

## Policy 5.5: ATTENDANCE

### ATTENDANCE

ALL COMPULSORY AGE STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND SCHOOL EVERY DAY OF THE 180-DAY SCHOOL YEAR OR THE EQUIVALENT ON AN HOURLY BASIS PURSUANT TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION. PARENTS OF CHILDREN OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL AGE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CHILD'S DAILY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE. BECAUSE POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IS ASSOCIATED WITH NONATTENDANCE, SCHOOLS WILL RESPOND IN A TIMELY MANNER TO PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF PATTERNS OF NONATTENDANCE WHICH MAY INDICATE EARLY SIGNS OF TRUANCY. SCHOOLS WILL COLLABORATE WITH APPROPRIATE LOCAL AND STATE AGENCIES THAT ARE INVOLVED IN TRUANCY PREVENTION, INTERVENTION, AND JUDICIAL ACTION.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RELATED TO ATTENDANCE CAN ALSO BE FOUND IN THE CURRENT EDITION OF THE [CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT](#), APPROVED AS SCHOOL BOARD [POLICY 5.8](#), AND THE [PROGRESSION PLAN](#), APPROVED AS [POLICY 6000.1](#).

### I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Attendance:** Students are to be counted in attendance for the school day if they are present at school and shall be recorded as present by the teacher or attendance clerk. Students present at educational activities that constitute part of the approved school program, including field trips, are counted in attendance. At the elementary level, the homeroom teacher will record daily attendance. At the secondary level, each class period is factored into the daily attendance count.
- B. **Chronic Absenteeism:** When a student's absences total 10% or more school days for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences, and out-of-school suspensions. Using the percent of days enrolled, schools may identify students early in the school year to provide appropriate interventions. At the end of a 180-day school year, a chronically absent student misses at least 18 days of school.
- C. **Class Attendance:** Students are to be counted in attendance if they are physically present in class at the secondary level (grades 6-12). Teacher codes for attendance include: "P" for Present; "TU" for Tardy Unexcused; "PN" for Present, Not in Class; "E1" for the student's first day of enrollment in the school. The absence code that may be entered by a teacher includes "AU" for absent unexcused. For field trips, teachers do not have "FT" as an option; field trips will be recorded by the attendance clerk.
- D. **Early Warning System:** A system to identify students who need additional support to improve academic performance and stay engaged in school. The early warning system in Broward Schools includes data for students from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and includes "Attendance below 90 percent, regardless of whether the absence is excused or as a result of out-of-school suspension" (F.S. s. 1001.42(18)(b)(1)(a)).
- E. **Field Trip:** A District-approved trip away from a School Board site or the student's regularly assigned classroom. A student with a signed permission slip that attends a field trip shall be recorded in attendance as "FT." The school attendance clerk is responsible for recording "FT" for students on a field trip. The classroom teacher can enter "AU" (absent unexcused) to identify that the student is not in class. The attendance clerk will override the teacher's attendance record.

- F. **Habitual Truancy:** A student of compulsory school attendance age who accumulates 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days. In this definition, "calendar days" refers to all the days in a month, including weekends and holidays (F.S. s. 1003.01(8)).
- G. **Pattern of Nonattendance:** A child study team will determine if a student is developing a pattern of nonattendance to allow the school to initiate interventions in a proactive effort to prevent patterns of nonattendance from becoming excessive or repeated from year to year. Chronic absenteeism is one metric for a child study team to consider in determining a pattern of nonattendance. A pattern of nonattendance may be developing if a student has 5 unexcused absences within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar-day period. A child study team may find that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or unexcused (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(b)).
- H. **Physician's Verification Form:** When a student is absent, or expected to be absent, more than 10% of the school year, this form may be required to excuse absences without adding further distress to the parent to verify their child's condition. The form requests the physician verifies an illness (without identifying the specific illness), that the child is under their care, and how the condition impacts the student's attendance.
- I. **Regular Attender:** A student that attends more than 95% of the academic school year. A regular attender's absences range from 0 to 4.9% of school days. At the end of a 180-day school year, a regular attender may miss from 0 to 8 school days.

