

POLICY

SOMERSET COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Attendance – Elementary and
Secondary

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1. Purpose

All Students are expected to attend school and all classes daily and to be punctual. There is a significant relationship between regular attendance and academic achievement. Education requires a continuity of instruction, classroom participation, learning experiences and study in order to reach the maximum educational benefits for each student. The regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and their participation in well planned instructional activities under the direction of highly qualified teachers are essential for learning to be meaningful and effective. For these reasons, the Somerset County Board of Education believes that it is of utmost importance to require regular attendance in Somerset County Public Schools. The Board, in the interest of the education of its students and the integrity of its program, will not grant credit for annual attendance when a student has not complied with the following attendance regulations.

2. Definitions

A. Lawful (Excused) Absences:

Absences for the following reasons are lawful absences and will be excused with appropriate, timely documentation.

- 1) Illness of Student.
- 2) Death in the immediate family. Immediate family shall be defined as parents/guardians, grandparents, siblings and students child (ren). Absences for death in the immediate family are not to exceed five school days.
- 3) Court summons with documentation presented upon return.
- 4) State emergency.
- 5) Lack of authorized transportation. This does not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- 6) Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions are those which would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
- 7) Work approved or sponsored by the school, the Somerset County Board of Education or the State Department of Education, accepted by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal (or their designees) as reason for excusing students.
- 8) Observance of a religious holiday.
- 9) Out-of-School Suspension.
- 10) Absences imposed by school-sponsored activities (i.e.: athletics, band, field trips, etc.)
- 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.

B. Unlawful Absences: All absences and tardies other than those listed in section 2 A, above, shall be considered unlawful and will not be excused. Half days will accumulate. Two half days will equal one full day. Tardies will accumulate. Students who are unlawfully tardy to school more than 20% of any marking period will be referred to Student Services for possible involvement from the State's Attorney's Office.

C. Half Day and Full Day Attendance: Elementary and Intermediate school students are counted present for ½ day if in attendance at least two hours but not more than four hours of the school day. A student is counted present for a full day if in attendance for four or more hours of the school day. Academy and High school students are counted present for a full period if in attendance for more than ½ of the class period.

D. Tardy: A student who arrives after the official start of the school day or class time.

- E. Early Dismissal:** A student who is picked up from school and/or leaves before the official end of the school day.
- F. Chronically Absent:** A student who is unlawfully absent from school for more than 10% of the school days in any given quarter, semester, or academic year.
- G. Truant:** A student who is absent for a day or any portion of a day for any reason other than those cited as lawful and/or failure to bring a note written by a parent/guardian to verify absence.
- H. Habitually Truant:** A student who meets ALL of the following criteria during the school year:
 - 1) Age 5 through 20 during the school year;
 - 2) In membership in a school for 91 or more days; and
 - 3) Unlawfully absent for 20% or more of the days in membership.
- I. Compulsory Attendance:** Each child who resides in this County and is 5 years old or older and under 17 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 Somerset County Public Schools to children of the same age. Beginning July 1, 2016, the compulsory attendance age will be 18.
- J. Regular attendance standard:** The minimal standard is 94% attendance per school year for all students. This standard considers both lawful and unlawful absences.

3. Guidelines

- A. Recording Absences:** All classroom teachers are responsible for taking student attendance. The recording of attendance data shall follow the procedures outlined in the Attendance Procedures Manual for Somerset County Public Schools. These procedures will be reviewed with Principals or their designees annually. Principals are responsible for assigning and overseeing personnel to monitor the attendance procedures as indicated in attendance manual.
- B. Family Trip:** Parents should avoid scheduling vacations that result in unlawful absences from school. However, educational trips in which the student is receiving instruction or is visiting a school in anticipation of potential future enrollment, may be deemed a lawful absence. The trip must be approved by the Principal at least ten days prior to departure (use *Family Trip form*). Participation in a family trip is not to exceed five days and only one trip can be approved per school year. Plans for the completion of missed class work are the responsibility of the student.

