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Chancellor Approval: **box SIGN**

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# Attendance and Truancy Policy

## I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) mission is to ensure that students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment. DCPS and its schools view attendance as one of the key metrics in working towards this mission. Attendance patterns provide key insight into experiences that may impact other domains of child development.

This policy outlines general attendance requirements, school expectations for attendance, excused absences and required documentation, immunization and attendance requirements, absences due to school-sponsored activities, school-based attendance interventions, prohibited actions related to absenteeism, grading and promotion attendance requirements, late arrival for secondary students, early dismissal for all students, and attendance record appeals.

This policy rescinds and supersedes all previous policies, memoranda, and guidance promulgated by DCPS on this subject matter.

## II. AUTHORITY AND APPLICABLE LAW<sup>1</sup>

| Source                                     | Citation   |
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| Federal Law                                | - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g   |
| Federal Regulations                        | - FERPA implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 99  |
| District of Columbia Law                   | - D.C. Official Code § 38-202 – Establishment of school attendance requirements<br>- D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04 – Limitations on exclusion as a disciplinary action<br>- D.C. Official Code § 38-501 <i>et seq.</i> – Immunization of school students  |
| District of Columbia Municipal Regulations | Office of the State Superintendent of Education<br>- 5-A DCMR § 2100 – General Provisions<br>- 5-A DCMR § 2101 – Attendance Records and Reporting<br>- 5-A DCMR § 2102 – Absences<br>- 5-A DCMR § 2103 – Absentee Intervention and School-Based Student Support Teams<br>- 5-A DCMR § 2199 – Definitions<br><br>DC Public Schools<br>- 5-B DCMR § 2103 – Truancy<br><br>Original Title 5<br>- 5-E DCMR § 2101 – Absences |

<sup>1</sup> Nothing in this policy shall supersede federal, state, or local law.

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|  | - 5-E DCMR § 5300 – Public School Immunization Procedures and Requirements |
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III. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Absence** means a school day when a student is either fully absent or partially absent.<sup>2</sup> DCPS differentiates between excused and unexcused absences.

**Absenteeism** means a pattern of a high frequency of absences.<sup>3</sup>

**Asynchronous Distance Instruction** means non-simultaneous distance instruction where a student completes work independently without a teacher providing real time instruction.<sup>4</sup>

**Attendance Action Plan** means a written document that is designed to meet the individual and specialized needs of a student and contains the relevant details of the student’s attendance record, expected attendance goals, and the school-based or third-party-provided interventions toward addressing the underlying causes of unexcused absences as determined by the school-based student support team.<sup>5</sup>

**Attendance Counselor/Designee (AC/AD)** means the person(s) designated by the principal to be responsible for improving student attendance, ensuring students are regularly present in school, and coordinating and monitoring the attendance interventions designed to increase student attendance and address truancy.

**Attendance Monitor** (also known as the attendance point-of-contact (POC)) means the person(s) designated by the principal of an educational institution to be responsible for collecting, maintaining, and reporting attendance records that are required pursuant to District of Columbia compulsory education and school attendance laws, regulations, and OSSE policies for each student enrolled in the educational institution.<sup>6</sup>

**Chronically Truant** means the condition in which a student of compulsory age has ten (10) or more days of unexcused absences within a single school year.<sup>7</sup>

**Excused Absence** means one of the types of acceptable excuses described in this policy. A parent/guardian’s permission is insufficient to cause an absence to be “excused.” Absences will only be “excused” if it meets the requirements of this policy.

**Full School Day** means the entirety of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.  
<sup>3</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.  
<sup>4</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.  
<sup>5</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.  
<sup>6</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.  
<sup>7</sup> D.C. Official Code § 38-202(a); see 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.  
<sup>8</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

**Fully Absent** means the designation for a school day when a student is not in attendance for the entire instructional day. This designation applies to both excused and unexcused full school day absences.<sup>9</sup>

**Fully Present** means the designation for a school day when a student is present for the entire instructional day.<sup>10</sup>

**In-Seat Attendance** means the percentage of registered days that a student is present.

**Module** means a subdivision of the instructional day, such a class period or educational block.<sup>11</sup>

**MTSS** means a multi-tiered system of supports which provides a guiding framework for educators, school leaders, and district leaders to remove barriers to learning at the systems level, use evidence-based practices to support the whole child along a tiered continuum, and make decisions for targeted and intensive interventions based on data.

