

McDuffie COUNTY

Toombs Judicial Circuit

STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

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Committee Chairman

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Section 1.0 - Purpose and Organization

The Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Section 20-2-690.2 (O.C.G.A. section 20-2-260.2) establishes a Student Protocol Committee for each County in Georgia. The purpose of this Protocol Committee is to ensure coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues; to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school; and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests that are required to be administered under the laws of the State of Georgia.

The Student Attendance Protocol Committee shall be organized as provided by O.C.G.A. section 20-2-690.2. The Chief Judge of the Superior Court of each County shall establish a Student Attendance Protocol Committee for the County. Each of the following agencies, officials or programs shall designate a representative(s) to serve on the committee, to wit:

- The Chief Judge of the Superior Court
- The Juvenile Court Judge
- The District Attorney
- The Department of Juvenile Justice
- The Superintendent, a Certified School Employee, a Certified School Social Worker, and a Local School Board Member
- The Sheriff of the County
- The Chief of Police of each Municipality within the County
- The Department of Family and Children Services
- The County Board of Health

- The County Mental Health Organization
- Family Connection
- The Court Appointed Community Based Risk Reduction Program
- Additional Members as may be necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Committee

Each Committee shall by June 1, 2005, adopt a written Student Attendance Protocol for its County School System, which shall be filed with the Department of Education. The Protocol shall outline in detail the procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of Code Section 20-2-690.1, relating to mandatory school attendance. The Protocol shall outline in detail methods for determining the causes of failing to comply with compulsory attendance and appropriately addressing the issue with children and their parents or guardians. The Protocol shall also include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness. The Department of Education shall provide model school protocols if requested by the Committee.

A copy of the Protocol shall be furnished to each agency, official, or program within the County that has any responsibility in assisting children and parents or guardians in complying with Code Section 20-2-690.1.

The committee shall write the summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance under code section 20-2-2690.1 for children and their parents, guardians, or other persons who have control or charge of children for distribution by school in accordance with code section 20-2-690.1. The summary of possible consequences for children shall include possible dispositions for

unruly children and possible denial or suspension of driver's license for a child in accordance with code section 40-5-22.

The committee shall continue in existence after writing the Student Attendance Protocol. The Chief Judge of Superior Court of each County shall ensure that the committee meets at least quarterly during the first year, and twice annually thereafter, to evaluate compliance with the Protocol, effectiveness of the Protocol, and appropriate modifications. Each local Board of Education shall report student attendance rates to the committee and the State Board of Education at the end of each school year, according to a schedule established by the Board of Education.

Board Of Education

McDuffie County Board of Education will monitor student attendance daily. Codes for attendance used in the student information system (Power School) will be used to indicate excused absences, unexcused absences, tardiness, and early dismissals. The Board of Education will adopt policies and procedures outlining how attendance will be monitored and addressed. Each school will create a building level procedure in accordance with this policy. Individual schools will develop attendance incentives to encourage good attendance.

Parents and guardians will be given notice of the attendance procedures, a list of excused absences, and possible consequences and penalties of excessive absences upon enrollment and registration each school year pursuant to O.C.G.A. section 20-2-690.1. All students age ten or above, as of September 1 of the school year, will also receive this notice. The schools will make reasonable efforts to ensure that notice was received and understood by requesting signatures from parents / guardians and students (age 10 or

older) acknowledging receipt. After two attempts to obtain signatures, a copy will be sent via certified return receipt requested mail.

Section 2.0 - Definition of Terms and Information

Absence: A student is considered absent any time he or she is missing from any assigned class or school activity, with or without permission.

Attendance Support Team (AST): AST is responsible for implementing and monitoring policy to reduce tardy days, early checkouts, and truancy. The AST is directly responsible for reviewing all cases of students with 8 or more total absences.

Detention: Work / study session outside of regular school hours.

Early Dismissal: When a student is checked out early before the end of the school day.

Exception: Students shall be counted present when they are serving as pages for the Georgia General Assembly.

