

POLICY TITLE: STUDENT ATTENDANCE		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: July 9, 1990	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED: April 10, 2017	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: STUDENTS		

I. Purpose

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

II. Definitions

None.

III. Statement of Policy

- A. The Board is committed to the goal that students shall attend school and classes regularly. 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.
 2. Students shall be considered in attendance at school when participating in school sponsored activities during the school day, and when that participation is approved by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal, or their designees.

3. Lawful Absences
 - a. Death in the immediate family. The immediate family shall include parent, siblings, grandparents, a person who is the primary care provider, or anyone who lives regularly in the household of the student and others as determined by the school principal.
 - b. Illness of the student. The principal 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.)
 - c. Court Summons.
 - d. Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
 - e. 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.
 - f. 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.

g. Pregnancy and Parenting. The absence of a student due to pregnancy or parenting needs

(1) A student's absence due to a student's pregnancy or parenting needs is a lawful absence as provided in Maryland law and acknowledged in Board of Education (Board) Policy 430 *Attendance at Schools*.

(2) Pregnant or parenting student absences due to pregnancy, or pregnancy-related conditions, shall be excused. Examples are:

- (i) Labor;**
- (ii) Delivery;**

- (iii) Recovery; and
- (iv) Prenatal and postnatal medical appointments.

(3) At least ten days of excused absences will be provided for a parenting student after the birth of the student's child.

(4) 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.

(5) 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.

(6) 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:

- (i) Retake a semester;
- (ii) Participate in an online course credit recovery program; or
- (iii) Allow the student six weeks to continue at the same pace and finish at a later date.

- h. State emergency.
- i. Suspension.
- j. Lack of authorized transportation. This shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- k. 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.
- l. Family Vacation or Family Trip

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

(3) 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.

(4) 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 per year may be approved by the superintendent's designee.

4. Unlawful Absence/Tardiness/Early Dismissal
 - a. An absence, including absence for any portion of the day, for any reason other than those cited as lawful are presumed to be unlawful and may constitute truancy.
5. Truancy. A truant is a student who is absent without lawful cause as defined above, from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.
6. Habitual Truant. A student is a habitual truant if he or she is unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or equivalent days in excess of six per cent of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year.
 - a. Repeated unlawful absences will require a school conference between the appropriate school personnel and parent(s)/caretaker(s) and may result in a referral to the pupil personnel worker.
 - b. Any student who meets or exceeds five days of unlawful absence in a quarter must be referred to the pupil personnel worker.

7. Tardiness/Early Dismissal. Any student(s) arriving up to two hours late to school shall be considered late to school. Two hours or more late would be considered absent one-half day. Students arriving with less than two hours remaining in the school day would be considered absent the entire day. Students leaving school with more than two hours remaining would be considered absent one-half day.
8. Standards for Regular Attendance
 - a. The standard for regular attendance is the minimal requirement for student attendance in order to foster continuity in the instructional program. The standard includes both lawful and unlawful absences within a marking period, semester, or school year. The minimal standard is four (4) total days absence per quarter.
 - b. 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, etc.
 - c. All schools
 - (1) Beginning with the fifth absence and/or tardiness in any quarter, the parent will be notified in writing.
 - (2) Continuing absence and/or tardiness of the student will result in the initiation of one or more of the following actions:
 - (a) Conference with the parent, student, and the principal or designee.
 - (b) Referral to pupil services team/and or the Pupil Personnel Worker for appropriate intervention.
 - (c) Probationary time period – verbal agreement.
 - (d) Written contract.
 - (e) After-school detention.
 - (f) Saturday school (nonteaching day attendance).
 - (g) Removal of school privileges.
 - (h) Restriction of extracurricular activities.
 - (i) Consideration of the Alternative Education Program.

- (j) Referral to student services for possible outside referral to court or other agencies for violation of the compulsory attendance law.
- d. 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 loses 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 loses credit for the full-year course. Parents will be notified in writing of the loss of credit and made aware of the appeals process.
- e. Elementary and Middle Schools
 - (1) 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.
- 9. Procedures to Monitor Attendance and Verify Absences/Tardiness
 - a. The Principal of each school shall review and monitor attendance in his/her school.
 - (1) Student Accounting on a Daily Basis
 - (a) The following procedures may be used to facilitate accurate student accounting.
 - (i) At the beginning of the day, the homeroom teacher will send a list of all absentees to the office.
 - (ii) The office will issue, by the end of period one, a list of all absentees for the entire school.
 - (iii) Each period the teacher will check his/her class roll against this office list. Any student absent from class, and not included on the list from the office, will be recorded on the appropriate school form. This form should be returned to the office at the end of the day.

(iv) The follow-up checking on absentees will be handled by the principal, assistant principal, or some other administrative assistant who has been assigned this duty.