## II. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- A. All children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year or who are older than six years of age until graduation, are required to attend school regularly during the entire 180-day school term (F.S. s. 1003.21)(1)(a)).
- B. Public school students who have attained the age of 16 years and who have not graduated are subject to compulsory attendance until the student files a formal declaration of intent to terminate school enrollment with the School Board. The declaration must acknowledge that terminating school enrollment is likely to reduce the student's earning potential and must be signed by the student and the student's parent. A student who attains the age of 18 years during the school year is not subject to the legal sanctions for compulsory school attendance (F.S. s. 1003.21(2)(c)).
- C. Students under 16 years of age may not be withdrawn from school for any reason unless expelled through Board action or covered by an exemption allowed by Florida Statute (F.S. s. 1002.20(2)(b)).
- D. Compulsory school attendance requirements may be met by attendance in a home education program.
  - 1. As defined in Florida Statute s.1002.01(01) a "home education program" means the sequentially progressive instruction of a student directed by his or her parent in order to satisfy the attendance requirements of ss. 1002.41, 1003.01(13)(d) and 1003.21(1).
- E. For students enrolled in Department of Juvenile Justice Programs, the compulsory school attendance requirement is governed by state law and regulations (F.S. s. 1003.52(6)).

## III. PATTERNS OF NONATTENDANCE

Nonattendance for instructional activities is established by tardiness, early-sign-outs, or absences for all or any part of the day. The District recommends that students attend school every day.

- A. A pattern of nonattendance shall be reviewed by the Collaborative Problem-Solving Team to assist in identifying strategies and/or interventions intended to improve academic performance and student engagement. A pattern of nonattendance may be identified based on one or more of the following:

1. Prior history of chronic absenteeism (to provide interventions at the beginning of the school year)
  2. Chronic absenteeism within the current school year
  3. Habitual Truancy
  4. Excessive absences due to illness (excused and/or unexcused). This may be 3 or more consecutive days or more than 8 nonconsecutive days in a school year
- B.** Unless acceptable documentation is presented/submitted, an accumulation of daily unexcused absences by tardiness, or early sign-outs that equals 5 days (30 hours) in a marking period or 10 days (60 hours) within two marking periods may establish a pattern of nonattendance.
- C.** If the student exhibits a pattern of nonattendance, principals may request documentation for subsequent absences (F.S. s. 1003.24(4)). Nonattendance for instructional activities is established by tardiness, early sign-outs, or absences for all or any part of the day.
- D.** "Habitual truant" means a student who has 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent, is subject to compulsory school attendance under F.S. ss. 1003.21(1) and (2)(a), and is not exempt under F.S. s.1003.21(3) or s.1003.24, or by meeting the criteria for any other exemption specified by law or rules of the State Board of Education. Such a student must have been the subject of the activities specified in ss. 1003.26 and 1003.27(3), without resultant successful remediation of the truancy problem before being dealt with as a child in need of services according to the provisions of chapter 984 (F.S. s. 1003.01(8)).
- E.** Home Education Program: For Home Education attendance requirements see [Board Policy 6000.1](#) and F.S. ss. 1002.41, 1003.01(13)(d) and 1003.21.

## IV. ABSENCES

### A. Reporting an Absence

Absences should be reported by parents within two school days of the absence.

