

# Student Attendance



Attending school each day and being on time to school are extremely important to a student's academic development and achievement. Every day a student is in school is an opportunity to learn, build relationships, and access needed support. Too many absences can cause children to fall behind and make it harder to learn to read. **Students are expected to attend school at least 95% of the time. During a 180-day school year, that means students should miss no more than nine days.**

Each parent/legal guardian is responsible for regular and punctual attendance of any child in their charge within the [compulsory age for school attendance](#). Emancipated students are responsible for their own regular and punctual attendance. Parents/legal guardians and emancipated students are expected to work cooperatively with school personnel to correct attendance issues.

## What are the procedures if a student is absent?

The parent/guardian is requested to notify the school of the student's absence on the day of the absence. If the parent/guardian fails to do this, a reasonable effort will be made by the school to verify the absence. When an absence occurs, the parent/guardian is requested to provide the school written or oral verification explaining the reason for the absence within two days of the student's return to school. Written verification should be signed by the parent/guardian and be accompanied by documentation from a physician when possible.

**What is the difference between an excused absence and an unexcused absence?**

Any absence will be considered unexcused until appropriate verification is received and reviewed by the school’s attendance secretary.

[Dinwiddie County School Board Regulation JED-R](#) defines excused and unexcused absences. Examples are shown in the chart below.

Examples of Excused Absences	Examples of Unexcused Absences
Personal illness/Mental health	Student employment or work schedule
Death in immediate family/household	Lack of transportation or missed bus
Extenuating circumstances	Oversleeping or general tiredness
Religious holiday	Taking care of siblings
Professional/Legal Appointments	Out-of-school suspension
School-sponsored/related activities	Activities unrelated to school/Vacations

**\*\*We will only excuse 2 personal illness days per nine weeks with parent notification.**

**\*\*Extenuating circumstances must have prior approval from the principal.**

**\*\*Professional/Legal/Doctor Appointments require a note from the doctor, lawyer, etc.**

**\*\*3 days will be allowed for a death in the immediate family or household**

**What are the procedures if a student has excessive unexcused absences?**

It is extremely important that any student absence only be for a valid reason (as outlined in the example above) and that **the parent/legal guardian submits the appropriate documentation either in advance of, during or directly following the absence so that it can be documented as excused.**

If there is a medical or disability-related reason for a student’s absence(s), the parent/legal guardian should communicate with support staff at the school, such as the school nurse, school counselor, teacher or administrator so that the appropriate supports can be put into place to assist the student.

The state requires that schools take steps to support students who have excessive unexcused absences. DCPS will take the following actions when a student has accumulated the corresponding number of unexcused absences for the full school day.

The following actions will be taken at the time of the corresponding absence:

3 unexcused absences-A school official will contact the parent/guardian to review the attendance policy.

4 unexcused absences-The attendance team will meet with the student and/or parent.

5 unexcused absences-An attendance contract will be developed and implemented.

6 unexcused absences- A Plan will be developed with parents/guardians to determine if more supports and/or interventions are needed.

7 or more unexcused absences- The school social worker will complete an Affidavit of Compliance for a Child in Need of Supervision (CHINS) petition or a petition and order for parental participation against the parent/guardian as described in § 22.1-258 of the Code of Virginia.

### **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.

[Virginia Code §46.2-334.001](#)

**What if my child is late to school?**

When late arrival is necessary, written verification stating reasons for such shall be presented upon arrival. Tardiness will be considered excused for reasons consistent with those for which an excused absence is granted. Students are not considered tardy when the bus arrives late. In the event the school officials determine it necessary, steps shall be taken to verify an excuse for absence, late arrival, or early dismissal. A pattern of absences, late arrivals, or early dismissals may be questioned by school officials when there is reason to suspect forgery or a misrepresentation of facts exists.

**What if my child needs to leave school early?**

When early dismissal is necessary, written verification requesting such shall be presented to the attendance secretary. Early dismissal shall be considered excused for reasons consistent with those for which an excused absence is granted.

\*We understand that there will be times when late arrivals or early departures are unavoidable due to doctor's appointments. We ask that these only occur when absolutely necessary. Every minute of the instructional day matters for students. When they are not there, they miss valuable information, instruction, and work.

# Attendance Tips

## **For Parents/Legal Guardians:**

- ✓ Develop a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- ✓ Talk about the importance of regular attendance and about how your child feels about school.
- ✓ If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors or other school staff for advice on how to make him/her feel comfortable.
- ✓ Keep a chart at home to record your child's school attendance. At the end of the week, talk with your child about what you see.
- ✓ Avoid missing school unless your child is truly sick. If chronic illness is a challenge, seek help from your doctor or speak to the school nurse.
- ✓ Develop a backup plan for getting to school if something comes up. Ask a family member or friend for help.
- ✓ Seek support from school staff or community groups to help with transportation, health problems, or no safe path to school.
- ✓ Arrange medical appointments when school is not in session.
- ✓ Avoid extended vacations when school is in session.

## **For Students:**

- ✓ Going to school every day develops a skill that will help you do well in class and with getting and keeping a job in the future.
- ✓ Sometimes it's tempting to skip or stay home because you're tired or don't understand what's going on in class. But, missing a day only makes school harder because you aren't learning something that will help you understand an upcoming lesson.
- ✓ One day matters. By missing just one day every two weeks, you would be on track to miss two full weeks in a semester or nearly a month of school for the year.
- ✓ Chronic absences increase the risk of becoming a dropout and affect your ability to earn a living. A high school graduate makes, on average, \$1 million more than a dropout over a lifetime.
- ✓ When you're not in school, teachers and administrators notice because they care about you and want you to be successful.
- ✓ If you're having trouble getting to school—and have challenges such as transportation, bullies, etc.—tell someone, such as a teacher, school counselor or your family.

Additional Information:

For more information about attendance policies and regulations in DCPS, see [Dinwiddie School Board Policy JED](#) and [Dinwiddie School Board Regulation JED-R](#)



# ATTENDANCE MATTERS!

Many absences, even in Kindergarten, can cause children to fall behind in school.



Students who miss 10 days or more during a school year are less likely to graduate from high school.



Missing just a day or two each month can make it harder to learn to read.



Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves.



Being in school every day will enable children to do well in school and graduate from high school ready for work or college.



