

STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS

A. Generally

The administration and staff of the Charles City County Public Schools believe that regular attendance is valuable and critical to each student's academic achievement and personal success. Each parent or guardian having charge of a child within the compulsory attendance age shall be responsible for the child's regular and punctual attendance at school as required under provisions of state law. Students attending the Charles City County Public Schools are encouraged to attend school and class every day as there is a direct relationship between poor attendance and class failure. Students who have good attendance usually achieve higher grades, enjoy school more, and are likely to be more successful at the conclusion of their school careers than students who have poor attendance records.

Every teacher in every school in Charles City County shall keep an accurate daily or class record of attendance of all assigned students. Teachers are urged to stress the importance of regular attendance to their assigned students. Each meeting of the class should be planned so that regular attendance is a necessity if the student is to complete satisfactorily the requirement of the course. Excessive absenteeism from a class will then result in poor or unsatisfactory grades because of inability of the student to compensate fully for the class activities which were missed.

B. Attendance Expectations

To benefit maximally from the instructional program, students will be expected to arrive at school on time and maintain at least 95% attendance in a class in order to receive credit. Students shall attend school for a full day unless otherwise excused. Secondary students shall be scheduled for a full day unless they are enrolled in a cooperative work-study program. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee must approve all other exceptions to a full day schedule on an individual basis. A student who is approved to participate in a school-sponsored field trip or other approved activity shall be counted as in attendance.

A student who is tardy to school or leaves early from school, regardless of whether it is excused or not, may disrupt the learning environment for all students. For elementary and middle students, the principal or his/her designee must approve tardies to school or early dismissals from school. Any three unapproved tardies to school or early dismissals from school in a nine-week grading period will result in parental notification by telephone or written communication. Tardies to school or early dismissals from school may be considered excused for the same reasons as are listed for absences in Section C.

If a student misses 15 consecutive days, he/she is automatically withdrawn from the roll. However, if such student is subject to the compulsory attendance law, action must be taken

by the school to enforce compulsory attendance. If a student is irregular in attendance due to illness, the school may request a doctor's statement. If the excused absence extends beyond 15 days because of illness, homebound instruction may be available.

The possibility of child neglect on the part of parents or guardians should be investigated in cases of habitual absenteeism.

All students must be present at school for the entire first period class in order to be marked present for the day.

C. Absences

There are times when a student is unable to attend school. Each parent or legal guardian having charge of a child enrolled in Charles City County Public Schools shall inform the school each day his or her child is absent all or part of any school day. School will make reasonable effort to contact a parent or legal guardian of each absent student every day and a log will be kept of contact attempts.

Absences that may be considered excused upon receipt of a valid written note or other form of notice approved by the school from the parent or guardian on the day of the student's return to school include:

1. Death in the family;
2. Bona fide religious observances;
3. Medical and dental appointments;
4. Personal illness (for an accumulation of days for illness beyond three days, the school will require a note from the physician. The days do not have to be consecutive.);
5. Other serious personal or family problems; and,
6. Extenuating circumstances which are determined by the school administration or the school administration and the superintendent.

The parent will be required to verify any absence within twenty-four hours or the absence will be classified as truancy and disciplinary action will be taken. For a day of absence for which there is no valid written excuse, the principal or his/her designee will make a reasonable effort to contact the parent or guardian directly. For repeated absences, the principal will initiate corrective actions as stated in Section D.

The code of Virginia (22.1-258) requires that the school notify the parent when a student is absent from school.

D. Excessive Absences

Excessive absences are those which cause a student's attendance, at any point during the year to be lower than the expectations stated in Section B. A student who displays a pattern of excessive absences, tardies or early dismissals, whether excused or not, may be referred to the principal or his/her designee who shall investigate and recommend appropriate corrective action, including a conference with the parent or guardian, alternative placement or referral to the appropriate agencies, such as the Department of Social Services (TANF) and juvenile and domestic relations court.