Parents can find absence reporting options on each traditional school's website. On the website, under CONTACT, select "Report an Absence" where parents can choose their preferred absence reporting method:

- a) Online Form: Submit an online form that will provide a confirmation email that includes the date and time of submission
- b) Voicemail (Attendance phone line)
- c) Written communication from parent\* delivered to the front office

When reporting an absence for a student, the following information is required:

- a) Student first and last name
- b) Student ID or Date of Birth
- c) Grade level
- d) Date(s) of absence
- e) Reason for absence
- f) Parent first and last name
- g) Parent Contact information

*\* Parent includes either or both parents of a student, any guardian of a student, any person in a parental relationship to a student, or any person exercising supervisory authority over a student in place of the parent (F.S. s. 1000.21(5)).*

## B. EXCUSED ABSENCES

Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below (F.S. ss. 1003.24(4), 1003.26).

**1. Illness of student, which may be related to physical or mental health.**

A student's physical and mental health are factors that parents will consider to determine if their child must stay home from school.

**Physical Health:** Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) recommends keeping a child home if they have:

- a. A fever of 100.4 degrees F or higher,
- b. Sore throat, coughs, chills, and/or body aches,
- c. Rashes, yellow eye drainage, greenish-yellow phlegm from a cough or cold, vomiting, or diarrhea.

**Mental Health:** BCPS considers mental health to be a part of a person's overall health and wellness. A student's successful participation in school activities may be severely affected by the social/emotional well-being of the student (e.g., excessive stress or anxiety, depression, grief/bereavement).

**PHYSICIAN'S NOTE:** If a student is continually sick and/or repeatedly absent from school, the student must be under the supervision of a licensed health care practitioner, or if the absence is related to the student having autism spectrum disorder, receiving services from a licensed health care practitioner or behavior analyst certified pursuant to F.S. s. 393.17, in order to receive an excuse from attendance (F.S. s. 1003.24(4)).

**2. Illness of an immediate family member.**

**3. Death in the family.**

**4. Religious holidays of the student's own faith.**

**5. Required court appearance or subpoena.**

**6. Special event.** Examples of special events include important public functions, educational enrichment activities, conferences, state/national competitions, college/university campus tour/visit, as well as exceptional cases of family need. A special event must be approved by the principal, or the principal's designee, prior to the absence. In cases where prior approval was not possible, the principal may excuse the absence.

**7. Scheduled medical or dental appointment.**

This may include "an appointment to receive therapy service provided by a licensed health care practitioner or behavior analyst certified pursuant to F.S. s. 393.17 for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder, including but not limited to, applied behavioral analysis, speech therapy, and occupational therapy" (F.S. s. 1003.21(2)(b)(2)).

**8. Students having, or suspected of having, a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted are to be excluded from school and are not allowed to return to school until they no longer present a health hazard (F.S. s. 1003.22).** Examples of communicable diseases and infestations include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and scabies. Students are allowed a maximum of five excused days absence for each infestation of head lice.

**NOTE:** Students on field trips are not considered absent.

## C. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences not excused as defined in the previous section, are considered unexcused.

1. Examples of absences that are not excused include, but are not limited to:
  - a) Failure to communicate the reason for absence(s)
  - b) Family trip that does not include one of the excused reasons listed in this policy
  - c) Vacation
  - d) Excessive absences due to illness without the requested physician verification that a medical condition justifies the pattern of absences will be recorded as unexcused.
  - e) Oversleeping
  - f) Missing the school bus (as routinely scheduled)
2. Students without a completed Certificate of Immunization indicating compliance with the current required schedule of immunizations will not be allowed to attend classes until this document is provided or a waiver is obtained. Absences due to noncompliance with immunization requirements shall be considered unexcused (F.S. s. 1003.22(1)).
3. For students initially registering or transferring into Broward County, including but not limited to foster care students, or homeless students, a temporary 30-day waiver of both health examination documents and certificates of immunization must be granted (F.S. s. 1003.22(5)(e)).

## D. SUSPENSIONS

1. "In-school suspension" means the temporary removal of the student from their regular school program and placement in an alternative program within their school, under the supervision of District school board personnel, for a period not to exceed 10 school days (F.S. s. 1003.01 (5) (b)).

