

**BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY**

**INFORMATIONAL REPORT**

**RECOMMENDATION ON**

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE  
POLICY NO. 02-0001-000**

**APRIL 12, 2021**

**Background Information:**

The Board maintains a manual which sets forth the various policies of the Harford County Public Schools. The manual contains policies which are either required by federal and state law and regulation or which are, in the Board's judgment, necessary and appropriate for the school system to operate in a lawful, appropriate and effective manner. Included among such policies is that entitled:

02-0001-000 Student Attendance

**Discussion:**

The Code of Maryland Regulations ("COMAR") requires schools to have systems of information on student attendance. The Maryland State Department of Education ("MSDE") provides the Maryland Student Records System Manual that includes instruction to local school systems regarding the collection of this information. MSDE has revised the requirements for reporting attendance for full day, partial day and absences to align to federal definitions regarding chronic absenteeism.

As a result of the revisions made by MSDE, Mr. Bernard Hennigan, Executive Director of Student Support Services, reviewed the HCPS current policy entitled 02-0001-000 Student Attendance, and recommends the following changes to the policy to be in compliance with MSDE with regard to the reporting of student attendance.

- Students are recorded "Present," if the Student is in attendance for more than half of the time they are scheduled to be in attendance on a given day
- Students are recorded "Partial Day," if the Student is in attendance for 10%-50% of the time they are scheduled to be in attendance on a given day.
- Students are recorded "Tardy," if the Student is not present to school on time and present for more than 50% of their school day.
- Students are recorded "Early Dismissal," if the Student leaves prior to the end of the school day and in attendance for more than 50% of their school day.

**Attachments:**

1. Current Board Policy 02-0001-000 entitled Student Attendance.

2. Proposed, revised Board policy 02-0001-000 entitled Student Attendance.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

For the foregoing reasons, the Superintendent recommends that the Board review for approval at a subsequent Board meeting the following.

- Proposed revisions to policy 02-0001-000 Student Attendance.

POLICY TITLE <b>STUDENT ATTENDANCE</b>		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: <b>July 9, 1990</b>	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED: <b>December 17, 2018</b>	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: <b>STUDENTS</b>		

### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to set forth the position and criteria of the Board regarding student attendance.

### **II. Definitions**

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Absence – The failure of the student to be physically present in school/class or at a school-sponsored activity during the school day.
- B. Attendance – The act of being physically present at school or at activities that have been approved as part of the student’s instruction during the school day.
- C. Chronically absent – a year-to date absence rate of 10% or more, including both lawful and unlawful absences.
- D. Compulsory school age – Age required by the State for which a student must be enrolled in and attending public school or an equivalent approved education programs as set forth in Md. Code Ann., Ed. Art. §7-301.
- E. Extracurricular Activity – a school-sponsored activity that generally occurs after the regular school day is not graded and for which a credit is not earned, and is not described as a part of a course of study or subject offering in the course description guide, including, but not limited to, interscholastic sports.
- F. Lawful absence – an absence for any portion of the school day, under specified conditions that render the absence excused.
- G. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for a child:
  - 1. Biological parent – A person legally identified as the natural parent and who has not had parental rights terminated.
  - 2. Adoptive parent – A person who has legally adopted a child.
  - 3. Custodian – A person or an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of a child.
  - 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of a child.
  - 5. Caretaker – A person who is domiciled in Harford County and with whom a child resides who has a bona fide non-educational reason to reside with the caretaker.

6. Foster parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a State agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by Section 5-507 of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Annotated Code.
- H. School-sponsored activity – an event under the control and supervision of HCPS which is a component of instruction and which is not a regularly scheduled component of the student's school day.
- I. Tardiness – any time a student arrives at school after the official start of the school day or at class after the start of the class period.
- J. Truant student – a student who is absent from school or a portion thereof without lawful cause.
- K. Unlawful absence - an unexcused absence from school, or any portion of the school day or at a school-sponsored activity, for any reason other than those cited as lawful.

