

## ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS

### I. ATTENDANCE RECORDING DURING THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

- A. Student attendance will be recorded in each class daily, whether teaching and learning occurs via in-person instruction or distance learning. While maintaining consistency with Policies JEA and JED, attendance recording procedures may be modified from traditional methods in the distance-learning environment. Such changes:
- Comply with Superintendent’s Memo #188-20, *Tracking Attendance for the 2020-2021 School Year*;
  - Align with the Virginia Department of Education’s (VDOE’s) return to school plan implementing Virginia’s phased reopening of K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
  - Track attendance regardless of the instructional delivery model to promote the well-being of students through *meaningful interaction* (two-way engagement between a student and staff that allows feedback/input from the student).
- B. For the 2020-2021 school year:
- The compulsory student attendance requirements of Va. Code § 22.1-254 remain in effect;
  - Attendance will be recorded in PowerSchool for each class regardless of whether the student participated in distance learning or in-person instruction on that day;
  - **Distance learning–synchronous:** Teachers will record attendance based on the student’s presence during live, virtual instruction;
  - **Distance learning–asynchronous:** Teachers will record attendance based on student engagement (daily progress via ACPS distance learning platforms and/or assignments, or through teacher-student interaction). Progress, completion and/or submission of student assignments will be documented for participation and attendance;
  - Specific attendance modifications for students with 504 plans or IEPs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis;
  - In accordance with Section V. of this regulation, parents/guardians will be notified when students are absent (without prior parent/guardian notification to the school) and reminded of the need to contact the school as soon as possible;
  - Excused absences will continue to be requested/reported through traditional channels by contacting the school as outlined in Section V. of this regulation;
  - Absences due to technology systems failures (inability to log in to Zoom, loss of internet connection, etc.), will be converted from an unexcused absence to an excused absence once a parent/guardian has contacted the school and given an explanation for the absence in accordance with Section V. of this regulation; and
  - Student support teams and administrators, in consultation with teachers, will provide students who demonstrate a pattern of repeated absences with appropriate interventions. Such interventions are outlined in Policy JED, and may include student and parent/guardian conferences, referrals to community resources, engagement with the school’s Student Support Team, referrals to substance abuse supports, etc. Interventions are individualized based upon the reasons for and

frequency of the nonattendance.

**Unless modified above, all other provisions of this regulation remain in effect for the 2020-2021 school year.**

## II. PURPOSE

These regulations outline:

- Alexandria City Public Schools' Attendance Policy;
- The regulations by which the school division monitors and responds to truant activity; and
- The consequences of truant behaviors.

## III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Instructional school day** includes the entire day and/or periods within a regularly scheduled school day for an individual student.
- B. **Excused absence** is an absence of an entire instructional day with a reason, as outlined in this regulation, provided to the school administration by the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian should provide the school administration with the reason for the nonattendance prior to the absence or no later than 3 days following the absence.
- C. **Unexcused absence** is an absence where (i) the student misses his/her scheduled instructional school day in its entirety and (ii) no justification has been received by school personnel within three days of the absence, or the parent/guardian provides a reason for the absence that is not outlined in this regulation. The school administration may change an unexcused absence to an excused absence when the parent/guardian has provided an acceptable justification.
- D. **Unverified absence** is one for which there has been no contact from the parent/guardian. Unverified absences will be converted to unexcused absences if no contact is received within 3 days of the absence.
- E. **Verified absence** is one for which a parent/guardian has contacted the school and given an explanation for the absence.
- F. **Chronic absence** is the accumulation of excused/unexcused absences that occur for any reason to a total of ten percent or more of the school year.
- G. **Truancy** is the accumulation of five or more unexcused or unverified absences within an academic year. The Commonwealth of Virginia's truancy laws specify that all children must attend school every day.