A student assigned to in-school suspension will be included in the school's daily attendance count. The appropriate code for in-school suspension will be recorded by the attendance clerk to override the classroom teacher's reported attendance.
2. "Out-of-school suspension" means the temporary removal of a student from all classes of instruction on public school grounds and all other school-sponsored activities, except as authorized by the principal or the principal's designee, for a period not to exceed 10 school days and remanding of the student to the custody of the student's parent with specific homework assignments for the student to complete (F.S. s. 1003.01 (5) (a)).

A student assigned to out-of-school suspension will not be included as present in the school's daily attendance count. The student will be recorded as suspended, which will count as an absence due to suspension. This absence type is not counted as unexcused. The distinction between an absence due to suspension and an unexcused absence alleviates the double penalty problem associated with noncompliance with regular attendance as required by law (e.g., driving privileges and Learnfare).
3. "Alternative to External Suspension" means an alternative to external suspension program (AES) offered to students who have been externally suspended. If they do not attend the assigned days, the absences will be considered suspensions. For a student with a disability (SWD), if FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) is provided and the student does not attend, the student will be marked absent based on this attendance policy.

**NOTE:** For make-up work, refer to [Policy 6000.1: Student Progression Plan](#).

## E. TARDINESS

Tardiness is defined as a student not being in the classroom when the class is scheduled to begin.

1. Parents must follow the same process to excuse a tardy as they do to excuse an absence.
2. Excessive tardiness will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of nonattendance. Nonattendance for instructional activities is established by tardiness, early-sign-outs, or absences for all or any part of the day.
3. Tardiness to any class without documentation may be considered unexcused.
4. Habitual tardiness is defined as being tardy 5 times within a marking period.
5. Principals have the discretion to excuse tardiness for extenuating circumstances.
6. Unless excused under the provisions of this policy, accumulated tardiness will be recorded as unexcused absences (F.S. s. 1003.02(1)(b)).

## F. EARLY SIGN-OUTS

1. No students shall be released within the final 30 minutes of the school day unless the principal/designee determines it is an emergency.
2. All schools will establish procedures for early release that ensure that all students are treated consistently.
3. Excessive early sign-outs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of nonattendance. Nonattendance for instructional activities is established by tardiness, early-sign-outs, or absences for all or any part of the day.
4. Unless excused under the provisions of this policy, accumulated early sign-outs will be recorded as unexcused absences (F.S. s. 1003.02(1)(b)).

## V. STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. RULES:

- a. Students, when age-appropriate, have a responsibility to ask their parents to notify the school when they are absent.
- b. Students must maintain current classroom assignments while on internal suspension and turn in work daily.
- c. Students who are married, are parents, or are expectant parents have the right to remain in the regular school program or attend a special center program tailored to their specific needs.

**Note:** For additional information on students' rights and responsibilities, see the [Code of Student Conduct, Policy 5.8](#), as well as the Driving Privileges & Attendance section of this policy.

## VI. PARENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Parents have a right to be informed of the attendance responsibilities and consequences for truancy for both parents and students as described in the Code of Student Conduct.
2. Each parent of a child of compulsory school attendance age is responsible for the child's school attendance as required by law (F.S. s. 1003.24).
3. Parents must report the reason for their child's absence to the school (either by phone, written note, or the online form on the school website). The parent shall provide documentation of illness from a physician or public health unit, if requested.