**MTSS Leadership Team** means the group of staff members that leads MTSS in a school. This group may include the principal, assistant principal, counselor, social worker, psychologist, school nurse, teachers, special education staff, attendance counselor, or attendance designee.

**Output** means an instructional activity completed by the student during a module of distance learning that reflects the instruction delivered in that module.<sup>12</sup>

**Parent** means a parent, guardian, or other person who resides in the District of Columbia and who has custody or control of a minor.<sup>13</sup>

**Partially Absent** means the designation for a school day when a student is present for less than 60 percent of the instructional day. This applies to both excused and unexcused absences.<sup>14</sup>

**Partially Present** means the designation for a school day when a student is present for at least 60 percent of the instructional day regardless of whether the absent period was excused.<sup>15</sup>

**Present** means a school day when the student is either fully present or partially present.<sup>16</sup>

**Quarantine** means exclusion from in-person instruction and other activities, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>10</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>11</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>12</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>13</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>14</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>15</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>16</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>17</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2102.2(b).

**Routine Distance Instruction** means the use of distance instruction by a school on a regular or other predictable, nonemergency basis.<sup>18</sup>

**Situational Distance Learning** means a period of time when schools may transition a classroom, grade level, or an entire school to distance learning when circumstances arise that prohibit a school from providing instruction due to a temporary, emergency need. Such a need may be to address an unplanned emergency circumstance (e.g., public health response, operational issue, inclement weather). If a school determines that such emergency operational circumstances exist, school leaders must receive approval from their instructional superintendent to make the shift (except for grade level transitions, which are in the principal's scope of authority) and, once approved, immediately notify parents and staff of the shift to situational distance learning. Principals must also ensure that students have adequate access to learning materials.

For a student to be considered present in situational distance learning, a school must:

1. Authenticate the student's presence. This can be done in a number of ways; for example, ensuring the student sign on to a learning management system through any communication means (e.g., text, phone, camera); and
2. Ensure that the student completes at least one (1) or more assignment, task, or other type of academic output per situational distance learning day.

**Synchronous Learning** means an academic setting where teaching and learning occur simultaneously, such that the teacher is able to react and respond to students in the moment and vice versa.<sup>19</sup>

**Student Attendance Conference (SAC)** means a meeting held with the Attendance Counselor/Designee, parent/guardian, and student (as appropriate) to support the individual student by developing and implementing attendance action plans and intervention strategies that are school- or community-based and are designed to enhance the student's success.<sup>20</sup> SACs can be held in-person, over the telephone, or on a video teleconference. These meetings can also be referred to as Student Support Team (SST) meetings.

**Unexcused Absence** means the designation of a day when a student is either fully absent or partially absent without a valid excuse.<sup>21</sup>

## IV. REQUIREMENTS

### A. General Attendance Requirements

All children who reach five (5) years of age on or before September 30th of the current school year are considered school-aged and must attend school on time every day until they meet high school

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<sup>18</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>19</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2199.1.

<sup>20</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2103.4 and D.C. Official Code § 38-201(3B). The SAC fulfills school-based student support team responsibilities.

<sup>21</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2102.1.

graduation requirements or reach their 18th birthday.<sup>22,23</sup> Pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) children enrolled as DCPS students are expected to follow the same attendance policies as school-aged students, including attending school on time every day.

Minors who graduate from high school are no longer required to attend school.<sup>24</sup> Flexible school hours are permitted for students who are seventeen (17) years of age, on-track to graduate on time, and provide documentation of regular gainful employment.<sup>25</sup>

### **B. School Expectations**

All schools must implement a specific protocol for monitoring attendance and absenteeism, including a focus on prevention of unexcused absences and the use of academic and behavioral interventions to address the needs of students. School officials are responsible for taking attendance accurately every day in the student information system (SIS) or through alternative methods established by DCPS. Additional requirements for documenting attendance and communicating attendance expectations for approved distance learning models are provided in [Appendix A](#).