### III. Statement of Policy

- A. The Board is committed to the goal that students shall attend school and classes regularly. Daily attendance is crucial to student achievement and required in order to demonstrate mastery of materials and receive credit for courses. Accordingly,
  1. Students are required to attend school and all classes regularly and to be punctual.
  2. Regular attendance is a shared responsibility by the community, the home, students and school personnel, and all must work together to ensure that regular attendance is achieved.
- B. Standards and Requirements – General
  1. Each child who resides in this State and is five years old or older and under eighteen years of age, shall attend a public school regularly during the entire school year, unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction during the school year in the studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age in accordance with applicable law.
  2. Any person who has legal custody or care and control of a child who is of compulsory school age (5 years old or older and under the age of 18) shall see that the child attends school or receives instruction as required by State law and regulations.

#### C. Recording Attendance

##### 1. Students Scheduled for a Full Day

A student is counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance four hours or more of the school day. A student is counted present half day if in attendance for at least two hours of the school day, but less than four hours. A student is counted as tardy to school if the student is absent less than two and a half hours in the morning. A student is counted as having an early dismissal if the student is absent less than two and a half hours before dismissal.

### 2. Late Opening or Early Dismissal due to Inclement Weather or Planning Day

- a. In the event of a late opening or early dismissal, a student is counted present for a full day if absent no more than 30 minutes of the school day.
- b. In the event of a late opening or early dismissal, a student is counted present for half day if present for at least two hours. A student is counted as having an early dismissal if the student is absent less than 30 minutes before dismissal.
- c. In the event of a late opening, high school students scheduled for partial day will automatically be marked present for the day.

### 3. Students Scheduled for a Partial Day

A student scheduled for a partial day is to be counted present based on the amount of time he/she is scheduled. Example: A student scheduled for a two-hour block of time will be counted present for a full day if the student is in attendance for that entire block of time. If the student is absent for that entire block of time, the student will be counted absent for a full day. A student scheduled for a two-hour block of time will be counted present for one-half day if the student is in attendance for one hour.

4. Students who have been absent from school may not attend any after school activities for the same day, unless special permission has been granted by the principal due to the reason for the absence.

## D. Lawful Absences

1. Death in the immediate family.
2. Illness of the student. An administrator may require a physician's certificate from the parent(s) caretaker(s) of a student reported continuously absent for illness. Continuously absent means either a number of consecutive absences or a total absence in excess of the standard for regular attendance for which, in the principal's judgment, medical documentation is required. Students receiving Home and Hospital Teaching will be maintained on the regular school rolls and counted as present except when students are not available for home and hospital teaching, in which case they shall be marked absent.
3. Court Summons.
4. Hazardous weather conditions - hazardous weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
5. Work approved or sponsored by the school, the local school system, or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal, or their designees, as reason for excusing the students.
6. Observance of a religious holiday. The absence of a student to participate in the observance of a major religious holiday shall not prevent him or her from achieving a

“perfect attendance” certificate or other appropriate recognition for attendance. Major tests, field trips, the taking of student pictures, and similar activities should not, insofar as possible, be scheduled during religious holidays.

7. Pregnancy and Parenting. The absence of a student due to pregnancy or parenting needs
  - a. Pregnant or parenting student absences due to pregnancy, or pregnancy-related conditions, shall be excused. Examples are:
    - (1) Labor;
    - (2) Delivery;
    - (3) Recovery; and
    - (4) Prenatal and postnatal medical appointments.
  - b. At least ten days of excused absences shall be provided for a parenting student after the birth of the student’s child.
  - c. Parenting-related absences due to an illness or medical appointment of the student’s child, including up to four days of absences per school year for which the school may not require a note from a physician, shall be excused.
  - d. Any absence due to a legal appointment involving the pregnant or parenting student that is related to family law proceedings, including adoption, custody and visitation shall be excused.
  - e. In addition to home and hospital services, a school may allow the pregnant or parenting student to make up the work that the student missed in a time period that equals at least as many days that the student was absent, and allow the student to choose one of the following alternatives to make up work that the student missed:
    - (1) Retake a semester;
    - (2) Participate in an online course credit recovery program; or
    - (3) Allow the student six weeks to continue at the same pace and finish at a later date.
8. State emergency.
9. Suspension.
10. Lack of authorized transportation. Lack of authorized transportation shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
11. Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.
12. Reasonable participation by a middle school or high school student in a general or primary election campaign, for which sufficient documentation has been provided. In making the determination as to whether the request shall be approved or denied, the principal or designee will review all relevant facts to include the student’s attendance and academic record. No more than two (2) days total absence is allowed under this section.

