

## STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS

### I. Student Attendance Policy

Student attendance is a cooperative effort and the School Board involves parents and students in accepting the responsibility for good attendance.

Each parent/guardian or person having control or charge of a child within the compulsory attendance age is responsible for such child's regular and punctual attendance at school as required under provisions of the law.

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. Absences are excused for the following reasons:

*Illness, Prearranged Appointments, Family Death or Emergency, Religious Observances, Extenuating Circumstances, or Exceptional Circumstances.*

The superintendent, by regulation, establishes procedures for appropriate interventions when a student engages in a pattern of absences for less than a full day, the explanation of which, if it were a full-day absence, would not be an excused absence.

The superintendent's regulations include procedures for excusing students who are absent by reason of observance of a religious holiday. Such regulations ensure that a student is not 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.

Students shall attend school for a full day unless excused by the principal or principal's designee.

High school students may spend a maximum of 3 school days each academic year participating in High School to Work Partnerships established pursuant to guidelines developed by the Board of Education. Students who miss a partial or full day of school while participating in Partnership programs are not counted as absent for the purposes of calculating average daily membership. The superintendent's regulations include procedures by which students may make up work missed while participating in a High School to Work Partnership.

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.

### II. Compulsory Attendance Procedures

Whenever a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no information has been received by school personnel that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence, the school principal, principal's designee, attendance officer or other school personnel or volunteer notifies the parent by phone, email or other electronic means to obtain an explanation. School staff records the student's absence for each day as "excused" or "unexcused".

A. Upon Fifth Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

If (1) a student fails to report to school for a total of five scheduled school days for the school year, and (2) there is no indication that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence; and (3) reasonable efforts to notify the parent of the absences have failed, then the principal or his designee or the attendance officer shall make a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent, either in person or through telephone conversation, to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. The school principal, principal's designee or the attendance officer, the pupil, and the pupil's parent shall jointly develop a plan to resolve the pupil's nonattendance. Such plan shall include documentation of the reasons for the pupil's nonattendance.

B. Upon Sixth Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

If the pupil is absent an additional day after direct contact with the pupil's parent and the attendance officer has received no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the school principal, principal's designee or the attendance officer shall schedule a conference within ten school days, which must take place no later than the fifteenth school day after the sixth absence. At the conference, the pupil, his parent, and school personnel, shall meet to resolve issues related to the pupil's nonattendance. Other community service providers may also be included in the conference.

C. Upon Additional Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

Upon the next absence after the conference without indication to the attendance officer that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the principal or principal's designee shall notify the attendance officer or superintendent or superintendent's designee who shall 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 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.

#### III. Report for Suspension of Driver's License

In addition to any other actions taken pursuant to this policy, if a student who is under 18 years of age has 10 or more unexcused absences from school on consecutive school days, the principal may notify the juvenile and domestic relations court, which may take action to suspend the student's driver's license.

#### IV. Attendance Reporting

Student attendance is monitored and reported as required by state law and regulations. At the end of each school year, each public school principal reports to the superintendent the number of pupils by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled pursuant to Part II (B) above. The superintendent compiles this information and provides it annually to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

#### V. Dismissal Precautions

Principals do not release a student during the school day to any person not authorized by the student's parent/guardian to assume responsibility for the pupil. Students are released only on request and authorization of parent or guardian. The superintendent establishes procedures for release of pupils who are not residing with or under the supervision of a parent/guardian. The burden of proof on the authority of the person to receive the student is on the requesting party. A formal check-out system is maintained in each school.

Adopted: August 14, 1996

Revised: June 18, 1998

Revised: July 29, 1999

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Adopted: May 27, 2009  
Revised: June 26, 2013  
Revised: June 28, 2017

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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
	JFC	Student Conduct
	JFC-R	Standards of Student Conduct

**ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS**  
**(Grades K-8)**

Attendance on a daily basis is a mandatory requirement for all students. The Code of Virginia §22.1-254, requires that all children who have reached their fifth birthday on or before September 30th and who have not yet reached their eighteenth birthday must attend school. This requirement does not apply to any child who has obtained a high school diploma, its equivalent, or a certificate of completion or who is exempted pursuant to the provisions of the law.