Prior to the start of the school year, all school principals must designate an attendance point-of-contact (POC). At the direction of the DCPS Central Services Attendance Team, the attendance POC must ensure timely submission of attendance records, submit any corrected attendance records within fifteen (15) business days of submission, and respond in a timely manner to requests for clarification of submitted attendance records.

School principals must also select an attendance designee who is responsible for improving student attendance, ensuring students are regularly present in school, and coordinating and monitoring the attendance interventions required by this policy to increase student attendance and address truancy. If the school has an attendance counselor, they will typically fill this role as the attendance designee (as a result, this role is referred to in this policy as the Attendance Counselor/Designee or AC/AD), though this is not required. The person identified as the attendance POC may also have these responsibilities as the AC/AD.

Teachers in elementary schools are required to take and enter daily attendance, and teachers in secondary schools are required to take and enter attendance for each period in Aspen. Any student that enters the school building or a classroom late must be marked in Aspen as tardy, not absent. Attendance must be correctly entered before the end of each day and updated daily as the latest information is known.

### **C. Excused Absences and Required Documentation**

For an absence to be excused, a written or electronically-submitted note must be provided to the school

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<sup>22</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-202 requiring regular attendance for students of compulsory age. Regular attendance includes arriving to school on time.

<sup>23</sup> Pursuant to 5-E DCMR § 3002.1(d), a child found by DCPS to be eligible for special education will remain eligible to receive services through the end of the semester they turn 22.

<sup>24</sup> D.C. Code Official Code § 38-202(b).

<sup>25</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-202(b). For additional information on half-day schedules for employed students, see 5-B DCMR § 2103.2 and 5-E DCMR § 2101.2.

by the student's parent/guardian or an adult student (i.e., 18 years of age and above) either:

- prior to a partial or full-day absence, or
- within five (5) school days after the student's partial or full-day absence or their return to school after an extended period of absence.<sup>26</sup>

All students, including students supported by a 504 plan or Individualized Education Program (IEP), and all notes for an excused absence must meet these requirements.

As of school year 2025-26, notes documenting an excused absence may be submitted in the DCPS Parent Portal<sup>27</sup> or delivered to the school's attendance POC. Additional documentation (i.e., doctor's notes, court documents, or other relevant supporting information) cannot be uploaded to the Parent Portal and must be provided to the school's attendance POC. The Parent Portal is available for all schools and families and aims to facilitate and streamline the submission process for excuse notes.

Upon receipt of appropriate notification and additional documentation where necessary within the five (5)-school day period, schools must update absences as excused within 48 business hours.

All handwritten notes must:

1. Be dated;
2. Include the reason for the absence; and
3. Include the specific dates the student was or will be out of school.

Notes that fail to meet these requirements will not be considered.

All students, regardless of grade, who miss 40% or more of the school day (i.e., are partially absent) are considered absent for that day. Such as absence requires a note to be excused.

Absences for any of the reasons listed in [Section C.1](#) below are excused absences. Absences of five (5) or more consecutive days for any reason require additional documentation as outlined in [Section C.2](#) to be excused.

### 1. Excused Absences

The following absences may be classified as an excused absence<sup>28</sup> upon submission of a parent/guardian note and, if necessary, supported by the documentation required in [Section C.2](#):

- Illness of the student. A doctor's note is required for a student absent for five (5) or more consecutive days;<sup>29</sup>
- Illness of a child for parenting students. A doctor's note for the child is required for a student for absent five (5) or more consecutive days;
- Medical or dental appointments for a student;
- Death in a student's immediate family;

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<sup>26</sup> See 5-E DCMR § 2101.4; 5-A DCMR § 2102.4.

<sup>27</sup> Available at [dcps.dc.gov/page/parent-portal](https://dcps.dc.gov/page/parent-portal).

<sup>28</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2102.2.

<sup>29</sup> Students whose illness requires hospitalization or who are home-bound for more than three (3) weeks may be eligible for the Home and Hospital Instruction Program (HHIP). For more information, see [dcps.dc.gov/service/home-and-hospital-instruction](https://dcps.dc.gov/service/home-and-hospital-instruction).