Exception for suspension: School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

Excused Absence: An excused absence is an absence that is the result of one of the following reasons:

1. Personal illness or attendance in school endangering a student's health or the health of others. (Medical, counseling, dental, and other agency appointments that cannot be scheduled before / after school hours).
2. A serious illness or death in the student's immediate family necessitating absence from school.

3. A court order or an order by a governmental agency, including pre-induction physical examination for service in the armed forces, mandating absence from school.
4. Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.
5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
6. A period not to exceed one day is allowed for registering to vote or voting in a public election.
7. Educational trips if approved by the school administrator after the parent / guardian submits the required form.

Written documentation of absences should be turned in to the school within three (3) days of an absence. Examples of written documentation include a parent note, explaining a child's absence, a doctor's excuse, a hospital intake form of an immediate family member, an obituary of an immediate family member, a copy of a court order or subpoena, government documentation the student served as a page or had a pre-induction physical examination for the armed forces. If a student has had several parent notes explaining that a child has been ill, the school may ask for verification from a doctor or medical advisor.

An excused absence is required before middle and high school students can make up work. All work should be completed satisfactorily by the due dates specified by the classroom teacher. Asking for make up work is the responsibility of the student / parents.

Excused Tardy: A tardy is excused when a student arrives late to a school with a valid excuse (see “Tardies and Early Dismissals”). Other tardies may be excused at the Principal’s discretion.

Expulsion: Permanent removal from school.

In school Suspension: Removal of a student from their regular classes and assignment of the student to an alternative program isolated from peers.

Out of school Suspension: During the period of suspension, the student is excluded from all school sponsored classes and / or activities. Students having out of school suspension will receive 0’s for work missed as required by the McDuffie County Board of Education policy. School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy. (S.B.O.E. 160-5-1-.10)

Parent: For purposes of this Protocol, the term “Parent” may include any adult who has charge and control over the child, including a biological, adoptive, foster, or step-parent, a guardian or any other person who has control or charge of the child’s attendance at school. In this regard, two parents residing in the same household with the child are equally responsible for the child’s attendance at school.

Saturday School: School is provided on Saturday for students to make up time missed during the regular school schedule due to unexcused tardies, early dismissals, and unexcused absences.

School Policies: The McDuffie County School System will adopt policy and procedures outlining the specific steps to be taken to monitor and address student attendance on a daily basis.

Tardy: A student is tardy when he or she is not present in the assigned class or school activity at the designated time.

Truant: Any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences is considered truant. (S.B.O.E. 160-5-1-.10)

Unexcused Absence: Absence without a valid excuse is considered unexcused. *For middle and high school students:* Students with unexcused absences will not be allowed to make up assignments for credit. Any absence in which a note has not been presented to the school by the third day after the absence will be counted as unexcused and assignments will not be made up. Students are encouraged to make up work whether or not they receive credit, in order to continue sequential learning.

Unexcused Tardy: A tardy when a student arrives late to school without a valid excuse. (Examples include over-sleeping, traffic congestion, errand for parents.)

Unruly Child: A child who is habitually and without justification truant from school.

Section 3.0 – Attendance Procedures

Punctual and regular attendance is important and expected. Regular attendance in school is the joint responsibility of the student and his/her parents/guardian. While the following procedures indicate the required contacts on behalf of the school, the Principal or his/her designee may, at his/her discretion, contact parents/guardians by phone, mail, or in person, at any time school attendance is a concern. The following attendance procedures shall be observed and practiced according to school grade.