### 13. Family Vacation or Family Trip

- a. A family vacation or a family trip during the school year is strongly discouraged as the loss of class time may have a negative impact on the student's academic progress and record. It is also recognized that, on some occasions, working parents have little control over the time of the year when vacations or trips may be taken.
- b. A parent/guardian must submit the request to have a student's absence lawfully excused to the principal or designee in writing at least ten (10) school days in advance of the proposed absence.
- c. In making the determination as to whether the request shall be approved or denied, the principal or designee will review all relevant facts to include the student's attendance and academic record.
- d. If approved, the maximum number of lawful days for family vacations and family trips for any school year shall not exceed five (5). If a family vacation or family trip is not approved, the parent may follow the appeals process in Section B.13. Requests that exceed five days and are less than ten days may be approved by the superintendent's designee. Any request for a trip of 10 days or more will result in a referral to the Pupil Personnel Worker for withdrawal in accordance with the Maryland Student Records Manual. These students will need to be re-enrolled upon their return from the trip.

### E. Standards for Regular Attendance - Students are expected to maintain attendance at the State standard.

1. The actions taken when the standard is not met shall reflect a continuum of consequences for increasing absenteeism. School officials may waive these actions when they are aware of circumstances beyond the student's control such as documented chronic illness, extenuating family circumstances, disability status, etc.
2. All schools
  - a. An attempt shall be made to notify the parent after each absence. After the fourth absence, tardiness, or early dismissal in any quarter, the parent will be notified in writing.
  - b. Continuing absence, early dismissals, and/or tardiness of the student will result in the initiation of one or more of the following actions:
    - (1) Conference with the parent, student, and the principal or designee.
    - (2) Referral to student services team/and or the Pupil Personnel Worker for appropriate intervention.

- (3) Probationary time period – verbal agreement.
- (4) Written contract.
- (5) After-school detention.
- (6) Saturday school (nonteaching day attendance).
- (7) Removal of school privileges.
- (8) Restriction of extracurricular activities.
- (9) In-school suspension.
- (10) Referral to student services for possible outside referral to court or other agencies for violation of the compulsory attendance law.

### c. High Schools

- (1) Following the second day of unlawful absence in a semester course, the parent will be notified in writing of the imminent danger of loss of the one-half credit for the course. On the fifth day of unlawful absence, the student may lose credit for the semester course. Parents will be notified in writing of the loss of credit and made aware of the appeals process.
- (2) Following the sixth day of unlawful absence in a full-year course, the parent will be notified in writing of the imminent danger of loss of the full one credit for the course. On the eleventh day of unlawful absence, the student may lose credit for the full-year course. Parents will be notified in writing of the loss of credit and made aware of the appeals process.

### d. Elementary and Middle Schools

Students who have been absent twenty days by the end of the third quarter must be reviewed for possible retention during promotion/non-promotion conferences.

## F. Procedures to Monitor Attendance and Verify Absences/Tardiness

The Principal of each school shall review and monitor attendance in his/her school.

### 1. Student Accounting on a Daily Basis

- a. Daily attendance shall be reported by homeroom teachers using the Teacher Access Center.
- b. A student will be recorded as present unless marked absent.
- c. Absentees will be noted on the student roster, recorded in the database, and appear in the daily bulletin



- d. Follow-up on absentees will be handled by the principal, assistant principal, or some other administrative assistant who has been assigned this duty.