- Exclusion by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding or court-ordered activity as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Absences to allow a student to visit their parent/guardian who is in the military immediately before or immediately after the parent/guardian's deployment;
- An emergency or other circumstance, as approved by the school principal and the school's respective instructional superintendent.

DCPS has classified the following additional circumstances as excused absences:<sup>30</sup>

- College visits for students in 9th through 12th grades (up to three (3) cumulative days in a school year);
- School visits for students in K through 8th grades (e.g., a 5th grader visiting a middle school before enrolling). May be used for one (1) day in a school year;
- Absences of expectant or parenting students for a time period specified by their doctor and any accommodations mandated by law;
- Take Our Children to Work Day; and
- Religious events or celebrations outside of a religious holiday (up to five (5) cumulative days in a school year).

The following absences may also be excused without written documentation from a parent/guardian, as verified by the school:<sup>31</sup>

- Lawful out-of-school suspension or exclusion by school authorities;
- Temporary suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a suspension of classes; and
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student.

If a student or parent/guardian anticipates an absence that is not covered by the excused absences listed above, including an emergency or other circumstance approved by DCPS, or expects to accrue ongoing absences related to a specific condition or circumstance, they may submit a request to the school principal for an excused absence due to special circumstance. The principal will consult with their instructional superintendent before determining whether to grant the excused absence request. Any absence that does not meet the criteria of an excused absence or fails to satisfy the documentation requirement of an excused absence within the allowable timeframe will be classified as an unexcused absence.

### 2. Required Documentation

If a student is absent for **up to four (4) consecutive days**, a parent/guardian's note can be used as

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<sup>30</sup> 5-A DCMR § 2102.2(k)

<sup>31</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2102.2.

documentation of an excuse.<sup>32</sup> Any such absence will be excused if it falls under one of the excused absence reasons noted above.

If a student is absent for **five (5) or more consecutive days**, further documentation is required beyond communication by the parent/guardian for the absence to be excused. The following documentation will be accepted:

- Medical or dental absences: Written explanation of the student's absence must be submitted by a doctor or staff of a relevant agency on official office letterhead and signed by a relevant official;
- Judicial proceedings: A student's required presence at judicial proceedings must be established by a document from the court stating the need for the student's presence on all the relevant dates; and
- Death in the student's immediate family: Funeral programs may be accepted as appropriate documentation.

### a. Isolation and Quarantine Documentation

Due to individual illness or broader public health conditions, there may be times when a student is required to stay at home as part of an isolation or quarantine. In such a circumstance, the parent/guardian should notify the school and the health suite personnel, and the absence will be excused with appropriate documentation. School staff will provide instructions on what, if any, documentation is required before the student can return to school.

## D. Immunization and Attendance Requirements

To attend school in the District of Columbia, including public, private, parochial, and independent schools, students must be immunized in compliance with DC Health's requirements.<sup>33,34</sup> DCPS does not establish vaccination requirements, but must verify that all students comply with DC Health's requirements. DC law permits medical or religious exemptions from student immunization requirements under limited circumstances.<sup>35</sup>

If a student's medical record does not demonstrate compliance or there is not a documented medical or religious exemption, the school must immediately notify the parent/guardian or adult student in writing of the missing immunization(s). If the student does not come into compliance within twenty (20) school days, the school must remove the student from school until the parent/guardian provides the necessary documentation. Such a removal will be considered an unexcused absence and may require the interventions listed in [Section F](#).

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<sup>32</sup> DCPS divides its academic calendar into four terms, also known as grading periods or advisory periods, each consisting of a nearly equal number of school days. There are two terms in a semester.

<sup>33</sup> Please visit DC Health's site at [dchealth.dc.gov/page/immunizations](https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/immunizations) for immunization information.

<sup>34</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-503; 5-E DCMR § 5300.1 *et seq.* For more information, please visit the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) No Shots, No School! District of Columbia Immunization Policy for In-Person Attendance website at [bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool](https://bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool).

<sup>35</sup> For more information, please visit [bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool](https://bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool).



### E. Absences Due to School-Sponsored Activities

Students who are absent from school due to a school-sponsored or -mandated activity will be marked as present or excused based on the nature of the activity.

