

## **STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS**

### **I. Student Attendance Policy**

Student attendance is a cooperative effort and the Regional 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. Failure to comply with this requirement within three (3) days of the return to school will result in the absence being permanently coded as unexcused. Absences are excused for the following reasons:

funeral, illness (including mental health and substance abuse illnesses), injury, legal obligations, medical procedures, suspensions, expulsions, religious observances, and military obligation

and are included in the student handbook located on the school's website.

The director 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 director's regulations include procedures for excusing students who are absent by reason of observance of a religious holiday. Such regulations will 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 director or the director's designee. A full time student is defined as one actively enrolled and participating in 7 out of 8 periods per semester.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit in any way the authority of any attendance officer or the director 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 director, director'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 director or director's 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 director or director'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, either the director or director'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/her 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 attendance officer or director or director's designee 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 director or the director's designee may seek immediate compliance with the compulsory school attendance laws. The attendance officer, with the knowledge and approval of the director, 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 Va. Code § 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 director 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, the attendance officer reports to the director the number of pupils by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled pursuant to Part II (B) above. The director or director's designee shall compile and provide this information to the local divisions annually.

### V. Dismissal Precautions

Director or director's designee 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 director 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 the school.

Adopted: June 12, 1997  
Amended: November 10, 2016  
Amended: September 14, 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.: Pol 3013      Driver Education  
              Pol 8002      Student Conduct