### 2. Attendance-Monitoring Procedure

- a. All schools shall collect attendance data as required by applicable federal and state laws, regulations, and board policies.
- b. A daily attendance record will be maintained of each student's tardiness or absence from school and all classes.
- c. A record of each student's lawful and unlawful absences from an individual class will be recorded and maintained.
  - (1) A parent shall provide written documentation explaining the reason for the student's absence/tardiness within three (3) school days of the student's return to school.
  - (2) Each course grade received by a secondary school student will include a report of his or her absence(s) for that course.

### G. Make-Up Work Requirements

1. There is no make-up work obligated to students who have been unlawfully absent from school.
2. The make-up work policy for lawful absences shall be:
  - a. It is the responsibility of the student/parent to request missed assignments within the requested timeframe.
  - b. Students shall be given the number of days equal to the number of days absent to turn in completed make-up work. Assignments may be provided when possible in advance of a lawful absence if requested by parent/caretaker at least five days in advance of the absence and approved by the principal or designee.
  - c. The teacher shall provide the required make-up work in accordance with the method chosen by the teacher and shall collect and correct the make-up work. A reasonable timeline for the completion of the work will be established by the teacher. It is recommended that this exchange of completed and newly assigned work be done on a weekly basis.
  - d. The student will be accountable to complete all assigned make-up work.
  - e. All make-up work will be graded in accordance with the regular classroom grading policy as long as it is completed within the established timeline.
  - f. The make-up work requirements for students who have been suspended or expelled shall comply with COMAR 13A.08.01.11 as follows:
    - (1) Students suspended for more than 3 school days, or expelled, and who are not placed in an alternative education program, shall receive daily classwork and assignments

from each teacher which shall be reviewed and corrected by the teachers on a weekly basis and returned to the student;

- (2) The principal of the school shall assign a school staff person to serve as liaison between the teacher and the suspended/expelled student and parent to provide communication weekly about classwork assignments and school related issues by phone or e-mail.

H. Attendance Recognition. Each school shall establish strategies to encourage regular school attendance. Examples may include:

1. Orientation activities at the beginning of the school year to review the attendance policy and promote the importance of regular school attendance.
2. School-wide incentive programs to improve attendance.
3. Positive rewards/recognition for students who have met the standard or who have demonstrated improved attendance during a school quarter, semester, or school year.

I. Information Dissemination

1. Students and parents will be provided information regarding the Student Attendance Policy at the opening of school each year.
2. Information to be included in parent/student handbook, school handbooks, newsletters, school announcements, bulletin boards, school websites, etc.
3. Articles and news releases in local newspapers.

J. Appeals Process. Procedures for parent(s) in order to appeal attendance violation decisions related to the Student Attendance Policy at both the school and central office level.

1. The parent(s) contact the school principal to arrange for an appointment to discuss their concern.
2. If the issue is not resolved, the parent(s)/caretaker(s) contact the superintendent's designee to discuss the matter.
3. If the issue remains unresolved, the parent(s)/caretaker(s) may elect to submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools.
4. If parent(s) are not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision, they may appeal the decision of the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education. Such appeal shall be filed within 30 calendar days of the parent(s) receipt of the Superintendent's decision.

**Board Approval Acknowledged By:**



Sean W. Bulson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Policy Action Dates					
ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE
Adopted	7/9/1990	Amended	8/23/1999		
Amended	8/20/1990	Amended	5/30/2002		
Amended	7/8/1991	Amended	4/10/2017		
Amended	6/12/1995	Amended	12/17/2018		

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References	
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: Patrick P. Spicer, Esquire	JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: General Counsel
PERSON RESPONSIBLE: Mr. Bernard Hennigan	JOB POSITION OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE: Director of Student Services
DESIGNEE NAME:	JOB POSITION OF DESIGNEE:
POLICY NUMBER PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 1, 2005:	

### LEGAL REFERENCES<sup>1</sup>

See COMAR 13A.08.01.05.

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<sup>1</sup> All references are to specific federal or Maryland statutes or regulations. References are provided for convenience and informational purposes only and are not to be considered as exhaustive or as precluding Harford County Public Schools from relying upon any other statutes or regulations in support of a policy.