Section 3.1 – Elementary (1st – 5th Grades) Attendance Procedures

- At the beginning of the year and/or upon enrollment, the school will review the attendance procedures, list of excused absences and possible consequences and penalties of excessive absences with the students. This attendance information will be sent home to parents/guardians. Students 10 years old (as of September 1st) and older, and parents/guardians will sign the enrollment form indicating that they have received the attendance information. After two attempts to obtain signatures, a copy will be sent via certified mail return receipt requested.
- When a student has obtained five (5) absences (excused or unexcused), the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian.
- When a student has obtained five (5) unexcused absences, the school will contact the parent/guardian by phone and letter to notify them of the law, attendance procedures, and possible consequences and penalties of absences. As the law instructs, after two reasonable attempts have been made to contact a parent/guardian with no response, a letter will be sent via certified mail return receipt requested. Parents are to be notified at each occurrence of five and eight absences. The school will keep documentation of attempts and contacts.
- When a student has eight (8) absences (excused or unexcused) the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian.
- When a student has eight (8) unexcused absences, a referral will be made to the School Social Worker or other designee of the school, who will schedule

an Attendance Support Team meeting with the parent/guardian and student. The school will forward as part of the referral, documentation of notification of attendance information with parent/guardian and student signatures, as well as notification to parent/guardian of the student having 5 or 10 unexcused absences.

- Further unexcused absences will result in a complaint being filed with the appropriate court.

Section 3.2 – Middle School (6th- 8th Grades) Attendance Procedures

- At the beginning of the year and/or upon enrollment, the school will review the attendance procedures, list of excused absences and possible consequences and penalties of excessive absences with the students. This attendance information will be sent home to parents/guardians. Students 10 years old (as of September 1st) and older, and parents/guardians will sign the enrollment form indicating that they have received the attendance information. After two attempts to obtain signatures, a copy will be sent via certified mail return receipt requested.
- When a student has obtained five (5) absences (excused or unexcused), the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian.
- When a student has obtained five (5) unexcused absences, the school will contact the parent/guardian by phone and letter to notify them of the law, attendance procedures, and possible consequences and penalties of absences. As the law instructs, after two reasonable attempts have been made to contact

a parent/guardian with no response, a letter will be sent via certified mail return receipt requested. Parents are to be notified at each occurrence of five and eight absences. The school will keep documentation of attempts and contacts.

- When a student has eight (8) absences (excused or unexcused) the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian.
- When a student has eight (8) unexcused absences, a referral will be made to the School Social Worker or other designee of the school, who will schedule an Attendance Support Team meeting with the parent/guardian and student. The school will forward as part of the referral, documentation of notification of attendance information with parent/guardian and student signatures, as well as notification to parent/guardian of the student having 5 or 10 unexcused absences.
- Further unexcused absences will result in a complaint being filed with the appropriate court.

Section 3.3 – High School (9th – 12th Grades) Attendance Procedures

- At the beginning of the year and/or upon enrollment, the school will review the attendance procedures, list of excused absences and possible consequences and penalties of excessive absences with the students. This attendance information will be sent home to parents/guardians. Students 10 years old (as of September 1st) and older, and parents/guardians will sign the enrollment form indicating that they have received the attendance information. After two

attempts to obtain signatures, a copy will be sent via certified mail return receipt requested.

- When a student has obtained five (5) absences (excused or unexcused), the school will send a letter to the parent/guardian.
- When a student has obtained five (5) unexcused absences and is under age 16, the school will contact the parent/guardian by phone and letter to notify them of the law, attendance procedures, and possible consequences and penalties of absences. As the law instructs, after two reasonable attempts have been made to contact a parent/guardian with no response, a letter will be sent via certified mail return receipt mail. Parents are to be notified at each occurrence of five and 8 absences. The school will keep documentation of attempts and contacts.
- When a student is age 14 or older and has seven (7) unexcused absences, the school will send a letter, as required by law, notifying the student that they have three (3) unexcused absences remaining prior to violating the attendance requirements required to obtain a driver's permit or license.
- When a student has eight (8) absences (excused or unexcused) in a class during a quarter or semester, the school attendance officer will send a letter to the parent/guardian. Students with more than five (5) absences in a class during a quarter or semester will fail to earn credit for the course unless they are granted approval in an appeal. In order to meet the mandatory required hours for each course, a student may be asked to fulfill missed work and time after a quarter or semester is completed.