When a student accumulates more than six (6) unexcused absences in an academic year the attendance officer/superintendent's designee will enforce the provisions of the Code of Virginia §22.1-258 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 §16.1-228 or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to §18.2-371 or §22.1-262, as described in File: JED, of the Dickenson County Public Schools Policy Manual.

**Absences**

Students are expected to be in school every day. Parents/Guardians are expected to contact their child's school on the day of the child's absence to inform the school of that absence. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the date of such appointments is known. When such notification is made, the parent/guardian need not contact the school on the first day of the absence. **For any reason, a written note providing the dates of and reasons for the child's absence is required from the parent/guardian within three days of the child's return to school.** The purpose of this note is to determine whether or not the student's absence is excused or unexcused. This note will be maintained until the end of the school year for documentation purposes.

**Excused Absences**

Dickenson County Public Schools defines excused absences in support of the mandatory attendance law. The following conditions provide the only acceptable reasons for a student's absence from school.

*Illness* - When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness, a note written by the parent or a physician documenting the illness will provide evidence of the illness for the school.

*Prearranged Appointments* - For appointments with the court, social services or other state agencies and appointments with health care providers, official documentation must be presented to the school.

*Family Death or Emergency* - For absences because of a death in the family or an emergency beyond the family's control, the parent must notify the school and provide documentation for the absence.

*Religious Observances* - Absences as a result of observances of religious holidays should be prearranged by the parent, who is responsible for notifying the child's school of the religious holiday(s) to be observed.

*Extenuating Circumstances* – Unforeseeable or unpreventable absences as determined by the school administration.

*Exceptional Circumstances* - The principal may approve prearranged absences for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interests of the student and his/her family. Prior to the student's absence, the parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form.

The parent will document on this request the rationale for the absence, dates of absence, and siblings within the school division for whom the exception will be also requested. The principal will provide the response to the Requests for Exceptional Circumstances in writing to the parent.

In documented extenuating circumstances, the principal may approve an absence after-the-fact as exempt from the sanctions of the attendance policy. For those circumstances which cause the student to be absent and prior request for approval is not possible, the parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstances within two days of the student's return to school.

The school may require terms of compliance which the student must meet prior to the principal's approval of the Request of Approval of Exception to Attendance. Required terms of compliance may include, but are not limited to, timely completion and submission of make-up work and assignments, a relevant journal, and/or a related project.

No more than five (5) days may be approved by the principal for exceptional circumstances during a school year. For requests of more than five days, the request must be endorsed by the principal and approved by the superintendent/designee.

*Field trips and school related activities*- Days missed due to principal approved student participation in school related activities will not be counted as an absence.

### **Suspensions**

For absences because of a suspension, the parent will be notified of the suspension and the date when the student will be expected to return to school. The student must return on the indicated date.

### **Make-up Work**

When students are absent, (this includes absences for suspension), an opportunity to make up work will be provided. Make-up work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction.

Students will be expected to make up work for all classes missed within five (5) days of returning to school. Extenuating circumstances may be considered in extending the time limit.

It is assumed that an unexcused absence will represent a deliberate attempt by a student or his/her parents to avoid the duty of attending school. Assignments associated with unexcused absences and suspensions, including Comprehensive Tests (unit tests, exams, etc.), will receive a 10% reduction on those scores. These must be completed within five (5) school days after returning to school.

### **Excessive Absences**

Ten (10) or more excused absences within a semester are considered excessive and may require a physician's note or other official documentation to excuse subsequent absences. When a student accumulates ten (10) or more excused absences within a semester, the student may be referred to the Student Attendance Review (SAR) committee. The SAR committee will confer with the parents/guardians to determine the circumstances surrounding the absences and develop a corrective action plan as appropriate. Interventions may include, but are not limited to, parent conference, referral to guidance counselor, attendance contract, or referral to the Supervisor of Compliance.