- H. **Tardy** is a term used to describe arriving at school, or to a classroom, after the start of the day or class period.
- I. **Attendance conference** is a face-to-face meeting or an interaction that is conducted through the use of communication technology. A conference must be held after the sixth unexcused absence, and must involve, at a minimum, a school administrator, the parents/guardians, and the student, where appropriate. The conference may also include the school counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, intervention specialist and community representatives, if appropriate, for resolving issues related to nonattendance and revisions to the current attendance plan if necessary.
- J. **Attendance plan** is a plan developed jointly by a school representative, such as a school principal or designee, and the student to resolve the student's nonattendance and engage the student in regular school attendance. An attendance plan shall be developed if the student has five unexcused absences. Interventions and/or meetings are documented in the student information system.
- K. **Court referral** means filing a complaint to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court after direct contact has been made with the student's parents/guardians and the student has a seventh unexcused absence. Documentation of interventions regarding the student's unexcused absences, such as copies of the attendance plan, documentation of conference meetings, and compliance with § 22.1-258 of the Code of Virginia must be provided to the intake worker.
- L. **Multi-disciplinary team** is a school-based team that may be convened to review student records and to participate in prevention, early intervention, and provision of support services to address excessive absences, including school-based case management. These services should address academic, social, emotional, and familial issues in order to improve regular school attendance. Team members may include, but are not limited to, the following: an administrator, school counselor, school social worker or school psychologist, special education and general education teachers, and attendance officer. Community providers may also attend, as appropriate.
- M. **Parent/guardian** means the parent(s), legal guardian(s), legal custodian(s), or other person(s) having legal control or charge of the student.
- N. **Principal or designee** means the school principal, other administrator or other school official designated by the principal to meet the requirements of this regulation.

#### IV. ATTENDANCE CODING

Alexandria City Public Schools strictly adheres to the Commonwealth of Virginia's Compulsory Attendance Law (22.1-258) and the Virginia Administrative Code (8VAC20-730-10), to establish and enforce attendance guidelines. These attendance regulations implement Policy JEA (Compulsory Attendance).

One of the following Attendance Codes shall be entered for each student in every period, every school day.

CODE	ATTENDANCE CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS
<b>Default Codes</b>			
No Code Required	PRESENT	Automatic attendance default code  Student is present in class and arrived on time.	This is the default attendance code that every student is assigned. The teacher must change the student record in Power-Teacher if the student is not present. If the teacher does not take attendance, then the code of “present” will serve as the student’s attendance code for that day or for the class.
A	UNVERIFIED	Default code for absent	This code is used when a teacher takes attendance and indicates the student is not in class. It indicates that the school division has not received any information about the absence from the family or other authorized sources.
<b>Absence Codes</b>			
D	COURT/LEGAL	This code signifies that an official court/legal document or verbal verification from a court representative has been received.	To be used when there is official verification that supports the student’s participation in a court hearing or other mandated, legal activities.
F	FAMILY EMERGENCY	This code signifies that a certified death of loved one has occurred or that a family medical emergency or displacement has been verified.	Parent/guardian must notify the school and provide documentation for such absences. This code is not used to excuse family vacations.
G	SHELTERCARE	This code is used when students are attending school during the day at the Sheltercare program per court placement.	
H	HOMEBOUND	This code is used when a student is approved to receive homebound instruction services following receipt of	The school counselor and homebound coordinator will facilitate this process and designate the start and end dates

