteeism as missing 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason. All absences (illness, need to care for a family member, unexcused absences and out-of-school suspensions) are factored into attendance percentages. Students who are chronically absent are missing a significant amount of school, thus, missing out on important instruction.

2. Lawful/Unlawful Absence

- a. **Lawful Absence** - Students shall be considered in attendance at school when participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day and when that participation is approved by the Superintendent, the school principal, or their designees.

A student is counted present if at school or at a school activity, at a different location, personally supervised by a member(s) of the school staff. This may include authorized independent study, work study programs, field trips, athletic events, contests, music festivals, student conventions, instruction for home bound students, and similar activities officially authorized under policies of the local school board. It does not include "making up" school work at home or activities supervised or sponsored by private groups or individuals.

- b. **Unlawful Absence** - Students shall be considered unlawfully absent when absent from school without the knowledge of the parent/guardian, without proper documentation submitted to the school, and/or is involved in activities that are not school related.

3. Truancy

- a. **Truant** - According to Maryland law, a student is truant when unlawfully absent for a portion of or the entire school day.
- b. **Habitual Truant** - According to Maryland law, a student is habitually truant if the student is unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or portion of days in excess of 20 percent of the school days within any marking period, semester or year.
- Any FCPS student attending kindergarten through grade 12 who is habitually truant is unlawfully absent more than 8 school days in any term, 15 school days in any semester, or 20 school days in a school year and must immediately be referred to the pupil personnel worker for intervention.
 - A habitually truant student is also considered chronically absent.

4. Exemplary Attendance

The only system-wide recognition of student attendance is that of exemplary attendance. All students with 3 or fewer days of legal absences shall be recognized as attaining exemplary attendance at the end of each school year.

a. **Present - Full Day**

A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance 4 hours or more of the school day.

b. **Present - Partial Day**

A student is counted present for one-half day if in attendance for at least 2 hours of the school day, but less than 4 hours.

c. Students Scheduled for a Partial Day

A student scheduled for less than a full day is to be counted present based on the amount of time he/she is scheduled.

Example: A student scheduled for a two-hour block of time will be counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance for that entire block of time. A student scheduled for a two-hour block of time will be counted present for one-half day if the student is in attendance for one hour.

IV. Coding Absence and Tardiness

When recording an absence, the appropriate code regarding the cause of the student’s absence shall be designated as indicated below:

<u>Code</u>	<u>Lawful Cause of Absence - COMAR 13A.08.01.03</u>
01	Death in the immediate family
02	Illness of the child - The principal may require a physician's certificate from the parent or guardian of a child continuously absent for illness.
04	Court summons
07	Hazardous weather conditions - Interpreted to mean weather conditions, which endanger the health or safety of the students when in transition to and from school.
08	Work or activity approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the state education agency, accepted by the local Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, or any persons duly authorized by the Superintendent or principal, as reason for excusing the students.
09	Observance of religious holiday (up to 3 per school year)
10	State emergency
13	Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the Superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.
17	Health Exclusion - The school is excluding a student because of health concerns (i.e., lack of immunization, conjunctivitis, lice infestation, etc.).
18	Suspension – (Reference FCPS Regulation 400-04: In-School Suspension, Short-Term Suspension, Extended Suspension, Expulsion)
19	Lack of authorized transportation – Shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
<u>Code</u>	<u>Other Causes of Absences - Lawful (determined by the principal/designee)</u>
03	Doctor’s note
14	Illness in family
15	Hardship - Lack of housing, clothing, or other personal items, or any other barrier that impacts attendance. This also includes situations related to McKinney-Vento.

- 16 Vacation – Students who take trips with approval of their parent/guardian may be excused for a maximum of 5 days, per school year, with prior written notice to the principal or designee.
- 23 College Visits – Visits by students to prospective colleges are excused up to 4 days per year for students who provide the principal or designee with prior written notice.

Code Other Causes of Absence - Unlawful

- 20 Truancy
- 21 Other

V. Standards for Regular Attendance

An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful is presumed to be unlawful unless a note stating the reason for absence or lateness is submitted within the same term of the absence.

A. Monitoring Attendance

Procedures for monitoring attendance:

1. School staff, including school administration, will review each case in which the student has reached more than 5 unlawful absences during a 9-week grading period, 10 unlawful absences during a semester or 20 unlawful absences during the year. The administration will evaluate the legitimacy of all absences and remove those days where lawful absences can be documented.
2. Parent Notification - 3 days
When a student has accumulated 3 days of unlawful absence in any marking period, administration must notify parents/guardians, either by mail or electronically. This letter will include an explanation of the attendance policy and procedures. The secondary letter will also include an explanation of a possible loss of credit due to unlawful absences.
3. Parent Notification - 5 days
When a student has accumulated 5 days of unlawful absence in any marking period, administration must notify parents/guardians, either by mail or electronically. This letter will include an explanation of the attendance policy and procedures. The secondary letter will also include an explanation of a possible loss of credit due to unlawful absences.
4. Parent Notification - 10 days
When a student accumulates 10 absences, lawful or unlawful, administration must notify parents, either by mail or electronically. This letter will include an explanation of the attendance policy and procedures. The secondary letter will also include an explanation of a possible loss of credit due to unlawful absences.