- When a student has eight (8) unexcused absences and is under 16, a referral will be made to the School Social Worker or other designee of the school, who will schedule an Attendance Support Team meeting with the parent/guardian and student. The school will forward as part of the referral, documentation of notification of attendance information with parent/guardian and student signatures, as well as notification to parent/guardian of the student having 5 or 10 unexcused absences.
- If the student is under age 16 and has further unexcused absences, a complaint will be filed with the appropriate court.

Section 4.0 – High School Appeals

The maximum number of days a student may miss a class in one quarter or semester and meet the minimum requirement for earning unit credit is five days, unless the High School Attendance Board of Appeals (hereinafter referred to as the A.B.A.) grants a waiver.

Initiating the appeal process is the responsibility of the student.

The appeal must be filed no sooner than 10 school days before the end of the quarter or semester and no later than the last day of the quarter or semester. Any appeal for graduating seniors must be filed on a timeline, which will allow the situation to be resolved prior to graduation.

Forms required for filing an appeal may be obtained by the Principal. Completed forms should be turned into the main office.

In order to meet the mandatory required hours for each course, a student may be asked to fulfill missed work and time after the quarter or semester is completed.

The decision of the principal. will be available on or before the last day of the semester.

Section 4.1 – Attendance Board of Appeals

The school will notify the parent via letter when the student is absent six days. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Principal and request an attendance packet. The Principal will review the attendance packet upon completion by the teachers and student and make a decision to grant an appeal.

Section 5.0 – Consequences and Penalties of Excessive Absences

Section 5.1 - Parents / Guardians

- Referral to the Attendance Support Team meeting for parents/guardians of children under age 16.
- Charges may be filed against the parents/guardians if their child is under age 16 and has excessive absences.
- Judges may invoke the following consequences for each separate offense:
 - \$25 - \$100 fine per unexcused absence
 - Imprisonment not to exceed 30 days
 - Community Service
 - Probation
 - Any combination of the above
- Each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense.
- If juvenile charges are filed against the student under age 16, the parents/guardians may be placed under a protective order and must abide by the rules set forth by the Juvenile Court Judge.

Section 5.2 – Students

- Referral to the Attendance Support Team meeting for students under age 16.
- Students may earn poor grades and test scores resulting in being retained.
- Suspension from participating in extra-curricular activities pursuant to applicable school policy.
- For High School students, possible loss of course credit for students having more than five (5) absences in a class during a quarter or semester.
- Charges may be filed in Juvenile Court if a student is under age 16 and has excessive absences.
- The Juvenile Court Judge may invoke the following consequences:
 - Informal Adjustment (90 day supervision)
 - Probation for up to 24 months
 - Denial or suspension of Driver’s instruction permit or license for one year or until the student’s 18th birthday.
 - Community Service.
 - Referral to Counseling or Community Based Treatment Program.
 - Detention / Placement outside of the home.
 - Any combination of the above.
- Each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense.
- Denial or suspension of driver’s instruction permit or license for one year, or until the student’s eighteenth birthday.

Section 6.0 – Attendance Support Team (A.S.T.)

Each school will establish an AST; which an administrator will chair. The AST should include the following members: School Social Worker, School Counselor, School Attendance Representative, and other designated professionals as deemed appropriate by the Principal. Each AST will meet on a regular basis to review attendance issues. The AST is responsible for implementing and monitoring policy to reduce tardy days, early checkouts, and truancy. Parents/guardians shall be invited to and encouraged to attend these meetings in accordance with established laws and procedures. The AST is directly responsible for reviewing all cases of students with five (5) or more unexcused absences and all cases of students with ten (10) or more total absences.

The AST will review the student’s attendance, grades, and discipline record with the parents/guardians and/or student depending on the student’s age and circumstances surrounding the attendance issue. The AST will give suggestions and inform the family of referral resources when needed and appropriate. The law and possible consequences of further absences will be discussed. A contract will be signed with the parents/guardians, student (if present), and the AST representative. Further unexcused absences will result in a legal complaint being filed.