		<p>the medical certification of need per state regulations. Homebound instruction may be rendered due to the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic Physical or Mental Illness</li> <li>• Hospitalization</li> <li>• Maternity/Paternity Leave</li> <li>• Extenuating Critical Circumstances</li> </ul>	<p>of homebound services. Decisions regarding homebound instruction will be communicated to the school registrar and related school support team members.</p>
I	ILLNESS	<p>Parent/guardian must provide verification (verbal and written) of a student’s illness.</p> <p>This code is also used when official documentation is submitted by a medical facility, to verify absences related to any physical or mental health condition.</p>	<p>When a student is unable to attend school due to illness, the guardian or physician must submit documentation verifying the incident prior to the absence, or provide written verification of the illness no later than 3 days following the absence.</p> <p><b>Chronic/Extended Illness</b> When students are pervasively absent due to a chronic illness or disability, official documentation from a physician must be presented to the school.</p> <p>When illnesses occur in frequent or excessive patterns, it is deemed best practice to consult with the school nurse, administrator, and relevant school support team members to implement appropriate interventions of support, including a Health Care Plan.</p>
P	IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION	<p>This code is used when a student is absent from class because the school administration has assigned the student an in-school suspension (ISS) or to an Alternate Instructional Support (AIS) Center.</p>	<p>The parent/guardian will be notified of the suspension start and end date. The student must return to class on the date indicated by the administration.</p>
R	RELIGION	<p>This code includes any</p>	<p>Students are excused from class</p>

		absences affiliated with students' professed faith-based practices or religious traditions.	when absences are affiliated with students' professed faith or religious traditions.
U	UNEXCUSED	<p>Unexcused absences include instances in which the student misses a class or an instructional school day without justification or verification. Examples may include family travel, loitering, missing the bus, or oversleeping.</p> <p>Family vacations during the school year will be marked as unexcused absences.</p>	An unexcused absence includes instances in which the student misses a class or an instructional school day in its entirety and no indication has been received by school personnel within 3 days of the absence. This also includes instances in which the parent/guardian provides a reason for the absence that is not outlined in this regulation. The school administration may change an unexcused absence to an excused absence when the parent/guardian has provided an acceptable justification, per Virginia attendance codes.
V	SCHOOL ACTIVITY	School activities include approved and verified absences that may include activities related to campus sports, band, ROTC, choir, or other academic clubs sponsored by an official ACPS staff member. This code also includes excused absences resulting from student meetings with school administration and other staff members during the school day.	Activity sponsors or department chairs must verify and communicate activities to designated teachers and staff who are responsible for managing student attendance records before, or immediately following the school activity.
S	SUSPENDED (Out of School)	This code is used when a student is absent from class because the school administration has assigned a suspension out of school.	The parent/guardian will be notified of the suspension/exclusion start and end date. The student must return on the date indicated by the school administration.
<b>Tardy Codes</b>			
T	TARDY	Tardies include any unexcused or unverified late arrival to class.	This is the default code entered by teachers to indicate that a student was tardy to class without

			justification or verification.
L	EXCUSED TARDY	Verification can include written or verbal communication from a doctor’s office, court, school staff, community agency representative or parent/guardian.	Excused tardies may include instances caused by medical illnesses, court proceedings, school sponsored activities, ACPS transportation services related delays, or inclement weather related conditions. Excused tardies do not include instances such as missing the bus, oversleeping, or other personal anecdotal accounts.

**V. PROCEDURES**

**A. Attendance Record Keeping**

Principals shall arrange to have verified absences entered into the student information system no later than the first hour of the school day in elementary schools, and by the end of first period in middle and high schools. All assigned classroom teachers, school registrars, or administrative assistants assigned to manage attendance shall code student attendance each class, each day. School Administrators are responsible for monitoring this activity.

Parents/guardians will be notified each day, via phone and email where available, when students are absent from school without parent/guardian notification, and reminded of the need to contact the school as soon as possible. Parents/guardians of secondary students will be notified each evening if the student was absent from any classes without parent/guardian notification, and will be asked to contact the school. Student attendance records may be amended from an unverified absence to an excused or unexcused absence after parent/guardian contact has been made with designated school personnel. A parent/guardian must contact the school within 5 schools days to request changes to student records.

1. Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Attendance Documentation Regulations

The VDOE is the primary agent responsible for monitoring ACPS student attendance data and interventions, particularly in cases of chronic absenteeism. Per the VDOE, ACPS’ method for calculating/defining all-day absences, particularly at the secondary level, will include instances where a student misses *all* periods within a given school day.