C. Verification For Excused Absence

A parent/guardian must send a signed note certifying each excused absence within five school days of the student's return to school. Notes from a parent/guardian should be signed by the parent/guardian and include the student's name, the reason for student absences, the dates of the absences, and a phone number where the parents/guardians can be reached. An approved family trip form will serve as verification of a student's absence and will be included in the total ten (10) days allotted to parents. Student illness will only be considered an excused absence if a parent note or a physician's note certifying the student's absence was due to illness is submitted within five school days of the student's

return to school. Parents/guardians may certify absences up to a total of ten days during the school year for elementary/intermediate students and five days per semester in high school for illness, family trips, etc. A physician's note will be required for each absence of illness exceeding ten days.

D. Prevention, Intervention, and Consequences:

- 1) Each school in collaboration with the Student Services department will develop motivational practices and/or activities to recognize and affirm good attendance. There will be a list of resources and intervention for parents of students not meeting the attendance guidelines in the School Counseling office of each school.
- 2) Principals are responsible for informing staff, students, and parents annually of attendance expectations and the provisions in these procedures.
- 3) Interventions with regard to student attendance are outlined in the administrative procedures for this policy.
- 4) Elementary and Intermediate students who are unlawfully absent the equivalent of more than ten (10) full days per year will have a mandatory retention conference before a student can be promoted. High School and Academy students who are unlawfully absent for five or more class periods in a semester course will receive a failing grade in that course. High School and Academy students enrolled in a yearlong course will receive a failing grade for each semester in which they are unlawfully absent for five or more days.
- 5) Any student who is unlawfully absent or tardy more than four days in any given quarter will be referred to the Learning Support Team. Eight or more unlawful absences within a quarter are considered excessive and will result in a referral to the State's Attorney's office and/or Circuit Court.
- 6) Appropriate discipline procedures will be followed for all unexcused attendance infractions.

E. Make-Up Work

- 1) Contact for makeup work must be made by the student and/or parent during the first two (2) days after returning from being absent
- 2) The student in collaboration with their parents/guardians shall be responsible to see that all requested makeup work is completed within a maximum of five school days of receiving make-up work. For extended absences, the guidelines will be: five days for the first day of absence and one day for each additional day of absence thereafter. If students need assistance in completing the assignment the student/parent should contact the teacher immediately. Make up work not completed within this timeline will result in the student receiving a failing grade for the missed assignments. Teachers will provide written documentation to parents indicating opportunities given and a list of assignments that were not completed.

- 3) Each principal will notify parents or guardians of the contact information for the school liaison who will be responsible for ensuring all students who are suspended have the opportunity to complete the academic work they miss during the suspension period without penalty.
- 4) Each student suspended or expelled out-of-school who is not placed in an alternative educational program shall receive daily classwork and assignments from each teacher, which shall be reviewed and corrected by teachers on a weekly basis and returned to the student; and each principal shall assign a school liaison that will coordinate these efforts between the teacher and the student and parents.

F. Reporting of Student Attendance

Attendance will be reported on the student report card by quarter through a percentage citing the number of days in attendance. Each quarter is calculated independent of the previous quarter. A final attendance for the year is calculated on 180 days and reported on the student’s permanent record. Upon graduation the attendance report may be removed from the transcript at the student’s request. Students who transfer to the district during the year or who transition in and out will have their attendance calculated upon their days in membership in Somerset County Public Schools.

G. Appeal Process

- 1) The parent/guardian upon receipt of notification that their child’s absences prohibits promotion to the next grade, failing grades or the awarding of credits may appeal to the principal in writing within five school days of notification. Parents/Guardians will be notified of their right of appeal and the process of appeal in the absence letter explaining their child’s failure.
- 2) In requesting an appeal, the parent/guardian must be prepared to present medical notes for absences or documentation of unusual health or chronic medical conditions (certified by a physician).
- 3) The principal’s or school level Appeal Committee’s decision may also be appealed to the Superintendent of Schools. A written request to the Superintendent must be submitted within ten calendar days of notification of the principal’s or school level Appeals Committee’s decision. Upon receipt of appeal, the Superintendent will respond to the parent/guardian within ten school days.

H. Legal foundations for the development and implementation of this attendance policy are:

7-103	Required School Days and Holidays
7-301	Compulsory Attendance Law
7-302	Report of Absences and Maladjustment
7-303	Arrest for Reportable Offenses
7-304	Special Programs for Disruptive Students
7-305	Suspension and Expulsion

COMAR 13A.08.01 Students-General Regulations Effective July 1, 1990.

3-801	Definitions – Juvenile Causes Jurisdiction of the Courts
3-804	