For any student whose absences exceed, during a semester, more than five (5) school days or five (5) class periods of a course scheduled daily or the equivalent class periods of a course on the block schedule, the principal or his/her designee may require a conference with the parent or guardian to discuss the implications for learning and achievement, the consequences of failure to attend school, and any corrective actions to be made. Further the principal or his/her designee may require documentation beyond the written excuse.

Any student whose absences exceed, during a school year, ten (10) school days in a year or ten (10) class periods of a course scheduled daily or five (5) class periods for a block class will not receive credit for the course unless the student completes tutoring or an alternate-learning module as prescribed by the principal or his/her designee. The principal, in consultation with the Superintendent, may require the parent, guardian or student to pay for the costs associated with tutoring or the alternative-learning module. The principal may waive this requirement upon consideration of extenuating circumstances. The consequence complies with the State Standards for Accrediting Public Schools that defines the standard for awarding course credit for graduation. For elementary and middle school students, excessive absences may be a factor in decisions regarding a student's promotion to the next grade.

Unexcused Absences. For any student whose absences are in excess of five (5) scheduled days for the school year and there is no indication that the parent is aware of and supports the student's absence, the principal or his/her shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent directly to obtain an explanation and explain the consequences of non-attendance. A conference will be scheduled and a plan will be developed jointly with the parent and student to resolve the student's non-attendance. If the student is absent for an additional day after the direct contact and again the parent is unaware, a conference shall be scheduled with the parent and student within ten (10) days and held no later than 15 days after the sixth absence. Upon the seventh absence of which the parent is unaware, the principal or his/her designee will notify the Intervention/Prevention Coordination to take the actions prescribed by VA Code § 22.1-258. Actions include either or both of the following: (i) filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the student is a child in need of supervision or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to Va. Code §§ 18,2-371 or 22.1-262.

In addition to any other actions taken pursuant to this policy, if a student driver who is under 18 years of age has 10 or more unexcused absences from school, or tardies to 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.

E. Consequences to Unsatisfactory Attendance

The parent and the student will be informed, in writing, when the student has three (3) absences from school or in a class. If the student reaches five (5) absences from school, or in a course during a semester, the parent and student will receive a second notification to indicate that the student is in jeopardy of failing for the school year. Immediately upon the sixth (6) absence during the first semester and the tenth (10th) absence for the year, the parent/guardian will be sent information about the waiver process and change in grade if the waiver is granted. * Parents should be aware that the 11th absence from school will result in failure for the school year. To apply for a waiver, the student and his/her guardian must follow the appeal process which takes place in a student/parent/school attendance meeting. When considering whether to grant a waiver, the student's entire attendance history for that semester must be considered.

To apply for a waiver, the student and his/her parent/guardian must follow the appeal process.

F. Make-up Work

It is the student's responsibility, or the responsibility of the parent or guardian of an elementary student, to communicate with the teacher on the day he or she returns to class to schedule the make-up of missed work. Students are expected to make up all work missed immediately upon return to class and in a time period not to exceed five (5) days from return to school. Students in grades three through 12 who turn in missed work after the established time period will receive a grade no higher than a 69; a student whose work earns a grade below 69 will receive the grade earned. The principal or his/her designee, however, may consider extenuating circumstances in extending the time limit.

G. Attendance Committee

To review requests for extensions of absences from school, each school will establish an attendance committee. The committee will consist of the principal or designee, Intervention/Prevention Coordinator, school nurse (if appropriate), teacher and/or department chair, school counselor and school psychologist (if appropriate).

When there is a request to do so, an Attendance Committee will review all cases exceeding the above mentioned five (5) days per semester or ten (10) days per year in order that consideration be given to those students who may have extenuating circumstances. The Attendance Committee shall have the power to waive this directive if warranted by the circumstances. Students and parents should note that the allocated days of the absence are to be used **only** as indicated in Section C above and Guideline 8 that follows:

The following guidelines will be used in implementing the policy:

1. A copy of the policy will be sent to each student's home at the beginning of each school year.
2. A copy of the policy and guidelines will be given to each student by his or her homeroom teacher.
3. Whenever an enrolled student is absent from school, the office will make contact with the home. Students are required to attend school for a full day unless otherwise excused. After every three (3) absences from school, the parent(s) or guardian(s), will be notified in writing. **THE ABSENCES DO NOT HAVE TO BE SUCCESSIVE ABSENCES.** (Absences from class refer to absences other than for cutting class.) The teacher must turn in daily absentees to the office.