Section 7.0 – Attendance Support Team Contract

The following is the suggested Attendance Support Team Contract to be used with students and parents/guardians.

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM CONTRACT

Student Name: _____ Grade _____ DOB _____ Date _____

School _____ Parent/Guardian _____

Please check all that apply:

THE STUDENT SHALL:

1. _____ Attend School and all assigned class periods everyday.
2. _____ Arrive at school and every class period on time.
3. _____ Obey all school rules, dress codes, and behave appropriately.
4. _____ Complete and return all homework as directed.
5. _____ Comply with daily sign in sheet procedures as directed.
6. _____ Participate in the following counseling and education programs:

7. _____ Other: _____

THE PARENT/GUARDIAN SHALL:

1. _____ Get child to school everyday on time.
2. _____ Escort and check child in at school daily at _____ o'clock a.m.
3. _____ Do not remove child from school early without providing the school with a valid excuse.
4. _____ For all illness absences:
 - a) Provide school with written verification from medical official; OR
 - b) Send child to school to be checked / released if ill; OR
 - c) Call School Social Worker or School Nurse to have a home visit or check of child.
5. _____ For all absences: contact the school attendance officer to explain absence.
6. _____ Ensure all homework is completed and returned to school promptly as directed.
7. _____ Participate in parenting and / or counseling programs with child.
8. _____ Provide the school with written verification of counseling or parenting session attended.
9. _____ Have child examined / treated by doctor for: _____
10. _____ Inform school administrator about medication prescribed and taken by child.
11. _____ Attend all meetings scheduled by the school.
12. _____ Other: _____

THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOL SHALL:

1. _____

- 2. _____
- 3. _____

I understand that violations of this agreement may result in the student and parent being referred to the Legal System:

 Student Signature Parent/Guardian Signature AST Representative

Section 8.0 – Legal Referrals

Legal complaints may be filed against the parent/guardian and/or student for violating Georgia Compulsory Education Law.

Section 8.1 – Parents/Guardians

If the parent/guardian cooperates with the Attendance Support Team (AST) contract and school recommendations, then no complaint will be filed against the parent/guardian, even if the student continues to have absences.

If the parent/guardian does not cooperate with the AST contract and the student has continued unexcused absences, then one of the options from below will be selected by the School Attendance Officer or other designee.

OPTION ONE: The School Social Worker may request a meeting with the District Attorney’s office and the parent/guardian. The School Social Worker will call the District Attorney’s office to schedule a meeting.

OPTION TWO: The School Social Worker will refer the case to the District Attorney for prosecution.

If a student has unexcused absences following the Attendance Support Team meeting, and it is not solely the parent’s fault, a complaint will be filed with the

Department of Juvenile Justice against the Student. The complaint will be prepared by the School Social Worker and forwarded to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Section 8.2 – Students

After all reasonable efforts to resolve and address absenteeism / tardiness have been exhausted by the Board of Education, the case will then be forwarded to the Juvenile Court.

A juvenile complaint form (JUV-96-2) shall be completed by the School Attendance Officer or designee and be forwarded to the Department of Juvenile Justice. The complaint form shall be completed with all of the student's current demographic information. Attached to the complaint shall be the most current report of attendance and discipline records, as well as documentation of all efforts that have been made by the Board of Education to resolve the issue with the student, parent or guardian, including the Attendance Support Team Contract.

Upon receipt of the juvenile complaint form, the Department of Juvenile Justice will process complaints as directed by the Juvenile Court. DJJ shall ensure that the complaint is filed with the appropriate clerk of court and shall schedule the complaint for a preliminary hearing. The Board of Education shall be notified of the scheduling date and time for upcoming cases to be heard before the Court. The student, parent/guardian shall be served notification of the hearing by proper service through the clerk of court.

At the preliminary hearing, said student, parent(s) or guardian shall be advised of their right to representation prior to the proceeding. If either party chooses to seek representation, the Juvenile Court shall allow the parties to make application for appointed counsel or shall give them the opportunity to hire counsel of their choice. If

representation is requested, a petition shall be filed and the case shall be scheduled for an Adjudication hearing. All parties, including counsel will receive notification of this hearing by proper service through the clerk of court.

