

SPECIAL SERVICES

Admissions, Residency, and Attendance

Student Attendance at School

This policy supersedes Policy 2232.2.

I. PURPOSE

To establish policy regarding student attendance and school attendance procedures.

II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE LAST PUBLICATION

- A. Section III. clarified excused absences, unexcused absences, and releasing students.
- B. Section IV. changed "Alternative Attendance Procedures" to read "Alternative Attendance Procedures for Secondary Schools" and rewrote section for clarification.

III. ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Every student must attend school during prescribed hours.

A. Excused Absences

An excused absence is one for which parents or guardians have prior knowledge, consent, and/or legitimate reason. Legitimate reasons may include: illness of the student, death in the family, doctor or dental appointment, observance of a religious holiday, suspension except for certain violations as provided in the current version of Regulation 2601, Student Responsibilities and Rights, or another reason acceptable to the principal or his or her designee. The principal or his or her designee determines whether or not absences will be excused and may require a physician's note in cases of chronic or long-term illness. Parents or guardians and students are encouraged to prearrange excused absences when possible.

B. Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence is one for which the parent or guardian does not have prior knowledge, consent, and/or legitimate reason. Examples of reasons that are not justified and will result in an unexcused absence include: family and/or student vacations, child care situations, nonschool-related activities, missed school bus, or other reasons unacceptable to the principal or his or her designee. This definition holds for all day and period absences.

When students are absent without prior communication between the parent or guardian and the school, school personnel will notify the parent or guardian by phone or electronic communication and take appropriate action based on the individual

circumstances. After two unexcused absences, a conference may be requested with the parent or guardian.

After the fifth unexcused full-day absence, the school will refer the student to the attendance officer, who will contact the parent or guardian to notify him or her of the absences and the consequences of continued absences, obtain and document the explanation for prior unexcused absences, and develop a plan to resolve the nonattendance. If the student has an additional day of unexcused absence after contact with the parent or guardian, a conference will be scheduled with the school staff members, the attendance officer, the student, the parent or guardian, and, if appropriate, a community services provider no later than 15 days after the sixth absence. If a further unexcused absence occurs, the attendance officer will file a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court that the student is a child in need of supervision or services and/or will institute proceedings against the parent or guardian as described in Section 22.1-258 of the Code of Virginia.

C. Releasing Students

A principal shall not release a student during the school day to any person not authorized to assume responsibility for the student. All students, including declared 18-year-olds, must comply with established release procedures.

IV. ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

A. Approval of Alternative Programs

Secondary schools may seek approval for alternative attendance programs by submitting requests to the Division Superintendent or his or her designee for approval and concurrence by the School Board. Requests should be submitted prior to July 1 of the year of planned implementation. A request must contain the following:

1. Written request from the principal.
2. Documentation of concurrence of the faculty, the student government, and the families with students in the school.
3. Concurrence of the Division Superintendent or his or her designee and the School Board.

B. Development of Alternative Programs

The minimum requirements of the Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-258, and the guidelines contained in Section III. Attendance Requirements and Procedures, must be incorporated into any proposed alternative program. The proposal also must address the following:

1. Course completion and credit requirements.
2. Makeup work.

3. Home-school communication regarding absences.
4. Exemption for religious holidays, suspensions, illness, and school-related activities.
5. Procedures for verification of chronic or extended illness.
6. Assistance for students with attendance problems.

C. Periodic Review of Alternative Programs

Schools that have established alternative attendance programs must provide a process for review and reaffirmation of the program every three years. The review must include a survey of the faculty and the families with students in the school and the continued concurrence of the principal and the student government. Documentation of the affirmation must be submitted to the Division Superintendent or his or her designee and the School Board.

If continuation of the alternative program is not affirmed by a majority of both the faculty and the families with students in the school responding to the survey, adjustments to the alternative program shall be made in accordance with the survey results, or the systemwide procedures shall be reinstated.

Legal References: Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-254
Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-258 through 22.1-269
8 VAC20-110-100

See also the current version of: Regulation 2240, Parent Participation and Decisionmaking
Regulation 2234, Student Absences and Attendance
Regulation 2235, Releasing Students for Special Instruction
Regulation 2601, Student Responsibilities and Rights
Regulation 2604, Rights of Adult Students

Policy

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