

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1.0 Purpose

The Mercer County Board of Education firmly supports the concept that regular attendance in school correlates with success in the classroom and helps create a positive, safe environment conducive to learning. Regular school attendance is essential if students are to develop responsibility, self-discipline, and good work habits. Programs of study are delivered by building each day's lesson on work previously completed. After excessive school absence, a student loses the benefit of daily classroom discussion, laboratory work, teacher guidance and motivation. It is essential that students attend school regularly and that they are on time for classes.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 **Attendance:** For statistical purposes, attendance will be reported and aggregated to the nearest half day according to the following definition:
 - 2.1.1 A full-day attendance means being present at least .76 of the school day.
 - 2.1.2 Half-day attendance means being present at least .50 of the school day.
- 2.2 **Excused Absences:** These absences are defined by West Virginia State Policy 4110.10, Section 4.
 - 2.2.1 Illness or injury of the student requiring physician's verification.
 - 2.2.2 Medical and/or dental appointment which cannot be scheduled outside the school day when the absence is verified in writing by the physician or dentist.
 - 2.2.3 Illness of student verified by parents/guardian not to exceed five (5) total days per semester. Principal or designee has discretion to accept more than 5 parent notes for illness.
 - 2.2.4 Illness or injury in family when student absence is verified as essential by physician.
 - 2.2.5 Calamity, such as fire in the home, flood, or family emergency upon approval by the school principal.
 - 2.2.6 Death in the family, limit three (3) days for each occurrence except in extraordinary circumstances. "Family" defined as mother, father, brother, sister,

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grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother's children, sister's children, student's child(ren), spouse or any person living in the same household.

2.2.7 School approved curricular or extracurricular activities. Activities may include educational travel and/or post-secondary visitations. Permission for these absences must be obtained from the principal prior to the scheduled visit. Documentation of attendance may be required upon completion of the visit.

2.2.8 Legal obligation with verification.

2.2.9 Failure of bus to run.

2.2.10 Observance of religious holidays.

2.2.11 Handicapped students' absences should be addressed in accordance with Policy 2419 Regulations for the Education of Exceptional Students, Section 1.10 Home/Hospital Instruction.

2.2.12 Absence related to military deployment of student's family.

When returning to school these absences must be confirmed with written verification from parents, guardians and/or doctors.

2.3 **Unexcused Absences:** All absences not covered as an excused absence.

2.4 **Tardy:** Failure of the student to be in the classroom, seated and prepared to receive instruction at the designated time. Tardies will be used for computing absences for determining student eligibility for perfect or faithful attendance awards, or any other attendance-related incentive award. Tardies will be recorded on the WVEIS by using a "TE" (Tardy Excused) or "TU" (Tardy Unexcused).

2.5 **Tardy Excused:** Tardies verified by medical or dental excuse OR by legal document indicating a court appointment. Principal has discretion to excuse a tardy.

2.6 **Early Dismissal:** Excused departure from school prior to the end of the instructional day, verified by parent and/or guardian for the purpose of the following:

2.6.1 Illness or injury of student.

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- 2.6.2 Parents are encouraged to schedule medical and/or dental appointments outside the school day. When appointments cannot be scheduled outside the school day, students are to bring appointment cards or note from the parent regarding such to the office before the instructional day begins.
- 2.6.3 Illness or injury in family.
- 2.6.4 Calamity, such as fire in the home, flood, or family emergency.
- 2.6.5 Death in the family.
- 2.6.6 Legal obligation with verification.
- 2.6.7 Observance of religious holidays.
- 2.6.8 For purposes of the Truancy/Truancy Diversion Program, three (3) unexcused early dismissals shall equate to one (1) unexcused absence.
- 2.7 **Referrals:** May be made to the Attendance Director via WVEIS reporting, written notice, e-mail or by telephone.
- 2.8 **Selected:** School field trips and/or school assembly programs which are curricular/academic related.

3.0 Procedures

- 3.1 **School Responsibilities - Elementary:**
 - 3.1.1 All parents will be provided a copy of the Mercer County Student Calendar which includes the county attendance policy (Mercer County File J-10).
 - 3.1.2 Each elementary school will have a school-based attendance committee consisting of the principal or designee, classroom teacher, and guidance counselor or other designee who collects classroom attendance data and makes appropriate referrals to the Student Assistance Team and/or county attendance director. The school-based committee's decision is final.
 - 3.1.3 Principals/designees shall contact parents by phone or by letter after three (3) days of absences, cumulative or consecutive.