If representation is not requested and all parties are in agreement to proceed with the case by admission at the preliminary hearing, the Court shall make every attempt to resolve the case the day of the preliminary hearing with specifically outlined conditions for child, parent(s), or guardian to follow. The Court, after hearing and reviewing all of the evidence, documentation and testimony and taking into consideration the age of the child and circumstances surrounding the case, shall make every reasonable effort to appropriately outline very specific conditions for the student, parent(s) or guardian to follow. If issues of deprivation are disclosed, an immediate referral shall be made to the Department of Family and Children Services.

The Court may order the following dispositions in reference to the student, including, but not limited to: dismissal, holding the charge(s) in abeyance pending compliance of conditions while being monitored by the Court, informal adjustment, probation, commitment to the Department of Human Resources, commitment to the Department of Juvenile Justice not to exceed sixty months, placement in an institution, placement into the Department of Family and Children Services, community service, suspension of drivers license privileges. The Court shall outline a specific time limit for which conditions are to be followed.

The Court may order the following dispositions in reference to a parent(s) or guardian, including, but not limited to: placing said parent(s) or guardian under a protective order outlining conditions for the parent(s) or guardian to follow for a period

of one year or a time outlined by the Court. Extensions can be made by the Court if necessary.

Upon disposition of the Court, the Department of Juvenile Justice will make necessary referrals ordered by the Court and will supervise any conditions outlined by the Court in compliance with D.J.J. policy.

If the student, parent(s) or guardian successfully follow all Court ordered conditions for the period of time specified, the Court will consider a dismissal of the case and / or termination of the supervision.

It will be the responsibility of the Board of Education to monitor attendance and cooperation of the student, parent(s) or guardian. The Board of Education will provide all agencies involved a regular report of progress.

Any non-compliance will be immediately reported by the Board of Education to the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Upon receipt of any non-compliance, the Department of Juvenile Justice or the Juvenile Court will immediately schedule the case for review. All parties will be notified of the review by proper service of the clerk of court.

If the non-compliance is confirmed by the Court as a result of the student's action(s), the Court may order any of the previously stated dispositions that would assist in establishing compliance of conditions. The Court, while considering all factors relevant to the student and case, shall continue involvement or supervision until such compliance is established. The Court shall continue utilizing progressive discipline or sanctions as needed to protect and safeguard the best interest of the student's educational future.

If the non-compliance is confirmed by the Court as a result of the parent(s) or guardian's actions, the Court may punish the person(s) for being in contempt of court for willfully disobeying an order of the Court. The Court may impose any or all of the following sanctions: Requiring the person to make restitution in any amount not to exceed \$2,500.00 for any damage caused by the child's wrongful act; impose a fine up to \$1,000.00; reimbursement to the state for the cost of detention, treatment or rehabilitation of the child, require the parent or guardian to perform community service or require the person to enter a contract or plan as a part of the disposition of any charges against the child. The Court may also use civil contempt powers to incarcerate the parent or guardian.

Any violations or non-compliance by the parent(s) or guardian occurring beyond a contempt charge shall immediately be referred to the District Attorney's office by the Juvenile Court for prosecution of the parent(s) or guardian under O.C.G.A. section 20-2-690.1. The office of the District Attorney shall be provided with accurate and complete documentation of every action and proceeding prior to the referral. Every agency including but not limited to: Board of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Family and Children Services, Mental Health, shall be available to the District Attorney's office for interviews, questions and/or testimony needed to adequately prepare the case for prosecution.

The School Social Worker or Attendance Officer or other designee shall serve as a liaison between the School System and the Court System.

Section 9.0 – Tardy and Early Dismissal Procedures

Section 9.1 - Tardy Procedure:

Elementary School students must be checked in by a parent/guardian. Middle School students are required to check in at the front office when arriving to school after the beginning of the official school day. High School students should report to their classroom teachers. Classroom teachers record and report any student who is late to school or class as tardy. Records of tardiness are monitored and maintained in the School Student Information System.