### **Tardiness/Check-outs**

A student arriving late to school or leaving early from school will only be excused for the following reasons; illness, prearranged appointments, family death or emergency, religious observances, or other extenuating circumstances.

Any combination of three (3) unexcused tardies or check-outs will count as one (1) unexcused absence for the purpose of supporting the mandatory attendance law.

Any combination of ten (10) unexcused tardies or check-outs will result in a referral the SAR committee. The SAR committee will confer with the parents/guardians to determine the circumstances surrounding the unexcused tardies or unexcused check-outs and develop a corrective action plan as appropriate.

### **Homebound Instruction**

In the event a student develops a medical condition which would result in prolonged absence from school, the student may be a candidate for Homebound Instruction. Students approved for Homebound Instruction are considered present for attendance purposes. For more information concerning Homebound Instruction, please contact Mrs. Denechia Edwards, Supervisor of Special Education, P.O. Box 1127, Clintwood, Virginia, or (276) 926-4643.

### **General Provisions**

1. Each principal will be responsible for forming a Student Attendance Review (SAR) committee. The SAR committee will be responsible for devising and implementing a plan to promote the three A's to school success:
  - **Attendance** — promoting strategies to reduce excused and unexcused absences,
  - **Attachment** — establishing meaningful connections with youth, their families and their schools through caring, support, and mutually-defined expectations, and
  - **Achievement** — ensuring that students have the tools and resources to complete courses and graduate.

The SAR committee will meet at least once a month and will promote the three A's through, but not limited to, improving school climate, reviewing school attendance patterns, developing incentives, and developing attendance contracts. Minutes of the meeting will be forwarded to the Supervisor of Compliance and will be shared with the Dickenson County School Board at its regularly scheduled meetings.

2. Each principal will ensure that teachers are accountable for the following:
  - a. checking the roll each day in every class;
  - b. communicating with a student's parents if poor attendance is affecting the student's progress and keeping a log of those contacts;
  - c. including student participation, which may be affected by attendance, in their student evaluation procedures;
  - d. offering vital, stimulating instruction each day which necessitates and encourages student attendance.

#### **Attendance Awards for the School Year**

1. **Perfect Attendance** – Student is present every day with no more than eight excused check-ins or checkouts during the school year.
  2. **Excellent Attendance** – Student has three or fewer absences with no more than six excused check-ins or checkouts for the school year.
  3. **Outstanding Attendance** – Student has six or fewer absences with no more than six excused check-ins or checkouts for the school year.
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Adopted: June 27, 2012

## ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS

### (Grades 9-12)

Attendance on a daily basis is a mandatory requirement for all students. The Code of Virginia §22.1-254, requires that all children who have reached their fifth birthday on or before September 30th and who have not yet reached their eighteenth birthday must attend school. This requirement does not apply to any child who has obtained a high school diploma, its equivalent, or a certificate of completion or who is exempted pursuant to the provisions of the law.

When a student accumulates more than six (6) unexcused absences in an academic year the attendance officer/superintendent's designee will enforce the provisions of the Code of Virginia §22.1-258 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 §16.1-228 or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to §18.2-371 or §22.1-262, as described in File: JED, of the Dickenson County Public Schools Policy Manual.

#### Absences

Students are expected to be in school every day. Parents/Guardians are expected to contact their child's school on the day of the child's absence to inform the school of the absence. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the date of such appointments is known. When notification is made, the parent/guardian need not contact the school on the first day of the absence. **For any reason, documentation providing the date(s) of and reason(s) for the child's absence(s) is required from the parent/guardian within three days of the child's return to school.** The purpose of this documentation is to determine whether or not the student's absence is excused or unexcused. This documentation will be maintained until the end of the school year.

#### Excused Absences

Dickenson County Public Schools defines excused absences in support of the mandatory attendance law. The following conditions provide the only acceptable reasons for a student's absence from school.

*Illness* - When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness, a note written by the parent or a physician documenting the illness will provide evidence of the illness for the school.

*Prearranged Appointments* - For appointments with the court, social services or other state agencies and appointments with health care providers, official documentation must be presented to the school.