The VDOE will collect information regarding unexcused absences at the following intervals:

Fall semester: October 1

Spring semester: March 31  
End of the school year: June 30  
Summer semester: August 30

VDOE accountability measures will include stringent monitoring of the Division's electronic documentation of attendance interventions in three specific areas:

- Documentation of an Attendance Plan Code.  
This field must be completed at the 5th unexcused absence.
- Documentation of an Attendance Conference Code.  
This field must be completed at the 6th unexcused absence.
- Documentation of a Court Referral/Complaint Proceedings Code  
This field must be completed at the 7th unexcused absence.

2. Documenting Ten Day “No Show” Procedures in September

The Virginia Administrative Code (8VAC20-730-30) states:

“Data collection shall begin on the first day students attend for the school year. Each school division shall provide student level attendance data for each student that includes the number of unexcused absences in a manner prescribed by the Virginia Department of Education. A student's attendance is cumulative and begins on the first official day of the school year or the first day the student is officially enrolled. All nonattendance days are cumulative and begin with the first absence. For purposes of this data collection, truancy shall start with the first unexcused absence and will be cumulative.”

All students who are officially registered and actively enrolled in school division records should be counted as absent for nonattendance until acceptable verification stating otherwise is provided. Students who are absent due to extended vacations, overseas travel, and matters that are otherwise defined as “unexcused” shall be marked accordingly.

**B. Defining All-day Absences**

In compliance with the Virginia Administrative Code, ACPS calculates all-day absences at the secondary level to account for when a student misses *all* periods within a school day.

When a student engages in a pattern of unexcused absences for less than a full day, the school social worker, along with the parent/guardian and other school support team members, will develop a plan to resolve the situation as soon as possible. This includes:

- Conferences with the student, parent/guardian, and school staff;
- Development of a plan to remove any barriers to regular attendance, including facilitating connections to community resources and assistance; and
- If necessary, potential referrals to court services.



### C. Excused Absences

1. Per the Virginia Administrative Code (8VAC20-730-10), student absences may be excused, pending verification from the parent/guardian and/or another designated professional. Examples of excused absences may include, but are not limited to, the following conditions:
  - a. Medical Illnesses (Physical or Mental). A principal must request that documentation from a physician be provided after the student has accrued 3 consecutive absences or 10 or more absences within a given school year.
  - b. Medical and dental examinations.
  - c. Observance of a religious holiday.
  - d. Student court hearings.
  - e. Students who have been approved to participate in school sponsored activities (inside and outside of the school building).
  - f. Students who have been assigned In-School (ISS), Alternate Instructional Support (AIS) Center or Out-of-School Suspension (OSS).
  - g. Family emergencies (loss of a loved one, unexpected residence dislocation, critical injuries to family members, etc.). Parents/guardians are expected to plan extended travel and vacation days around ACPS scheduled breaks and approved holidays.
  - h. ACPS transportation services related delays.

#### 2. Pre-Arranged Excused Absences

*Pre-Arranged Absences Request Forms* may be submitted in specific situations. Examples of activities that may constitute a pre-arranged excuse absence include, (with documentation), but are not limited to:

- a. Visitation with family members deployed in the U.S. Military and Armed Forces
- b. Visitation with incarcerated caregivers
- c. Appointments with military recruiters
- d. Appointments with college/university admissions departments
- e. School students, ages 12 and under, who cannot be left at home alone/unsupervised, while a parent/guardian is on professional travel for employment related activities.

Pre-Arranged Absences Request Forms must be submitted at least 5 days prior to the scheduled absence and advance approval of each pre-arranged absence must be granted by the school administration. Documentation of a student's participation in the above noted activities must be provided no later than 3 days after the event is complete.

#### 3. Medical Illnesses (Physical or Mental)

- a. Parents/guardians may initially inform school staff of student illnesses via verbal or written notification. A principal must request that documentation from a physician be provided after the student has accrued 10 or more absences within a given school year. When a student is unable to attend school due to illness, the guardian or physician must submit documentation verifying

the incident prior to the absence, or provide written verification of the illness no later than 3 days following the absence.