Section 9.2 - Early Dismissal Procedure:

In order to leave school early,

- Students should bring a note from the parent/guardian stating the reason and time for the early dismissal; or
- Parent/guardian should call the school to explain the reason for the early dismissal; or
- Parent/guardian can come to the school to pick up their child and explain the reason for the early dismissal.

The note must be turned in to the appropriate office for verification and approval. Elementary School and Middle School students must be signed out by a parent/guardian at the front office before leaving campus.

Section 9.3 - Excused Tardies and Early Dismissals:

A tardy or early dismissal may be considered excused for any of the following reasons: (1) when personally ill and when attendance in school will endanger their health, the health of others, or for medical, dental, or counseling appointments; (2) when in their immediate family there is a serious illness or death which will reasonably necessitate a tardy or early dismissal from school; (3) when mandated by

governmental agencies, child protective services, or by Court order; (4) when prevented from school attendance due to conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to their health or safety. Written documentation should be provided to the school for tardies or early dismissals in the same manner as for excused absences.

Section 10.0 – Tardy and Early Dismissal Consequences

Section 10.1 - Elementary Schools

Parents/guardians will receive a letter or be contacted by the school when there are five tardies or early dismissals in a particular grading period. When there are 10 tardies or early dismissals in a particular grading period, a referral to the School Social Worker who will contact the parent/guardian.

Section 10.2 - Middle Schools

Students with any combination of five (5) unexcused tardies and/or unexcused early dismissals in a particular grading period will have to make up time in a Saturday school. Failure to attend Saturday School will result in the student having to attend In-School Suspension (ISS). Students with 10 tardies / early dismissals will be referred to the School Social Worker who will contact the parents/guardians.

Section 10.3 - High Schools

Punctuality is essential to every student's present and future academic success. Excessive tardiness will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Three unexcused tardies per class each individual grading period will result in one session of teacher assigned detention.

2. Four unexcused tardies per class each individual grading period will result in two sessions of teacher assigned detention.
3. Five unexcused tardies per class each individual grading period will result in a referral to administration – assignment of one (1) day ISS.
4. Six or more unexcused tardies per class each individual grading period will result in a referral to administration – assignment of two (2) days ISS.

Each course has a participation grade, which comprises 10% of the Quarter or Semester Grade as outlined in the Student Handbook. Tardies will be considered when determining this portion of each Quarter or Semester's final grade.

Students must be in class for at least fifty (50) minutes to be counted present for that class.

Section 10.4 - Chronic Unexcused Tardies and/or Early Dismissals

The school through the School Social Worker or other designee will communicate with the parents/guardians about the student's chronic unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals. After the parents/guardians are informed and the situation persists, a referral will be made to the McDuffie County Department of Family and Children Services by the School Social Worker.

Section 11.0 – Attendance Requirements for Driver's License / Permit

Students wishing to obtain their instruction permit or driver's license are required to maintain good attendance or a period of one academic year prior to applying, must be enrolled in school and not under suspension.

If a student is enrolled in a home education program, he/she must be enrolled in a home education program that satisfies the requirements of all State laws governing such courses.

An instruction permit or driver's license will be suspended for one (1) year or until the student's 18th birthday for the following reasons:

- A student has dropped out of school without graduating and has remained out of school for ten (10) consecutive days;
- A student has more than (10) unexcused absences in a quarter or semester; or
- A student has been suspended from school for:
 - Threatening, striking, or causing bodily harm to a teacher or other school personnel;
 - Possession or sale of drugs or alcohol on school property;
 - Possession or use of a weapon on school property;
 - Any sexual offense prohibited under Chapter 6 of Title 16; or
 - Causing substantial physical or visible bodily harm to or seriously disfiguring another person, including another student.

Students may no longer get their instruction permit or driver's license with their parent/guardian's permission to withdraw from school.