If an attempt is made to contact the parent(s) or guardian(s) by phone and the contact is unsuccessful, the person trying to make contact must then send a letter. The person who makes the contact with the home must keep a record of the contact whether it is done by phone or in writing. In cases where written contact has been made, a copy of the correspondence MUST be kept on file.

DURING EACH CONTACT, THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN MUST BE INFORMED ABOUT THE LOSS OF CREDIT OR POSSIBLE GRADE RETENTION IF MORE THAN THE ALLOCATED DAYS ARE MISSED FROM SCHOOL/CLASS DURING A SEMESTER/YEAR.

When the student has missed the fifth (5th) day from a semester course or the tenth (10th) day from a year-long course, a letter will be sent from the principal reminding the parents or guardians of the consequences and inviting them to discuss the seriousness of the problem.

4. A student who is absent must bring a note, upon return, signed by a parent or guardian. The note should include the reason(s) for the absence as well as the date(s).

5. Students are expected to make up all work missed because of absence. It is the student's/parent's responsibility to make arrangements with the grade/subject teacher to make up work within five (5) days after returning to class. Students who fail to make the necessary arrangements will forfeit their rights to make up work and will receive a failing grade for any such work that was missed.
6. School sponsored or sanctioned activities are exempt from, and will not count toward, the total absences. Even though students may be absent because of school-related activities, they are still expected to make up any work that is missed.
7. Students will lose credit in a course after exceeding ten (10) unexcused days.
8. The five (5) days of absence per semester or the 10 days of absence per year allowed in the Policy are to take care of parental excuses (notes) for:
 - a. Death in the family;
 - b. Bona fide religious observances;
 - c. Medical and dental appointments;
 - d. Personal illness (if over three days, the school may require a note from the physician. The days do not have to be consecutive.);
 - e. Other serious personal or family problems; and,
 - f. Extenuating circumstances which are determined by the school administration or the school administration and the superintendent.
9. After a student has missed more than the allocated days, a final notice will be sent to the parents or guardians. The parent(s) or guardian(s) may request that an Attendance Committee meet by calling the principal within two weeks of the mailing date of failure notice. Extenuating circumstances, with written documentation presented at a conference by the parent, MAY be reviewed by the Attendance Committee to determine if consideration for changing the grade needs to be given.
10. NONE OF THE ALLOCATED DAYS ARE TO BE USED AS SKIP DAYS.
11. A student who is suspended from school for a disciplinary problem for any number of days will have that number charged against the total absences. If suspension for any number of days causes the student to reach or pass the 10th day, the student will be in jeopardy of failing the course or grade. (Refer to item # 8 of the policy.)

H. Tardiness

Tardiness is to be avoided at all cost. Being tardy to class means loss of valuable instruction for each student. If a student is tardy during the homeroom period or after homeroom, an

excuse written and signed by the parent or guardian is necessary and must be presented to the school administration office. A student who is tardy to school will be marked tardy to school only and not his first period class. Consequences will be applied as stated in the Student Code of Conduct, Section I.

1. Tardies Verification: Student must bring a note signed by a parent/guardian or doctor in order for the tardy to be “excused.”
2. Early Dismissal Verification: A note is required from the parent/guardian, including a daytime phone number, to verify the reason or dismissal.

Parents must be communicated with immediately when tardies and early dismissals are negatively affecting a student’s progress.

Any tardiness to class during the day will be unexcused unless a certified pass has been signed by the school administration.

High School and Middle School students who report to school after 7:30 a.m. and Elementary School students who report to school after 8:45 a.m., must report to the main office to sign in. Students will be issued an admit slip and will then report to the assigned class. Teachers will not accept students to class after 7:35 a.m. at the Middle School and High School and after 8:50 a.m. at the Elementary School, unless they have an admit slip from the office or have otherwise been notified by the administration to admit the student.

