

Book	Board of Education Policy Manual
Section	J. Students
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The parents/guardians/other persons having charge of any child between the child's sixth and sixteenth birthdays are subject to "compulsory attendance". That is, they are required by law to enroll and send such child to a public or private school or utilize a home study program. Students assigned to alternative schools are subject to this requirement as well.

All K-12 children enrolled for 20 school days or more in a public school of this state prior to their sixth birthday become subject to compulsory attendance.

The School System will abide by all applicable authority regarding student attendance, including State Board of Education Rules.

Georgia law, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1, states that a person who fails to send a child to school may be charged with a misdemeanor. For each violation of the statute, a court may subject this person to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed thirty (30) days, community service, or any combination of such penalties. Each day's absence after the school notifies the person of five unexcused days of absence shall be considered a separate offense of the statute.

For the purposes of this Policy, a child between his/her sixth and sixteenth birthdays shall be considered truant if the child has more than five days of unexcused absences in a school year. A truant student with more than ten days of unexcused absences within a school year may be identified as a child in need of services in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-11-2, as well as the possible denial or suspension of a driver's license.

Parents/guardians/enrolling persons should review Policy JCDA (Behavior Code) for more information regarding truancy/attendance procedures, legal consequences and school discipline for attendance violations.

### Definitions

**Tardy** - A student is tardy when a student arrives at an assigned place after the designated time. Repeated or habitual tardiness is an undesirable personal habit and is also disruptive of the orderly instructional process; therefore, teachers or principals will take corrective action.

**Unexcused Absence** - A student is absent any time he or she is missing from school or from any assigned class or school activity.

**In Attendance** – to be considered "in attendance" for a school day, a student must be present for at least one-half of the school day, excluding the lunch period. Students leaving school before meeting that requirement, or arriving at school too late to meet the requirement, will be considered absent for the day.

**Truant** – any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences. Truancy is a serious offense that requires stern corrective action on the part of the school and the parents.

**Foster Care Student** – a student who is in a foster home or otherwise in the foster care system under the Division of Family and Children Services of the Department of Human Services.

The following procedures should be observed in regard to attendance of students:

#### A. Absences and Excuses

a. Students may be temporarily excused from school for any of the reasons allowed by state law and State Board of Education Rules. Such reasons include, at a minimum:

- i. Personal illness or when the student's attendance in school endangers the student's health or the health of others;
- ii. A serious illness or death in a student's immediate family;
- iii. A court order or an order by a government agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces;
- iv. Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school;
- v. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety;
- vi. Registering to vote or voting in a public election, which shall not exceed one day; and
- vii. Visitation if a student has a parent or legal guardian that is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. This shall not exceed a maximum of five school days per school year

b. Students not present at school shall be counted as present for any of the reasons allowed by state law and State Board of Education Rules. Such reasons include, at a minimum:

- i. Children who are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly shall be marked as present by the school for days missed for this purpose in the same manner as students on a field trip.
- ii. A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to the student's foster care shall be credited as present by the school and shall not be counted as an absence, either excused or unexcused, for any day(s) or portion of a day missed from school;
- iii. Children who successfully participate in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program shall be counted as present and given full credit during the day of participation in STEP, for up to a maximum of two school days per school year. STEP is a program designed to permit students the opportunity to volunteer to work as poll officers during any primary, special or general election.

c. Students are required to provide documentation supporting their absence as excused. At a minimum, the parent/guardian/enrolling person must submit a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for the absence. Schools may request, among other documentation, a letter written by a licensed physician of the student or family member, explaining the reasons for the absences. Failure to submit a written excuse within two school days of the student's return to school after an absence may result in the absence being marked as unexcused.

d. School days missed as a result of an out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

e. Students must be counted as present in order to be eligible to engage in extra-curricular activities on that day.

## B. Make-up Work

a. Students should be allowed to make-up missed assignments and final course grades of students shall not be penalized because of absences if the following conditions are met:

- i. Absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons; and
- ii. Make-up work for excused absences was completed satisfactorily; (Students must have requested make-up work within 2 days of returning to school after an excused absence.)

b. Schools are not required to provide make-up work for unexcused absences.

## C. Notification

a. Schools will provide to the parent/guardian/enrolling person a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance.

- i. By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent/guardian/other person having control or charge of such student shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties. After two reasonable attempts by the school to secure such signature, the school will send a copy of the statement, via certified mail, return receipt requested, or first class mail, to such parent/guardian/other person have control or charge of student.
- ii. Students age ten or older by September 1 shall sign a statement indicating receipt of written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the School System's policy.

b. The school will notify the parent/guardian/other person who has control or charge of the student when the student has five (5) unexcused absences. The notice will outline the penalty and consequences of such absences and that each subsequent absence

shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent/guardian/other person who has charge of the student, the school system shall send written notice via certified mail with return receipt requested, or first class mail;

c. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee will use his or her best efforts including first class mail to notify a student age fourteen and older when the student has only three (3) absences remaining before violating the state's attendance requirements regarding the denial of driver's permits and licenses.

d. Prior to any action to commence judicial proceedings to impose a penalty on a parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of the student for failing to comply with compulsory attendance, the school shall send notice to such parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested.

#### D. Excessive Absences

a. All schools should keep daily attendance records verified by the teacher making such records. The reports are open to inspection by the school social worker or duly authorized representative at any time during the school day.

b. The District's attendance protocol committee shall ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues, to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school, and to increase the percentage of students present to take test required to be administered under the laws of this state.

c. All schools, and the Administrative Assistant, Operations, should provide the school social worker or duly authorized representative the names, ages, and residence of all students enrolled at their schools, or enrolled in a home study program, who have violated the attendance policy or who exhibit a pattern of attendance that will lead to excessive absences.

d. School administrators and/or the Administrative Assistant, Operations may make a referral to a school social worker or duly authorized representative at any time it is deemed appropriate. Truancy may also result in referral to appropriate law enforcement or court authorities at any time.

e. The school social worker or duly authorized representative may initiate additional contacts with parents/guardians/enrolling persons if deemed necessary to address attendance issues.

f. Students will face progressive disciplinary consequences for attendance-related offenses. See Policy JCDA for more information.