

Prince George's County Public Schools

Ernest Everett Just Middle School

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Student Attendance, Absence and Truancy



Why is School Attendance Important?

Students who attend school regularly have been shown to achieve at higher levels than students who do not have regular attendance. This relationship between attendance and achievement may appear early in a child's school career.

Any absence, whether excused or not, denies students the opportunity to learn in accordance with the school's instructional program, but students who miss school are sometimes further excluded from learning opportunities as a consequence of chronic absenteeism.



POLICY AND BACKGROUND

POLICY: All students are expected to attend school regularly in accordance with state laws and regulations.

BACKGROUND: Each child who resides in Maryland and is **five (5) years old or older, and under 18** shall attend a public school during the entire school year unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in public schools to children of the same age, or is exempted by law. If the child is homeschooled, the PGCPS Homeschool Office must be notified and provided the required documentation for the exemption.



Truancy and Absenteeism

- Truancy refers to a student's accrual of *unexcused* absences from school.
- Unlike truancy, absenteeism refers to *both* excused and unexcused absences. A student who is absent for more than 10% of school days, whether excused or unexcused, is considered to be a chronically absent student.



Chronically Absent

Definition - Chronically Absent: A student is chronically absent if the student has been enrolled in a school for at least 10 days and is absent **10%** or more of the school days while enrolled at that school. For example, a student who is enrolled in a school for 30 days, and who is absent three of those days 30 days, is considered chronically absent. A student can be counted as chronically absent in multiple schools, within the State, in the same year.



Habitual Truant

Definition - Habitually Truant: A student is habitually truant if the student has been enrolled in a school for 91 or more days in a school year and is *unlawfully absent* from school for a number of days or portion of days equal to or in excess of **20%** of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year. *There may be legal consequences when a student is habitually truant.*



Chronic vs. Habitual

Chronic Absences

When a student misses **10%** of school membership days **whether lawful or unlawful** absences, including suspensions.

Habitual Truant:

Any student who is ***unlawfully absent*** from school **more than 20%** of any grading period, semester or school year is considered a **Habitual Truant**.



Parents Reporting Absences

Reporting Absences Parents/Guardians

Parents or guardians **must notify the school in writing** (**email** to teachers, letter, or electronic note via the school's website when their child is absent ***no later than three days after their return to school.***



LAWFUL ABSENCES



Lawful Absence - Illness of Student

Lawful Absence: The principal may require a physician's certificate from the parent/guardian of a student that is reported absent for illness at least three **(3) school days**. If absences reach six **(6) days**, a physician's certificate will be required.



Lawful Absence - Mental Health Day

Lawful Absence: Students may receive an excused absence one (1) day of absence in each semester for a student's **mental health needs**. Written notification from the parent is sufficient documentation provided immediately after return.

- Student is allowed to make up all missed assignments. Teachers may exempt or modify assignments.
- Upon return to school, the student may meet with the professional school counselor to check-in



Lawful Absence - Death in the Family

Lawful Absence: Death in the immediate family – **i.e.** parent, guardian, brother, sister, grandparent or extended family, and close non-relatives.

- a) Four school days shall be considered excused upon death of an immediate family member, extended family, and close non-relatives.
- b) The principal may grant extra days for extenuating circumstances.



Lawful Absence - Military Families

Lawful Absence: Prince George's County Public Schools supports the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. A lawful absence shall be granted to students while visiting with a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat supporting posting. Accordingly, students must receive missed homework assigned during the time they were absent. *Military orders may be requested by the school.*



Lawful Absences - Health Exclusion

Lawful Absences: Health exclusion, which *includes immunizations* and other health related communicable or contagious diseases. Students with a documented medical condition that adversely places them at-risk for contracting a potentially life-threatening medical condition- e.g., Coronavirus - shall be considered lawfully absent when absent from school.



More Lawful Absences

- Hazardous weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
- Court Summons
- Lack of authorized transportation.
- Observance of a religious holiday.
- State emergency.



Lawful Absence - Other Emergency

Lawful Absences: Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgement of the Chief Executive Officer or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school **including civil engagement, college visits and interviews (limited to three days).**



Lawful Absence - Suspensions

Lawful Absence: Suspensions are considered as lawful absences. For all suspensions, teachers are required to provide make-up work and assignments to all students, unless other educational alternatives are provided.



Lawful Absence: Makeup Assignments

Students who are considered lawfully absent from school or a class will have the opportunity to make up missed assignments.

- a. Teachers are required to provide make-up work (within 48 hours) for students who are lawfully absent, including suspensions, and who have not qualified for home and hospital teaching.
- b. For all suspensions, teachers are required to provide make-up work and assignments to all students, unless other educational alternatives are provided.
- c. Students who are lawfully absent may not be penalized for work not provided by the school for periods of such lawful absence.
- d. The number of days allowed to make up missed work will be equivalent to the number of days of lawful absences. The timeline will begin when the teacher provides the student with the assignments. Students who fail to complete missed assignments within the allotted time will receive 0 (zero) for each assignment.



UNLAWFUL ABSENCES



Unlawful Absences

Unlawful Absences: Students absent from school for any reason other than those defined as a lawful absence.

1. Students who are removed from school by their parent(s)/guardian(s) for more than ten (10) consecutive days for extended travel and not enrolled in another school or educational program may be withdrawn, then re-enrolled upon their return.
2. After ten (10) school days of consecutive unlawful absences, in which the student's whereabouts are unknown, the student shall be exited from the school.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Lay out clothes and pack backpacks the night before.
- Keep your child healthy and make sure your child has the required shots.
- Develop backup plans for getting to school if something comes up.
Call on a family member, a neighbor or another parent.
- Try to schedule medical appointments and extended trips when school isn't in session.
- If your child seems anxious about going to school, talk to teachers, school counselors and other parents for advice on how to make your child feel comfortable and excited about learning.



Source: www.attendanceworks.org



Please Remember To:

- Provide proof of a bona fide residence in Prince George's County;
- Provide required immunization documents to the school system;
- Notify the school whenever child is absent;
- Ensure child (5-18 years old) attends school regularly;
- Assume primary responsibility for the discipline of the child;
- Model cooperation with school and transportation personnel;
- Respond to school personnel requests for information and meetings;
- Update contact information annually.





KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Key Points to Remember

- Being present in school when information is delivered is critical to your child.
- When your child misses one day or one lesson, that means when he/she returns, your child may have missed something critical to his/her understanding of the next several days of instruction.
- If children don't show up for school on a regular basis, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.



“When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.” – Attendance Works



Thank you for all you do!

***And remember....You are an important
part of our attendance team!***