- b. When illnesses occur in frequent or excessive patterns, school support team members may implement appropriate interventions of support, including a student Health Care Plan. A Health Care Plan should be considered after the student has accumulated 10 sick days within a school year.
- c. When students are absent for 3 or more consecutive school days due to illness, an official note from a physician must be submitted to the administrative assistant assigned to manage attendance. Failure to present a doctor's note after 3 consecutive sick days may result in an unexcused absence.

#### **D. Unexcused Absences**

Per the Virginia Administrative Code (8VAC20-730-10) an unexcused absence occurs when (i) the student misses his/her scheduled instructional school day in its entirety and (ii) no indication has been received by school personnel within three days of the absence, or the parent/guardian provides a reason for the absence that is not outlined in this regulation. A student is considered truant at the accumulation of five or more unexcused absences within an academic year.

##### **1. Consequences of Truant Behavior**

###### **a. Student Consequences**

- i. Loss of critical instructional time
- ii. Students may experience low academic achievement.
- iii. Students may experience feelings of isolation and disengagement.
- iv. Students may be officially withdrawn from school (after 15 consecutive days).
- v. Students may be referred to the Alexandria Court's Attendance Review Panel.
- vi. School Social Workers may file a CHINS (Child In Need Of Supervision) Petition with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court as defined in Virginia Code § 16.1-228 ,§ 16.1-241.2, 16.1-278.5 and 16.1-278.4 and may result in:
  - Students may be sanctioned to participate in juvenile probation monitoring and supervision.
  - Students may be sanctioned by the court to participate in community service projects.
  - Students may be sanctioned by the court to participate in mental health treatment.
  - The court may order placement in Alexandria Sheltercare Program of Northern Virginia or the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center.
  - Students may be placed outside the home with a relative, child welfare agency, private organization or facility, or in the care and legal custody of a social service agency.
  - The Court may suspend or revoke a student's driver's license.

###### **b. Parent/Guardian Consequences**

- i. Referral to the Alexandria Court’s Attendance Review Panel
- ii. School Social Workers may file a complaint to the Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court against a parent/guardian, pursuant to Virginia Code §§ 22.1-262, 16.1-228 , 16.1-241.2, 16.1-278.5 and 16.1-278.4, which may result in:
  - The parent/guardian may be sanctioned to participate in mental health treatment.
  - The parent/guardian may be sanctioned to pay excessive fines.
  - The parent/guardians may be sentenced to jail (when court orders are violated).
  - Children may be removed from the parents’/guardians’ physical care and may be placed outside the home with a relative, child welfare agency, private organization or facility, or in the care and legal custody of a social service agency.
  - Missed time from work/lost wages

**E. Early Release**

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

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 adult students age 18-years or older, must comply with established release procedures. Records of early release will be maintained. If school staff identify a pattern of early release from school, interventions may be required.

**F. Tardiness**

Any student arriving after the official start of the class or school day will be considered tardy. When students arrive tardy to school they must adhere to the appropriate school-based check-in procedures, as outlined by the school administration. Records regarding tardiness will be maintained in student records. Although excessive tardiness to school is not specified in the Virginia Compulsory Attendance Codes, it is a critical factor that impacts the overall academic experience and success of students. Tardiness encompasses any variation of time that extends beyond the principal’s documented start time for the school day or class period. Parents/guardians are expected to provide verbal and/or written notification to designated school personnel each time a student is tardy to school.