5. Parent Notification - 20 days

When a student accumulates 20 absences, lawful or unlawful, administration will notify parents, either by mail or electronically. Parents of secondary students shall be informed that the student may fail or lose credit if unlawful absences exceed 10 days in a semester or 20 days in the entire school year.

6. The report card issued to students will include a denotation regarding attendance. In addition to the number of days absent, a message will be included regarding attendance status:

- a. Your child is eligible for exemplary attendance.
- b. Your child is chronically absent.

B. Tiers of Intervention to address attendance

Tiers of Interventions	
<p>Tier 1 Universal Supports Prevention oriented supports that promote and maintain good attendance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of attendance data, regularly, by school teams ● Engage students and parents ● Ensure that school climate/culture encourages students to attend school every day ● Provide ongoing communication with community regarding attendance rates, policies, and procedures ● Recognize and celebrate attendance ● Teach the importance of student attendance
<p>Tier 2 Targeted Supports Individual supports, in addition to Universal supports, for students who have a history of moderate chronic absence (less than 9 days) during the past school year or face a hardship (e.g. a chronic illness like asthma) that makes attendance difficult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and monitor students who are at risk for chronic absence ● Implement Student Attendance Intervention Plan to assist the family in the development of strategies to support improved attendance ● Recognize improved attendance of identified students ● Communicate attendance concerns with parents/guardians via mail or electronically (3 days, 5 days, 10 days, 20 days) ● Schedule parent conference to discuss absences ● Establish a check in/check out system ● Assign an attendance buddy/mentor/coach ● Identify & provide resources to families to address barriers ● Identify academic needs of the student and provide supports
<p>Tier 3 Intensive Supports High level of individualized support, in addition to Targeted and Universal supports, for students with chronic absence (9+ days) and/or face a hardship (e.g. a chronic illness) that makes attendance more difficult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and monitor daily attendance of students who have a history of chronic absence ● Call parents/guardians each day when student is absent ● Involve Pupil Personnel Worker (PPW) ● Refer family to community agencies/resources ● Recognize and celebrate improved attendance ● Develop/implement student buy-back plan ● Review/adjust Student Attendance Intervention Plan to assist the family in the development of strategies to support improved attendance

C. Educational Impact of Unlawful Absences

1. At the elementary level, unlawful absences in excess of 5 days in any one 9-week grading period may result in an unsatisfactory mark in grades K-1 and a failing grade in grades 2-5 in the affected class or classes.
2. Elementary students who have been absent 27 days by the end of the third quarter may be considered for possible retention during promotion/non-promotion conferences.
3. At the secondary level (middle and high school), unlawful absences in excess of 5 days in any one 9-week grading period may result in a failing grade in the affected class(es).
4. A secondary student who is unlawfully absent in excess of 10 days for a semester course or in excess of 20 days for a year-long course may fail/lose credit in the affected class(es).
5. Students have the right to make up class work missed and to have this work reviewed and evaluated by the teacher. Students have the responsibility to request make-up work within 2 days of their return to school.
6. Parents/students may appeal the failure/loss of credit decision to the principal.

D. Academic Contract Options for High School Students

Students at risk, or who have failed/lost credit due to absences, may earn days back through the following methods, as approved by the principal/designee:

1. Attend all scheduled classes for 20 consecutive school days.
2. Attend Saturday session(s). (Number to be determined by the principal/designee)
3. Meet the requirements of a special program approved by the principal. When a student has accumulated 5 unlawful absences per term (9-week grading period), 10 unlawful absences per semester or 20 unlawful absences per year, the principal/designee may develop an attendance make-up plan with the student and parents. The student who successfully completes the plan, as determined by the principal, will receive earned credit.

VI. Procedures - Recording Absences

The absentee report/attendance register is maintained to meet the needs of the local school system and the requirements established by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MSDE sets forth the rationale and guidelines for the implementation of a continuous student accounting system. It allows for flexibility in the manner in which records are maintained in the schools by providing a means for centralizing the function in the school. Attendance should be collected daily by the teacher. Schools are accountable for accurate reporting by creating an original source document, which is maintained in the school office for a period of 3 years.

VII. Attendance Procedures for Pregnant and Parenting Students

- A. A student's absence due to a student's pregnancy or parenting needs is a lawful absence as provided in Maryland law and acknowledged in Board of Education (Board) Policy 430 *Attendance at Schools*.
- B. Pregnant or parenting student absences due to pregnancy, or pregnancy-related conditions, shall be excused (e.g. labor, delivery, recovery, prenatal and postnatal medical appointments).
- C. At least 10 days of excused absences will be provided for a parenting student after the birth of the student's child.
- D. Parenting related absences due to an illness or medical appointment of the student's child, including up to 4 days of absences per school year for which the school may not require a note from a physician, shall be excused.
- E. Any absence due to a legal appointment involving the pregnant or parenting student that is related to family law proceedings, including adoption, custody and visitation shall be excused.
- F. In addition to home and hospital services, a school may allow the pregnant or parenting student to make up the work that the student missed in a time period that equals at least as many days that the student was absent, and allow the student to choose one of the following alternatives to make up work that the student missed:
 - 1. Retake a semester;
 - 2. Participate in an online course credit recovery program; or
 - 3. Allow the student 6 weeks to continue at the same pace and finish at a later date.

References: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-301
Cross reference Board Policy 430

Approved:

original signed by

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Superintendent