#### 1. Athletics

Students participating in DCPS-sponsored athletic events during regular school hours are considered present. Students must adhere to all attendance requirements under DC regulations and DCPS policy. To participate in any athletic tryout, practice, game, or match, a student *must* be present in school on the day of that event, unless the student has an excused absence.<sup>36</sup>

Medically eligible students participating in virtual instruction will not be eligible for in-person activities and athletics. Similarly, students absent due to quarantine will not be eligible for in-person activities and athletics.<sup>37</sup>

#### 2. Other DCPS-Sponsored Activities

Students participating in DCPS-sponsored events, field trips, or study abroad travel during the regular school day are considered present.

#### 3. Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan Service Delivery

Students who miss class to receive related services documented on their IEPs or 504 plans are considered present.

#### 4. Suspensions

Students will be marked present while serving an in-school suspension. Students will be marked as excused while serving an out-of-school suspension.

### F. School-Based Attendance Interventions Related to Absences

#### 1. Students in Grades K-12

Schools are required to implement the following school-based attendance interventions for all students in grades K-12, including students accessing virtual instruction:

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<sup>36</sup> 5-F DCMR § 104.8.

<sup>37</sup> Title 5-F of the DCMR governs interscholastic athletic policies for public schools, public charter schools, and independent schools in the District.

| Timeline  | School Responsibilities   |
|---|---|
| <b>Each unexcused absence (full or partial absence)</b>                 | <p>A <b>robo-call</b> will be sent to the student's family each night a student has the equivalent of one (1) day of unexcused absence.</p> <p>A <b>text message</b> will be sent to the student's family each evening for students in grades 6 through 12 who have accumulated the equivalent of one (1) full day of unexcused absence and for whom DCPS has received parental consent to send messages.</p>   |
| <b>3 cumulative partial or full-day unexcused absences</b>              | <p>AC/AD sends <b>3-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> to parent/guardian from Aspen.</p> <p><i>For virtual students only</i>, AC/AD calls the student's home to complete a <b>wellness check</b>. The wellness check must include a discussion of the student's attendance, including the identification of technology, other barriers or challenges, and potential resources needed to support student success.</p>   |
| <b>4 cumulative partial or full-day absences (excused or unexcused)</b> | <b>A teacher calls the student's home</b> to discuss the student's attendance.  |
| <b>5 cumulative partial or full-day unexcused absences</b>              | AC/AD sends <b>5-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> from Aspen to the student's home notifying the parent/guardian that a Student Attendance Conference (SAC) will be held. <sup>38</sup>   |
| <b>5 cumulative full-day unexcused absences</b>                         | <p>AC/AD holds an <b>SAC with the parent/guardian</b> and the student, if appropriate, to determine and document root causes of absences, provide related interventions, and develop an Attendance Action Plan within five (5) days of the referral. The AC/AD documents this meeting in Aspen. If the student has an IEP, the AC/AD must alert the local education agency representative designee (LEARD) and case manager.</p> <p>On a weekly basis, AC/AD will provide the MTSS leadership team with a list of all students who have reached the five (5)-day unexcused absence threshold, along with a report that summarizes the barriers identified during SAC meetings.</p> <p><b>Students who have reached the five (5)-day unexcused absence threshold are reviewed by the MTSS leadership team to consider if more targeted supports are needed.</b> If a Tier II or III referral is needed for any student, this referral is made in the MTSS system and school-based MTSS intervention POC will reach out to the AC/AD for existing SAC documents.<sup>39</sup></p> |

<sup>38</sup> See 5-A DCMR § 2103.4.

<sup>39</sup> MTSS cannot be used to delay the initial evaluation of a student who may have a suspected disability. DCPS must always initiate the special education referral and initial evaluation process for a student who may be a child with a disability in need of special education and related services.