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*Religious Observances* - Absences as a result of observances of religious holidays should be prearranged by the parent, who is responsible for notifying the child's school of the religious holiday(s) to be observed.

*Extenuating Circumstances* – Unforeseeable or unpreventable absences as determined by the school administration.

*Exceptional Circumstances* - The principal may approve prearranged absences for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interests of the student and his/her family. Prior to the student's absence, the parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form.

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The school may require terms of compliance which the student must meet prior to the principal's approval of the Request of Approval of Exception to Attendance. Required terms of compliance may include, but are not limited to, timely completion and submission of make-up work and assignments, a relevant journal, and/or a related project.

No more than five (5) days may be approved by the principal for exceptional circumstances during a school year. For requests of more than five days, the request must be endorsed by the principal and approved by the superintendent/designee.



*Field trips and school related activities*- Days missed due to principal approved student participation in school related activities will not be counted as an absence.

### **Excessive Excused Absences**

Eight (8) or more excused absences within a semester are considered excessive and may require a physician's note or other official documentation to excuse subsequent absences. When a student accumulates eight (8) or more excused absences within a semester, the student may be referred to the Student Attendance Review (SAR) committee. The SAR committee will confer with the parents/guardians to determine the circumstances surrounding the absences and develop a corrective action plan as appropriate. Interventions may include, but are not limited to, parent conference, referral to guidance counselor, attendance contract, or referral to the Supervisor of Compliance.

### **Unexcused Absences**

It is assumed that an unexcused absence will represent a deliberate attempt by a student or his/her parents to avoid the duty of attending school; therefore, one (1) point for each unexcused absence in each class will be deducted from the student's final average at the end of each nine week grading period. A student, for example, that has a final average of 93 (A-) and 4 unexcused absences in first block at the end of the first nine weeks would receive a final grade of 89 (B).

Excessive unexcused absences will be handled as described in the *Compulsory Attendance Procedures* found in File: JED, of the Dickenson County Public Schools Policy Manual.

### **Suspensions**

For absences because of a suspension, the parent will be notified of the suspension and the date when the student will be expected to return to school. The student must return to school on the indicated date.

### **Make-up Work**

When students are absent, (this includes unexcused absences and suspensions), an opportunity to make up work will be provided. Make-up work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction.

Students will be expected to make up work for all classes missed within five (5) days of returning to school. Extenuating circumstances may be considered in extending the time limit.

### **Tardiness/Check-outs**

A student arriving late to school or leaving early from school will only be excused for the following reasons; illness, prearranged appointments, family death or emergency, religious observances, or other extenuating circumstances.

Any combination of three (3) unexcused tardies to school or check-outs from school will count as one (1) unexcused absence for the purpose of supporting the mandatory attendance law and attendance regulations.

Any combination of ten (10) unexcused tardies or check-outs will result in a referral the SAR committee. The SAR committee will confer with the parents/guardians to determine the circumstances surrounding the unexcused tardies or unexcused check-outs and develop a corrective action plan as appropriate.

### **Homebound Instruction**

In the event a student develops a medical condition which would result in prolonged absence from school, the student may be a candidate for Homebound Instruction. Students approved for Homebound Instruction are considered present for attendance purposes. For more information concerning Homebound Instruction, please contact Mrs. Denechia Edwards, Supervisor of Special Education, P.O. Box 1127, Clintwood, Virginia, or (276) 926-4643.

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The SAR committee will meet a minimum of once a month and will promote the three A's through, but not limited to, improving school climate, reviewing school attendance patterns, developing incentives, and developing attendance contracts. Minutes of the meeting will be forwarded to the Supervisor of Compliance and will be shared with the Dickenson County School Board at its regularly scheduled meetings.

2. Each principal will ensure that teachers are accountable for the following:
  - a. checking the roll each day in every class;
  - b. communicating with a student's parents if poor attendance is affecting the student's progress and keeping a log of those contacts;
  - c. including student participation, which may be affected by attendance, in their student evaluation procedures;
  - d. offering vital, stimulating instruction each day which necessitates and encourages student attendance.

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Adopted: June 27, 2012