

## **SPECIAL SERVICES**

### **Admissions, Residency, and Attendance**

#### **Student Absences and Attendance Regulations**

This regulation supersedes Regulation 2234.5.

#### **I. PURPOSE**

To establish systemwide attendance standards and procedures and to establish guidelines for adoption and review of alternative attendance programs.

#### **II. SUMMARY OF CHANGES SINCE LAST PUBLICATION**

- A. Section III.B. changed “aid in solutions to these problems” to read “support effective communications and intervention planning” and added “appropriate” before school system resources.
- B. Section IV. clarified school attendance as required by law, and outlined in the Code of Virginia.
- C. Section IV.A. clarified absentee and early release records.
- D. Section IV.B. clarified parent or guardian explanation of absence.
- E. Section IV.C. clarified excused absences.
- F. Section IV.D. clarified reasons for unexcused absences; and removed the credit forfeiture provision for three unexcused absences.
- G. Added section IV.E., Mandatory Withdrawal.
- H. Added section IV.F., Late Arrivals.
- I. Section IV.G. references to denying credit for certain make up work for credit were removed. Teacher and student responsibilities for makeup work were clarified.
- J. Added section IV.H., Releasing Students.
- K. In section V., “Alternative Attendance Programs” was changed to read “Alternative Secondary Schools Attendance Programs.”
- L. Section V.B. deleted credit forfeiture and positive reinforcement of exceptional attendance, and added course completion and credit requirements.

- M. In section V.C., the word children was changed to students, and cluster superintendent was changed to Division Superintendent and School Board.

### **III. ATTENDANCE STANDARDS**

#### **A. General Requirements**

Regular attendance is necessary for maximum student achievement in school. In addition, punctuality and dependability in meeting assigned responsibilities are personal behavior habits valued in our society. To help students develop desirable behavior patterns, as well as maximize their classroom learning, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) requires that students be punctual and regular in school class attendance.

#### **B. Resource Assistance**

Whenever attendance problems exist, appropriate school system resources shall be made available to support effective communication and intervention.

### **IV. ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

School attendance is required by law, as outlined in the Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-254. Absences and tardies will be addressed by individual interventions with progressive consequences for students. Teachers are required to record class or daily attendance. Each student absence for all or any part of the school day shall be supported by a valid excuse. FCPS recognizes the relationship between attendance and learning.

#### **A. Absentee and Early Release Records**

Principals shall arrange to have a list of each school day's absentees prepared no later than the first hour of the school day in elementary schools, and later in the day for middle and high schools.

All schools shall establish a system for administrative follow-up of absences. In elementary schools, follow up with parents or guardians, via telephone or other communication, should occur within the first hour of the school day. Parents or guardians of secondary school students should be notified of unexcused absences or need for follow up as early in the day as possible.

When a student leaves the school premises during regular school hours for any reason, parents or guardians must provide advance notice and permission. Parents or guardians of elementary students must sign the school release log. Parents or guardians of secondary students must arrange for early release through the school attendance office and comply with release procedures.

#### **B. Parent or Guardian Explanation of Absence**

When a student has been absent from school for any reason other than for a school-sponsored activity and the parent or guardian has not contacted the school, an explanation for the absence is required. The parent or guardian must send verified communication to the principal or his or her designee citing the reason(s) for the

absence to the principal or his or her designee no later than two days following the student's return to school.

Any person who knowingly and willfully causes a child to be absent from school without justification is in violation of the Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-265.

**C. Excused Absences**

An excused absence is one for which parents or guardians have prior knowledge, consent, and/or a legitimate reason. Legitimate reasons may include: illness of the student, death in the family, doctor or dentist appointment, observance of a religious holiday, suspension except for certain violations as provided in the current version of Regulation 2601, 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.

**D. Unexcused Absences**

An unexcused absence is one for which the parent or guardian does not have prior knowledge, consent, and/or a 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, missed school bus, nonschool-related activities, or other reasons unacceptable to the principal or his or her designee. This definition holds for all day and period absences.

When a student is 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 absences after contact with the parent or guardian, a conference will be scheduled with school staff members, the attendance officer, the student, the parent or guardian, and, if appropriate, a community service 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.

**E. Mandatory Withdrawal**

In order to comply with state recordkeeping requirements, students shall be withdrawn from FCPS student membership rolls after 15 consecutive days of absence regardless of whether their absences are excused or unexcused. Withdrawn students are not

excused from mandatory school attendance requirements and are expected to reenroll as soon as possible. Students who withdraw to attend a non-FCPS school should notify FCPS as soon as possible.

**F. Late Arrivals**

Any student arriving after the official start of the class or school day will be considered late. Records regarding tardiness will be maintained and appropriate discipline imposed for recurring tardiness.

**G. Makeup Work**

Students are fully responsible for completing any missed assignments. Teachers may help the student and parent or guardian identify missed work but are not obligated to provide makeup assignments for unexcused absences.

**H. 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.

**V. ALTERNATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS ATTENDANCE PROGRAMS**

**A. Approval of Alternative Programs**

Secondary schools, in accordance with the current version of Policy 2232, 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 herein Section III., Attendance Standards, 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. Exemptions 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 Reference: Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-254  
Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-258  
Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-259  
Code of Virginia, Section 22.1-265  
8 VAC 20-110-100

See also the current versions of: Policy 2232, Student Attendance at School  
Regulation 6510, Accounting Procedures—Membership and Attendance Records  
Regulation 2240, Parent Participation and Decisionmaking  
Regulation 2412, Full Schedule Requirements for Students  
Regulation 2604, Rights of Adult Students  
Regulation 2601, Student Responsibilities and Rights Booklet