The attendance aide will notify the administrators when a student has accumulated three unexcused tardies to school or class. A student who is tardy to school will be marked tardy to school only and not his/her first period class. The administrator will notify the student and his or her parents/guardian of the consequences of a fourth unexcused tardy. Furthermore, the attendance aide will notify the administrators of all subsequent tardies.

Tardiness Consequences:

Elementary School, Middle School/High School:

1st-3rd Tardies	Level 1 and parents notified by telephone or email contact.
4th Tardy	Level 2 and parents notified.
5th Tardy	Overnight suspension and parent/legal guardian must accompany the student back to school.
6th Tardy	Students will be referred to the Intervention/Prevention Coordinator.

Note: Tardies will re-set at zero at the completion of the first semester.

Student Drivers: High school students who drive to school and are tardy to school 3 days per semester will have their driving privileges revoked for two weeks. Student drivers who are tardy to school for 5 days per semester will have their driving privileges revoked for one month upon accumulation of the fifth tardy. The process will repeat itself if student drivers continue to accumulate tardies.

I. Class Attendance

A student must be present for two-thirds (2/3) of a class period to be counted as present for the class. Therefore, students will need to be present for sixty (60) minutes in the block classes. In a class that meets daily, students will need to be present for forty (40) minutes.

All students must be present at school for the entire first period class in order to be marked present for the day.

Any student on the school grounds is expected to be in his or her assigned class. Any student caught elsewhere without an authorized excuse is subject to suspension. No student should leave from any class without a pass.

J. Student Incentives for Good Attendance

Semester Exams: With the parent's approval, a senior who maintains an "A" average and who misses no more than two (2) days* during a semester, may be exempt from the semester exam. **Passing the End of Course (EOC) SOL test may be used to exempt students from taking the semester exam with teacher approval.**

NOTE: Any student who is exempt may take the semester exam with the option of the exam not having any adverse impact on the semester grade.

NOTE: Any student who has been suspended or placed in ISS during a semester will not be exempted from taking the semester exam for that semester.

Any student absence resulting from the student's observance of a religious holiday shall not be counted as an absence for purpose of this policy provided that the parent/guardian of the student notifies the principal in writing in accordance with Board policy. This notification shall specify:

- a. The date(s) of the absence(s).
- b. The name of the religious holiday; and
- c. That the absence is due to the exercise of the student's bona fide religious beliefs.

AP EXAMS: There will be no exam exemption for the students enrolled in AP courses. Students enrolled in AP courses are required to take the exams.

K. Attendance Policy Appeal Process

The following guidelines shall apply for recommending appeals to the attendance policy:

1. An "Attendance Appeal Request Form" for an attendance waiver of the attendance policy must be submitted to the principal by the parent/guardian of the student in question no later than the last ten (10) school days prior to the end of the semester. **No appeal request will be accepted after last day of the semester.**
2. If the 11th absence, or the block scheduling equivalent, occurs within the last ten (10) days of the first semester, the request of the waiver must be submitted to the principal within 24 hours. If the 11th absence, **or the block scheduling equivalent**, occurs within the last ten (10) days of the second semester, the request for the waiver must be submitted to the principal within 24 hours.
3. The principal will meet with the student and parent to consider all the evidence and documentation of extenuating circumstances. The student and parent will be notified within five (5) school days. A completed, signed "Attendance Appeals Request Form" will be forwarded to the appropriate committee member.
4. Within five (5) school days, the parent/guardian may appeal the principal's decision by completing the appropriate section of the appeal form and returning the form with the required documentation to the principal.
5. Within five (5) school days, the principal shall forward all information to the School-Court Liaison's office at the School Administrative Office.
6. Within five (5) school days of receipt of the appeals form, the principal will schedule a meeting of the Attendance Policy Appeals Committee to consider the appeal.
7. The principal will notify all parties of the appeal meeting.
8. The Committee shall consist of members or their designees as delineated in Section G.
9. The parent and student will receive written notification of the committee's decision within five (5) school days of the hearing.
10. The decision of the committee will be final.