

**ANTOINE L. HICKMAN, CHIEF OFFICER  
STUDENT SUPPORT INITIATIVES & RECOVERY**

December 1, 2020

TO: All Principals

FROM: Antoine L. Hickman, Ed.D. *ALH*  
Chief Student Support Initiatives & Recovery Officer

VIA: Valerie S. Wanza, Ph.D.  
Chief School Performance & Accountability Officer

SUBJECT: **POLICY 5.5: ATTENDANCE (REVISED)**

**ACTIONS:**

- 1) Communicate the School Board of Broward County's most recent change to Policy 5.5 requiring all students to have their cameras on during attendance and direct instruction. Communications should be delivered to staff, students and parents. See attached guidance for policy implementation.
- 2) Ensure that school websites are updated with the most recent (11/17/20) Policy 5.5: Attendance information. The "School Protocols" or "School Policies" pages that include attendance or absence information must link to the most recent policy.
- 3) Monitor the implementation of the requirement that students must have their cameras on for attendance and instruction. Teachers should indicate noncompliance in Pinnacle's Quick Attendance Comment Box as student "Did not turn on camera" to maintain a record of the behavior.

The BCPS Attendance Office updated the "Report an Absence" page with the link to the revised policy.

Newly adopted language begins under Section VIII on page 9. The amended language for paragraph A. 2. reads as follows:

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.

**RATIONALE:** Policy 5.5 was revised and adopted by the School Board of Broward County on Tuesday, November 17, 2020.

The School Board's decision to require camera usage by students was based on feedback from students, teachers, administrators, and other employees from an Attendance Survey that was conducted between Nov. 6 – 16, 2020. Results from the survey revealed that 75% of the School-based administrators who responded and 69% of teachers who responded support requiring cameras for attendance.

School Board members unanimously agreed the policy should require students to turn on their cameras during attendance and direct instruction. For questions related to this policy, please contact Phillip Shaver, Coordinator, District Attendance, by email at [phillip.shaver@browardschools.com](mailto:phillip.shaver@browardschools.com).

VSW/ALH/MK:ps  
Attachment

c: Senior Leadership Team

**Policy 5.5: Attendance**  
**Updated Guidance for Schools**  
BCPS Attendance Office  
December 2, 2020

Policy 5.5: Attendance was revised at the November 17, 2020 Special School Board Meeting. *Distance Learning for Emergency School Closures* is included in the policy to adapt to our needs to teach students remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Section VIII, paragraph A2:**

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.

**Questions and Answers**

❖ **What does this camera requirement mean for the classroom teacher?**

Students are required to turn on their cameras during attendance and direct instruction. The camera does not need to be on when the teacher is not providing instruction.

Virtual backgrounds are encouraged to ensure the student's privacy.

Benefits to requiring student cameras:

- For accountability, teachers need to be able to verify student attendance.
- Face-to-face instruction allows the teacher to make visual assessments of student understanding and if additional instruction is needed in an academic area.
- Teachers can verify if a student is paying attention or at their computer.
- Teachers may be able to identify a need for intervention related to student safety.
- Socialization is an important part of the school experience. Students need to be "seen" on a regular basis. All students, at home and at school, are required to turn on their cameras for attendance and instruction.

*BCPS is working to ensure that students have an optimal learning experience during this very difficult time to deliver instruction. The educational purpose of requiring cameras is to ensure that students are engaged in bell-to-bell eLearning instruction.*

❖ **What should the teacher do if the student does not turn on their camera?**

The teacher will direct the student to turn on their camera to provide a first level of intervention.

If the student does not turn on their camera after a reasonable request from the teacher, enter the comment "**Did not turn on camera**" in Pinnacle's Quick Attendance view in the Comment Box and mark the student absent (AU).

When a student does not turn on their camera, the teacher is encouraged to communicate with the student and parent to determine if there are extenuating circumstances and remind the parent of the student requirement to turn on the camera during instruction.

School counselors, school social workers, family therapists, and technology support are available throughout Broward County Public Schools to assist with extenuating circumstances.

The home and school connection is essential for communicating and reinforcing student expectations.

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❖ **Is the student absent if they do not turn on their camera?**

Yes. Include the comment "*Did not turn on camera*" in the comment box.

❖ **Is there a disciplinary consequence if the student does not turn on their camera?**

Yes, the student is counted absent.

**Teachers must not add an academic consequence (points off or zeroes) because a student refused, or is unable, to turn on their camera.**

**A teacher must not remove a student from the learning environment because the student did not turn on their camera.**

❖ **What are some examples of "extenuating circumstances" where a student would not be able to turn on their camera? (This is not an exhaustive list of examples.)**

School staff will work with families on a case-by-case basis.

- Homelessness/Students in transition
- Internet bandwidth at the student's home
- Inoperable technology (broken camera or no camera available)
- Parent or student has communicated a specific extenuating circumstance
- Student health condition
- Other extenuating circumstances as determined by school staff