Section 12.0 – Educational Trips

Parents/guardians must complete the application for an Educational Trip and submit the request to the school principal at least one week before the trip.

A school administrator must approve the educational trip in order for the absences to be excused. The administrator will review the student's attendance record prior to approving the trip.

One educational trip per school year may be excused, not to exceed a total of five (5) school days.

Trips will not be excused during the last week of a nine (9) week grading period because of exams.

All work missed must be made up in order for credit to be given.

In addition, the student must keep a log of activities that occurred which are related to his/her educational experiences, if required to do so by the school. The student may also be required to write a paper concerning these activities or may be given another age appropriate assignment by the teacher or administrator. These documents must be presented to the administrator in a similar manner as all other makeup work.

Section 13.0 – Student Withdrawals

McDuffie County Schools will withdraw a student who:

- Has missed more than ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absences;
- Is not subject to compulsory school attendance; and
- Is not receiving instructional services from the local school system through homebound instruction or instructional services required by the Federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Each principal or designee shall use his/her best efforts to notify the parent/guardian if the school system plans to withdraw such student who is

younger than 18 years of age and is not subject to compulsory school attendance.

Schools are authorized to withdraw a student subject to compulsory school attendance if the principal or designee has determined the student is no longer a resident of the local school system or enrolled in a private school or home study program.

Schools shall withdraw students retroactive to the first day of the consecutive absences.

Section 14.0 – Community Support

Department of Juvenile Justice – The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) will have a representative serve on the Attendance Support Team and will inform students of consequences if they receive a truancy complaint. DJJ will accept truancy complaints from the school system and will process the complaints through the juvenile justice system.

Department of Family and Children Services – The Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) will have a representative serve on the Attendance Support Team. DFCS will accept referrals on educational neglect when there are concerns in the home-school program. DFCS will also accept school system referrals on families with chronic tardies and/or early dismissals.

Mental Health – Mental Health will have a representative serve on the Attendance Support Team. Mental Health will provide individual, family and group services to students in the school system, as appropriate, to alleviate missing instructional time for off campus appointments. Mental Health services provided in the schools will eliminate

barriers to receiving services at the Mental Health center. Mental Health will provide written excuses for students seen at its office.

Health Department – The Health Department will serve as a consultant regarding health issues identified by the Attendance Support Team and the School System. The Health Department will work in conjunction with School Staff to promote general health and safety for students, school staff, and the community.

Law Enforcement – Law Enforcement will approach school age children they see in the community during school hours. They will inquire of the child as to the reason they are not in school. Law Enforcement will transport the child home and talk with the parent/guardian as to the reason for the child’s absence. This information will be shared with the child’s school. If a parent/guardian is not at home and the child is enrolled in a public school, Law Enforcement will transport the child to the appropriate school.

The McDuffie County Board of Education (BOE) Police or Security will have a representative serve on the Attendance Support Team. The BOE Police will also assist with delivery of attendance notices to parent/guardian when requested by the School Social Worker.

Family Connection – Family Connection will have a representative serve on the Attendance Support Team. Through this participation, strengths and weaknesses will be identified to assist with the tracking of the benchmark related to students completing High School in a timely manner. Evaluation services will also provided to monitor the outcomes of attendance in the school system.

2005 _____ County Attendance Protocol Committee Signature Sheet

In signing this protocol, we, the undersigned, commit our agency/department to the procedures outlined above.

_____ County Superior Court

_____ Date

_____ County Juvenile Court

_____ Date

_____ County District Attorney

_____ Date

_____ Department of Juvenile Justice

_____ Date

_____ County Sheriff's Office

_____ Date

_____ County Board of Education
Superintendent

_____ Date

_____ County Board of Education
Board Member

_____ Date

_____ County Board of Education
Police or Security Officer

_____ Date

_____ County Board of Education
School Social Worker

_____ Date

_____ County Department of
Family and Children Services

Date

_____ County Mental Health

Date

_____ County Health Department

Date

_____ County Family Connection

Date

City of _____ Police Department

Date