4. Parents have the right to request a hearing if they refuse to participate in the interventions developed by the child study team because they believe that those interventions are unnecessary or inappropriate (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(e)).
5. The parents of a student expected to be absent at least 15 consecutive school days due to a physical or psychiatric condition (medically diagnosed and certified by a physician), or due to a chronic condition for at least 15 school days, which need not run consecutively throughout the school year, and could benefit from instruction should notify the school and request a copy of the Hospital Homebound Services referral packets.
6. Parents have a right to be notified if their child is absent from school or class and the parents have not reported the absence to the school (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(a)).
7. It is the parents' responsibility to maintain current contact information, including telephone numbers, with the school's registrar. Failure to comply may include the school needing to contact the proper authorities.
8. Florida law supports the active involvement of parents\* until the student graduates from school (F.S. ss. 743.07, 1003.26, 1003.21). It is presumed that students are dependent students (as defined by FERPA 34 C.F.R. s.99.31(a)(8) and by Internal Revenue Code s. 152). Parents will be notified that when a student reaches the age of majority (18 years of age), the parent shall continue to perform the parental functions of a dependent student, including, but not limited to, provide excusal of absences and tardiness, permission slips for early release, field trips, other activities, as necessary, and to register or terminate (withdraw) school enrollment, until the student graduates, except under the following circumstances:
  - (1) The student has submitted specific and acceptable documentation (such as rental agreement, lease etc.) to establish that he or she is independent of his/her parents and that the presumption of a dependent student does not apply to him or her.
  - (2) The student has been emancipated in compliance with Florida laws (F.S. ss. 1003.21(1)(c), 743.07).
  - (3) When the student has no parent and this fact is verified by the school administration (e.g. by communications with relatives, the Homeless Education Program, or the Florida Department of Children and Families, as is appropriate).

*\* Parent includes either or both parents of a student, any guardian of a student, any person in a parental relationship to a student, or any person exercising supervisory authority over a student in place of the parent (F.S. s. 1000.21(5)).*

## **VII. SCHOOL/DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **1. MAINTAINING RECORDS AND IMPLEMENTING INTERVENTIONS**

- a. Each principal must make the necessary provisions to ensure that all school attendance reports are accurate and timely and must provide the necessary training opportunities for staff to accurately report attendance (F.S. s. 1003.23(1)). Principals are required to maintain an attendance record which shows the absence or attendance of each child enrolled for each school day of the year (F.S. s. 1003.23(2)).
- b. Upon each unexcused absence, the school shall contact the student's parent in a timely manner (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(a)).
- c. If a student has accumulated five days (30 hours) of absences in a marking period or 10 days (60 hours) within two marking periods, the principal/designee shall determine if there may be a pattern of nonattendance. If there is no acceptable documentation, the principal/designee shall refer the student to the Collaborative Problem-Solving Team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing and provide appropriate interventions (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(b)).

- d. The principal/designee shall provide the Hospital Homebound Services referral packets to the parent of a child who, under the care of a physician that certifies the student is expected to be absent at least 15 school days due to a physical or psychiatric condition. Placement is determined by an IEP committee based on the medical needs of the student.
- e. If the parent or guardian of a child who has been identified as exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance enrolls the child in a home education program, the parent or guardian will be required to attend the portfolio review committee meeting(s) as required (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(f)1).
- f. Teachers shall report attendance promptly every school day. If the online grading/attendance program is not available or operating properly, teachers will record attendance at the earliest possible opportunity.

## 2. DRIVING PRIVILEGES AND ATTENDANCE

Florida Statute s. 322.091 and s. 1003.27(2)(b) requires school districts to report to the Division of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) the names, dates of birth, sex, and social security numbers of students ages 14–18 who accumulate 15 unexcused absences in any consecutive 90 calendar day period. Districts are also required to hold hardship hearings if requested by a student whose license has been suspended. The Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop administrative procedures to implement this legislation.

- a. The principal/designee will conduct the hardship hearing within 30 calendar days of receiving the request in accordance with the procedures established by the Superintendent.
- b. Students are eligible to have their driving privileges reinstated if they accumulate 30 consecutive days of attendance.