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If a student accumulates five unexcused absences during a school year, the attendance director shall be contacted. The attendance director shall serve written notice to the parent or guardian. West Virginia Code §18-8-4

- 3.1.4 Counseling for problems related to attendance will be provided by the elementary Counselor. When appropriate, outside agencies may be utilized to assist with attendance related issues.
 - 3.1.5 Schools are encouraged to develop preventive and educative procedures including incentives for maintaining and improving attendance and reducing tardies. (Incentives may include, but may not be limited to prize drawings, student recognitions, and physical activity periods beyond PE or recess, etc.)
 - 3.1.6 When a student accrues ten (10) unexcused absences and/or tardies, the principal or designee may restrict the student from participating in selected school field trips and/or school assembly programs.
 - 3.1.7 When a student accrues ten (10) unexcused absences, that student may be referred to the Truancy/Truancy Diversion Program. For purposes of the Truancy/Truancy Diversion Program, three (3) unexcused tardies or three (3) unexcused early dismissals or a combination of the two, shall equate to one (1) unexcused absence.
 - 3.1.8 Referrals are made to the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) by the Attendance Director in consultation with the principal or designee.
 - 3.1.9 Parents of students in grades K through 5 who have accrued ten (10) or more unexcused absences are subject to educational abuse and neglect charges.
 - 3.1.10 If a Pre-K student accumulates five (5) unexcused absences during a school year, the parent shall be contacted by the principal or designee and required to attend an attendance conference. The purpose of the conference is to inform the parent that if the student accrues ten (10) unexcused absences, their child's seat in the Pre-K program shall be forfeited and given to the next child on the Pre-K waiting list.
- 3.2 **School Responsibilities - Secondary:**
- 3.2.1 All parents will be provided a copy of the Mercer County Student Calendar which includes the county attendance policy (Mercer County File J-10).

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- 3.2.2 Each secondary school will have a school-based attendance committee consisting of the principal or designee, a classroom teacher, and a guidance counselor, or other designee who collects classroom attendance data and makes appropriate referrals to the Student Assistance Team (S.A.T.) and/or county attendance director. This committee will review absences in relationship to the failure of a class. This committee's decision is final. An appeal about a driver's license may be made to the attendance director.
- 3.2.3 Each day the school will call the home of every absent student and document verification of illness, no response to call, etc.
- 3.2.4 After a student has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences, the parent shall be notified by telephone, mail, or home visit. Thereafter, conferences and/or counseling sessions will be scheduled if school personnel deem it necessary. When appropriate, outside agencies may be utilized to assist with attendance related issues.
- 3.2.5 In the case of five (5) unexcused absences of a student during a school year, the attendance director shall serve written notice to the parent, guardian, or custodian of such student. West Virginia Code §18-8-4
- 3.2.6 Any student at least fifteen (15), but less than eighteen (18) years of age, who is properly enrolled in a West Virginia public school, or a West Virginia resident enrolled in an Exemption K nonpublic school may request from the attendance director appropriate school system documentation of enrollment/attendance status. This documentation must be provided on a form approved by the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) or presented to the West Virginia Division of Motor Vehicles (WVDMV) when making application for, or reinstatement of, an instruction permit or license to operate a motor vehicle.
- 3.2.7 In accordance with the provision of Section 3 and 5, Article 2, Chapter 17-b of the West Virginia State Code, the WVDMV will deny a license or instruction permit for the operation of a motor vehicle to any person under the age of eighteen who does not present proof of graduation or enrollment in a secondary school.
- 3.2.8 No later than five (5) days following appropriate due process from the date of withdrawal, the attendance director shall notify the WVDMV of the withdrawal from school of any student fifteen (15) years of age, but less than eighteen (18) years of age, except as provided in West Virginia Code 18-8-11(d).

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- 3.2.9 For the purposes of this section, withdrawal from school shall be defined as more than ten (10) consecutive or fifteen (15) days total unexcused absences during a school year. If suspended, the WVDMV may not reinstate a license before the end of the semester following that in which the withdrawal occurred.
- 3.2.10 Schools are encouraged to develop preventive and educative procedures, including incentives for maintaining and improving attendance and reducing tardies. (Incentives may include, but may not be limited to prize drawings, student recognitions, etc.)
- 3.2.11 When a student accrues ten (10) unexcused absences, that student may be referred to the Truancy Diversion Program. For purposes of the Truancy/Truancy Diversion Program, three (3) unexcused tardies or three (3) unexcused early dismissals shall equate to one (1) unexcused absence.
- 3.2.12 Referrals are made by the Attendance Director in consultation with the principal or designee. Referrals are presented to the Mercer County Probation Office for processing.
- 3.2.13 Students who have previously not had a truancy case through Mercer County Circuit Court may be eligible to participate in Mercer Counties Truancy Diversion Program. West Virginia Code §49-4-702.
- 3.2.14 Students in grades six (6) through age seventeen (17) who have accrued ten (10) or more unexcused absences are subject to status offender charges.
- 3.3 School Responsibilities - Early Dismissal Procedures**
- 3.3.1 Doctor/Dental Medical Appointments: Students are to bring appointment cards or a note from the parents to the office before the instructional day begins on the day of their appointment.
- 3.3.2 Early Dismissal for Other Reasons: The parent will be responsible for any other dismissal during the normal school day. Any students leaving early must be signed out of school by the parent/guardian, or designee as indicated on emergency card (no phone release) unless authorized by the principal or designee.
- 3.3.3 Emergency Situations: The principal or his/her designee shall have the authority to dismiss a student early under emergency situations.