Examples of **excused tardies** may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Medical and dental examinations
2. Student court hearings

3. Students who have been approved to participate in school-sponsored activities (inside and outside of the school building)
4. Critical or isolated family emergencies (death of a loved one, unexpected residency dislocation, critical injuries to family members, etc.) Parents/guardians are expected to plan extended travel and vacation days around ACPS scheduled breaks and approved holidays.
5. ACPS transportation services related delays

Tardies to class during the school day will be excused at the discretion of the principal or designee. When students have accrued an excessive number of unexcused or unverified tardies, the school social worker, along with the parent/guardian and other school support team members, must develop a plan to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

#### **G. Fifteen Consecutive Absences**

Any student who is absent from school for 15 consecutive days will be officially withdrawn from school, per the compulsory attendance expectations noted in the Virginia Code 22.1-254. In such cases, the school principal, or designee, must alert parents/guardians in writing at such time that a student is withdrawn from school records. Students who have been withdrawn from ACPS due to 15 consecutive absences are still required, per Virginia Code 22.1-254, to attend another school every day and will be subject to intervention for violation of such laws. When students have been withdrawn from school due to accrual of 15 or more consecutive days absent, the school support staff must make every effort to ensure that the following interventions have occurred:

1. School support staff must re-engage the student and parent/guardian to confirm the whereabouts of the youth.
2. School support staff must confirm the educational plan for the student.
3. School support staff must collaborate with the Alexandria Court Services staff regarding interventions and sanctions.

#### **H. Family Emergencies**

Students are excused from school when serious family emergencies arise. Examples of such emergencies may include, but are not limited to:

1. Death of immediate or close family members;
2. Impending or immediate loss of housing and family dislocation/displacement;
3. Severe medical trauma of immediate family members; or
4. Other; including unanticipated/required travel related to the adoption of a child.

In cases of frequent or extended absence due to a family emergency, (more than 2), additional documentation must be provided no later than 3 days after the absence has occurred. In addition, students who are absent for 3 or more consecutive school days to attend a funeral must provide proof of funeral services (e.g., obituary, funeral program, etc.) no later than 3 days after the absence has occurred.

Family emergencies do not include family travel, vacation activities, non-ACPS sponsored recreational activities, or personal appointments to accompany parents/guardians. Exceptions may include activities related to visitation with family members deployed in the U.S. Military and Armed Forces, or visitation with incarcerated caregivers.

**I. School Activities**

School activities include approved and verifiable activities related to campus sports, band, ROTC, choir, or other academic clubs sponsored by an official ACPS staff member. Activity sponsors or department chairs must verify and communicate activities to designated teachers and staff that are responsible for managing student attendance records before, or immediately following the school activity. Additional examples of excused school activities may include (with documentation):

1. School based meetings with ACPS staff (with documentation)
2. Appointments with military recruiters (with documentation)
3. Appointments with college/university/other school admissions departments (with documentation)

**J. Family Travel**

Parents/guardians are expected to plan extended travel and vacation days around ACPS scheduled breaks and approved holidays. Students who are absent due to vacations or family travel will be mark as “unexcused,” even if it is prearranged.

**K. School Transfers**

All students assigned to a designated school per a transfer (administrative, programmatic, sibling, non-resident employee student) must adhere to all ACPS attendance regulations regarding absences and timeliness to school.

**L. Homelessness**

Students experiencing homelessness or long-term precarious housing situations are not excused from compulsory attendance laws. Students are expected to attend school while working with their assigned school social worker and/or Division homeless education liaison to address factors that may be impacting permanent shelter and basic family needs.

Established: July 6, 2018  
Revised: September 7, 2018  
Revised: September 10, 2020

Legal Refs.: Code of Virginia, §§16.1-241.2, 16.1-254, 22.1-254, 22.1-258, 22.1-259, 22.1-262, 22.1-265.

8 VAC 20-110-100.  
8 VAC 20-730-10.  
8 VAC 20-730-30.

*Tracking Attendance for the 2020-2021 School Year*, Superintendent's Memo #188-20, (July 24, 2020).

*Recover, Redesign, Restart 2020*, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), (Revised July 2020).

*Phase Guidance for Virginia Schools*, Virginia Department of Health (VDH), (July 1, 2020),  
<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/governor-of-virginia/pdf/Final-Phase-Guidance-for-Virginia-Schools-6.9.20.pdf>.

Cross Ref.: JEA Compulsory Attendance  
JED Student Absences/Excuses/Dismissals