## 3. CONSEQUENCES RELATED TO TRUANCY

- a. A child who is found to be truant may be taken to the Juvenile Assessment Center or other locations that are established by the school district to receive students who are absent from school. It is the responsibility of the Law Enforcement Officer to call the school to determine if the child is legitimately out of school.
- b. Students 14–18 years of age who have 15 unexcused absences within 90 calendar days and have a driver's license will have their driver's license suspended by the Division of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles or will not be issued a license if they apply for one.
- c. If a child subject to compulsory school attendance will not comply with attempts to enforce school attendance and the Superintendent elects not to file a truancy petition or if the child does not successfully complete the sanctions ordered by the Court, the child will be referred to the Case Staffing Committee pursuant to F.S. s. 984.12. The staffing committee may file a child-in-need-of-services petition (F.S. s. 1003.27(3)).
- d. If the parent refuses to participate in the truancy interventions and exercises the right to appeal to the School Board because the parent believes the interventions are unnecessary or inappropriate, the school district will provide a hearing officer who shall make a recommendation for final action to the Board. If the Board determines that the interventions are appropriate and the parent still refuses to participate or cooperate, the Superintendent/designee will seek criminal prosecution for noncompliance with compulsory school attendance (F.S. s. 1003.26(1)(e)).
- e. Students who are habitually truant may lose their Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) grants through the Learnfare Program. The grant will be restored only when conditions as provided by law are met (30 days of attendance with no unexcused absences).



- f. When a student transfers to another school district in an attempt to circumvent the applicable remedial truancy procedures, copies of all records pertaining to said procedures shall be forwarded to the new school district free of charge (F.S. s. 1003.28).

## **VIII. DISTANCE LEARNING DUE TO EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURES**

**I. ATTENDANCE:** During a time when school buildings must be closed due to environmental conditions related to public health and/or safety, schools may be required to operate instruction through distance learning. The rules listed below will apply for student attendance during distance learning.

### **A. Recording student attendance during distance learning:**

1. Teachers will record student attendance in their online attendance book. Attendance will be based on the student's presence in the digital classroom.
2. During distance learning, the use of student cameras is required for attendance and instruction. Students will be counted in attendance in the learning environment during their scheduled class time. Teachers should be flexible and consider any extenuating circumstances of individual students who may be unable to turn on a camera. Teachers may consider other evidence of attendance for individual cases.
3. **Students will be counted as absent** when no evidence of the student's online presence can be observed by the teacher during their scheduled class time.

### **B. Excusing an absence:**

1. **Parent Responsibility:** Parents will be notified within 48 hours of a reported absence via automated notifications. It is the parent's responsibility to communicate a reason for absence by phone or through the online form available on the school's website or the BCPS Mobile App.
2. **School Responsibility:** The attendance clerk, designated by the principal, is responsible for monitoring and updating excused absences reported to the school's attendance hotline and the online forms submitted by parents from the school's website.

### **C. Excused Absence due to a Communicable Disease:**

Students who are participating in any model of instructional delivery (100% face-to-face, 100% eLearning, or a hybrid model) and have, or are suspected of having a communicable disease should not attend school in the brick and mortar setting in-person until they no longer present a public health hazard (F.S. s. 1003.22). Students suspected of having a communicable disease or are quarantined due to a possible exposure to the communicable disease who are not experiencing a health-related barrier to participation are encouraged to engage in eLearning if it does not impede the child's health. Parents of students who are unable to connect online or attend school in-person due to having, or suspicion of having a communicable disease, should report the reason for absence to the child's school to be excused. Students and families are encouraged to observe precautions for communicable diseases outlined by local public health authorities and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to protect the safety of their family members and the school community.

### **D. Substitute Teacher:**

When a teacher is not available to perform their duties, the principal (or their designee) will assign a staff member to provide the continuity of instructional duties each day the teacher is not available, which includes recording student attendance.

Statutory Authority: 1001.41(1) & (2), 1001.42, 1001.51(24) Fla. Stat.

Laws Implemented: 1002.20(2), 1003.01(5), 1003.02(1)(g), 1003.21, 1003.22, 1003.23, 1003.24, 1003.25, 1003.26, 1003.27, 1003.28, 1003.29, 1003.31, 1003.32, 1006.08 Fla. Stat.

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