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3.3.4 Granting of Early Dismissals: Early dismissals for 3.3.1 or 3.3.2 will not be granted within the last thirty minutes of the instructional day. Early dismissals for emergency situations (see 3.3.3) during the last thirty minutes of the instructional day may be authorized at the discretion of the principal or designee.

3.4 School Responsibilities: Makeup Work/Instruction Time Requirements

3.4.1 Student shall be given the number of days missed plus one day to make up his/her school work unless other arrangements are made with the teacher(s).

3.4.2 If students fail to make up work within the designated time period, credit will be denied for that makeup work.

3.4.3 While it is the teacher's responsibility for makeup assignments to be made available in a timely fashion, it is the student's responsibility to obtain all makeup work from his/her teachers.

3.4.4 If a student is absent due to suspension, it is the student's responsibility to arrange to get his/her assignments before leaving the school or have his/her parent/guardian pick up his/her assignments during the suspension. Students who have been suspended shall have all assignments completed on the day they return from suspension, unless other arrangements are made with the teacher(s) or principal. Otherwise, credit for this work will be denied.

4.0 Administration

4.1 Maintenance of Records:

4.1.1 Accurate attendance records and related documentation shall be maintained for every student enrolled in public school.

4.1.2 An up-to-date daily attendance register/record of attendance for every student will be maintained by the teacher and on WVEIS.

4.1.3 When a student is not physically present in class he/she will be counted absent. Notes will be required before or after an absence and will be retained in the student's attendance file.

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- 4.1.4 Absences that result from school approved curricular/co-curricular activities, from failure of the bus to run/hazardous conditions; and from the suspension of a student due to a “Safe Schools violation” shall be considered “allowable deductions” and will not count against the school’s average daily attendance.
- 4.1.5 The Mercer County attendance director is instructed to follow state law in pursuing prosecution of the parent/guardian of a student of mandatory school age who is absent beyond the limits of these regulations.
- 4.2 **Exam Exemptions:** Since all students in the Mercer County School system, grades 9-12, are on the block schedule and a mid-term exam is required of all students, the following is provided:

Exemption from final exams: Final exam exemptions in all subject areas, except Algebra II, Biology, World History, and English 12, at the student’s home school will be granted under the following circumstances:

- 4.2.1 No more than one absence and a “C” average, unless the excused absences are a result of school-approved curricular or extracurricular activities or, in the case of students regularly transported by school bus, failure of the bus to run (see 2.2.7, and 2.2.9), or
- 4.2.2 No more than two absences and a “B” average, unless the excused absences are a result of school-approved curricular or extracurricular activities or, in the case of students regularly transported by school bus, failure of the bus to run (see 2.2.7, 2.2.9), or
- 4.2.3 No more than three absences and an “A” average, unless the excused absences are a result of school-approved curricular or extracurricular activities or, in the case of students regularly transported by school bus, failure of the bus to run (see 2.2.7, and 2.2.8).
- 4.2.4. Students who are exempt from the final exam will not have to report to school on the designated final exam days, but will be counted absent in the school’s official record.
- 4.2.5. Any student enrolled in courses which require end-of-course content exams will not be exempted from these exams.

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4.2.6. For courses eligible for exam exemption, students may make-up a previous class absence by attending their home school's before-school or after-school tutoring program. Each make-up session attended will equal one student absence per designated course. Each student make-up session assignment shall be communicated by the student using the student's home school form(s)/procedure(s) to the before-school or after school tutoring coordinator.

4.2.6.1 Assignments completed during the after-school tutoring program shall adhere to Section 3.4 School Responsibilities: Makeup Work/Instruction Time Requirements. If assignments do not meet the requirements in 3.4, students shall complete county approved test prep activities.

- 4.3 **Compulsory School Attendance Exemption:** This policy does not apply to students who are exempt from compulsory attendance under West Virginia Code §18-8-1.
- 4.4 **Homeless:** The Attendance Director shall serve as the liaison for homeless children and youth as defined in West Virginia Code §18-8-4.
- 4.5 **Policy Development:** This policy was developed through input from teachers, principals, attendance directors, central office personnel, parents/guardians and community leaders and shall be reviewed annually.

5.0 Severability

If any portion of this policy or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this policy.

Authority: W.Va. Constitution, Article XII, §2, and W. Va. Code §§18-2-5, 18-2-5a, 18-2-9, 18-5-13, 18A-1-1, 18A-5-1, 18-5-15, 18-8-1 through 18-8-10, and 49-4-702.

Source: Board of Education Minutes

Date(s): 02/25/82, 10/13/83, 8/24/99, 02/21/02, 02/26/02, 6/24/03, 6/17/04, 8/22/06, 2/27/07, 1/24/12, 7/16/13, 7/15/14, 9/25/18