

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. All parents/guardians should inform the school regarding all absences. Absences for which the school receives no information are considered unexcused. Excused and unexcused absences are defined in the Regulation JED-R.

A reasonable effort shall be made to contact a parent/guardian of each absent student every day, and to obtain an explanation for the student's absence, where there is no indication that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence. A log will be kept of call attempts.

Parents of students who are absent must provide a valid note stating the reason for absence upon returning to school or at least within 24 hours of the first day absent. 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. Secondary students shall be scheduled for a full school day unless they are enrolled in a cooperative work-study program. All other exceptions to a full day schedule must be approved on an individual basis by the superintendent or designee.

High school students may spend a maximum of 180 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". Early intervention with the student and parent or parents takes place for repeated unexcused absences.

A. Responsibilities

Parent/Guardian- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to:

- facilitate communication by providing accurate information to the school staff regarding an emergency telephone number and current mailing address;
- notify the school staff of any change of pertinent information; and,
- promote the proper attendance of their child by adhering to the Madison County Public Schools attendance policies and supporting school officials in their efforts.

Student- It is the student's responsibility to:

- be present at school every scheduled school day for the entire day unless meeting the criteria for an excused absence.

School – It is the responsibility of the school to:

- attempt to make contact with the parent/guardian whenever their child is absent from school; and,
- document that a reasonable effort to contact parents was made. The documentation of each accumulated absence shall be the responsibility of the school. Late arrivals (tardies) and early dismissals will also be documented by each school. The determination of excused or unexcused will be in accordance with state and county policy. The principal or designee is to enforce and implement the Madison County Public Schools attendance policies and regulations and apply them to all students and parents.

B. School Attendance Regulations for Parent-Excused Absences

A student is allowed up to ten parent/guardian "excused absence" notes. Upon the tenth absence that is excused by the parent/guardian without third party documentation (doctor, dentist, therapist etc), a documented reasonable effort of contact by the principal or designee, will be made either by telephone, email, postal mail, school conference or home visit. The principal will require that any subsequent absences will need third party documentation in order to be excused. All absences not properly documented will be considered unexcused, and the unexcused absences policy and regulations will be implemented.

C. Compulsory School Attendance Procedures for Unexcused Absences

a. Upon Fifth Unexcused Absence

If (1) a pupil 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 pupil'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 principal's designee shall make a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent in person, through telephone conversation, or through the use of other communication devices to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. The school, principal or principal's designee, 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 student's nonattendance.

b. Upon Additional Absences Without Parental Awareness and Support

If the pupil is absent for more than one additional day after direct contact with the pupil's parent and school personnel have received no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the student's absence, the school, principal or principal's designee shall schedule a conference with the pupil, the pupil's parent and school personnel. Such conference may include the attendance officer and other community service providers to resolve issues related to the pupil's nonattendance. The conference shall be held no later than 10 school days after the tenth absence of the pupil, regardless of whether his parent approves of the conference. The conference team shall monitor the pupil's attendance and may meet again as necessary to address concerns and plan additional interventions if attendance does not improve. In circumstances in which the parent is intentionally noncompliant with compulsory attendance requirements or the pupil is resisting parental efforts to comply with compulsory attendance requirements, the principal or principal's designee shall make a referral to the attendance officer. The attendance officer shall schedule a conference with the pupil and pupil's parent within 10 school days and may (i) file a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations district court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code § 16.1-228 or (ii) institute 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 to comply with the provisions of this policy. In the event that both parents have been awarded joint physical custody pursuant to Va. Code § 20-124.2 and the school has received notice of such order, both parents shall be notified at the last known addresses of the parents.

D. Family Travel

The school division recognizes the occasional need of parents/guardians to have their children be absent from school due to travel for an out-of-town family emergency or family vacation. Prior approval by the principal or designee is required for these absences to be considered for being marked as excused, in part or as a whole. Principals may place requirements upon students to complete missed assignments before such absences will be excused.

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 students by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled pursuant to Part II (C) 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 student. Students are released only on request and authorization of parent or guardian. The superintendent establishes procedures for release of students 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 when a student's parent or guardian requests an early dismissal.

Adopted: November 13, 2017

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Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-227.1, 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 Ref.: IGAJ Driver Education
JED-R Guidelines for School and Class Attendance
JFC Student Conduct
JFC-R Standards of Student Conduct