(v) Further reporting of chronic absenteeism will be made to the pupil personnel worker. (Chronic absence means recurring, not necessarily consecutive, absence over time; i.e. habitual absence.)

(b) Attendance-monitoring procedure

(i) Recording-keeping format

a) All schools will collect attendance data in terms of race, sex, and grade level. A systemwide attendance keeping format to comply with state and school system policy and regulations has been developed and will be incorporated in the student database.

(ii) Reporting absences

a) A daily attendance record will be maintained of each student's tardiness or absence from school and all classes.

b) A record of each student's lawful and unlawful absences from an individual class will be recorded and maintained.

c) Upon returning to school from an absence, a student is required to bring a written note from his or her parent/caretaker stating the reason for each absence.

d) Each course grade received by a secondary school student will include a report of his or her absence(s) for that course.

(iii) Intervention strategies and procedures for dealing with absenteeism

- a) Recognition of problem by teacher, administrator, or data processing.
- b) Student referred to guidance counselor.
- c) Parent conference.
- d) Referral to school pupil services team.
- e) Referral to Pupil Personnel Worker.
- f) Referral to appropriate agencies.

(iv) Each school shall develop additional procedures to verify absences and tardiness. A copy of each school's current procedures must be on file with the Director of Student Services. In developing these procedures, consideration shall be given to the following:

a) The student and parent(s)/caretaker(s) shall be responsible for verification of absences or tardiness.

b) Establish a maximum time limit that a student and parent/caretaker can have to verify an absence/tardiness after which the absence/tardiness is coded as unlawful or truancy.

c) Specify a time limit that a written explanation will be acceptable upon a student's return from an absence.

d) Require a written explanation of a student's tardiness from the parent/caretaker or eligible student the next school day following the tardiness.

e) Require that the parent/guardian call the school on the morning of the absence(s) followed up with a written explanation.

f) Establish a procedure for a medical verification of long term, consecutive, or repeated absences due to illness.

g) Establish a procedure to accept an absence/tardiness verification from an eligible student (18 years or older) who lives with parent(s)/caretaker(s) or lives independently.

h) Establish procedure for appropriate school staff when excessive absence/tardiness is verified as unlawful or truancy.

i) Establish a process to insure that all students and their parent(s)/caretaker(s) are informed of the procedure to verify absence/tardiness.

10. Make-Up Work Requirements

- a. There shall be no make-up work given to students who have been unlawfully absent.

- b. The make-up policy for short term (five days or less) lawful absence shall be:
 - (1) It will be the responsibility of the student/guardian to request missed assignments.
 - (2) Students will 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. Submission of the make-up work provided in advance is required upon the return of the student to school unless extenuating circumstances have been documented.
 - (3) The make-up work policy for extended (six days to ten days) lawful absence shall require that the parent/caretaker request designated school officials to arrange for make-up work.
 - (a) The teacher will provide the required make-up work in a method chosen by the teacher and will collect and correct the make-up work. A reasonable timeline for the completion of the work will be established. It is recommended that this exchange of completed and newly assigned work be done on a weekly basis.
 - (b) The student will be accountable to complete all assigned make-up work.
 - (4) 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.
 - (5) It is the responsibility of the student and the parent/caretaker to initiate the request and obtain work from the teachers and return the completed work within the allocated time frame.
 - (6) The make-up work requirements for students who have been suspended or expelled shall comply with COMAR 13A.08.01.11 as follows:
 - (a) 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;
 - (b) 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.

11. Attendance Recognition. Each school shall establish strategies to encourage regular school attendance.
12. Information Dissemination
 - a. Students and parents/caretakers will be provided information regarding the Student Attendance Policy at the opening of school each year.
 - (1) information to be included in parent/student handbook, school handbooks, newsletters, school announcements, bulletin boards, etc.
 - (2) articles and news releases in local newspapers.
13. Appeals Process. Procedures for parent(s)/caretaker(s) in order to appeal attendance violation decisions related to the Student Attendance Policy at both the school and central office level.
 - a. The parent(s)/caretaker(s) contact the school principal to arrange for an appointment to discuss their concern.
 - b. If the issue is not resolved, the parent(s)/caretaker(s) contact the superintendent's designee to discuss the matter.
 - c. If the issue remains unresolved, the parent(s)/caretaker(s) may elect to submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools.
 - d. If parent(s)/caretaker(s) are not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision, they may appeal the decision of the Superintendent of Schools for a hearing before a committee of the Board of Education. Such appeal shall be filed within 10 days of the parent(s)/caretaker(s) receipt of the Superintendent's decision.

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

Barbara P. Canavan, Superintendent
Board of Education of Harford County

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				

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 REFERENCES¹

See COMAR 13A.08.01.05.

¹ 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.