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| <b>7 cumulative full-day unexcused absences</b>                       | AC/AD sends <b>Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Warning Letter</b> to the parent/guardian using Aspen.  |
| <b>10 cumulative partial or full-day unexcused absences</b>           | AC/AD sends <b>10-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> to the parent/guardian from Aspen.<br><br><b>MTSS leadership team reviews lists of all students (ages 5-17) who have reached the ten (10)-day unexcused absence threshold</b> to consider if more targeted support is needed. If a Tier II or III referral is needed for any student, this referral is made in the MTSS system and school-based MTSS intervention POC will reach out to the AC/AD for existing SAC documents.  |
| <b>10 cumulative full-day unexcused absences</b>                      | <i>For students ages 5-13 only:</i> If all attendance interventions have been executed and documented in Aspen, AC/AD <b>refers student to CFSA</b> for educational neglect.  |
| <b>15 cumulative partial or full-day unexcused absences</b>           | AC/AD sends <b>15-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> to the parent/guardian from Aspen.   |
| <b>15 cumulative full-day unexcused absences</b>                      | <i>For students aged 14-17 only:</i> If all interventions have been attempted and documented in Aspen, AC/AD, in conjunction with their Attendance Specialist, will <b>refer student/family to the Court Social Services Division and the Office of the Attorney General</b> .  |
| <b>20 <i>consecutive</i> full-day unexcused absences<sup>40</sup></b> | AC/AD sends <b>initial withdrawal letter</b> to the parent/guardian and makes <b>phone call to student's home</b> to notify the parent/guardian that the student is eligible to be withdrawn from school.<br><br>AC/AD must also send a <b>final withdrawal letter</b> to the parent/guardian after all outreach has been completed notifying the parent/guardian of intent to withdraw. Schools <i>must</i> have executed all required interventions before withdrawing a student, and schools must record all documentation in Aspen and have received approval by the principal and instructional superintendent. Students receiving special education services through an IEP cannot be withdrawn without the school demonstrating additional reasonable efforts to contact the parent/guardian and receiving approval from the DCPS Division of Specialized Instruction. |

## 2. Students in Pre-K

Pre-K students are subject to the same requirements regarding excused and unexcused absences as K-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Although attendance-based referrals to CFSA are not required for students below the age of five (5),<sup>41</sup> schools are required to implement the following school-based attendance interventions for Pre-K students in all learning models:

<sup>40</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c).

<sup>41</sup> Because Pre-K students are not of compulsory school age, schools are not required to contact CFSA to report the accumulation of full-day unexcused absences.

| Timeline  | School Responsibilities  |
|---|--|
| <b>Each unexcused partial or full-day of absences</b>                   | A <b>robo-call</b> will be sent to the student's family each night a student has the equivalent of one (1) day of unexcused absence.   |
| <b>3 cumulative partial or full-day unexcused absences</b>              | AC/AD sends <b>3-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> to the parent/guardian from Aspen.   |
| <b>4 cumulative partial or full-day absences (excused or unexcused)</b> | <b>Teachers call the student's home</b> to discuss the student's attendance.   |
| <b>5 cumulative partial or full-day unexcused absences</b>              | AC/AD sends <b>5-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> from Aspen to the student's home notifying the parent/guardian that a SAC will be held.  |
| <b>5 cumulative full-day unexcused absences</b>                         | <p>AC/AD holds a <b>SAC with the parent/guardian</b> to determine and document root causes of absences, provide related interventions, and develop an Attendance Action Plan. The AC/AD documents this meeting in Aspen. For the schools who receive Early Childhood Education (ECE) Family Service Team support (Title 1 schools), a referral should be made to the ECE Family Services Team.</p> <p>If the AC/AD is unable to reach the family through telephone calls, texts, and emails, they should contact emergency contacts and other known contacts. If no contact can be made or the welfare of the student cannot be determined, the team should consult with the ECE Team to determine whether a CFSA referral should be made.</p> |
| <b>10 cumulative full-day unexcused absences</b>                        | <p>AC/AD sends <b>10-Day Universal Absence Letter</b> from Aspen to the student's home.</p> <p><i>For students aged 5-13 only:</i> If all attendance interventions have been executed and documented in Aspen, AC/AD <b>refers student to CFSA</b> for educational neglect.</p>  |
| <b>20 consecutive full-day unexcused absences<sup>42</sup></b>          | <p>AC/AD contacts the student's family to complete a <b>wellness check</b> through telephone calls, texts, and emails. The wellness check includes a discussion of the student's attendance, including the identification of technology barriers, other challenges, and potential resources needed to support student success.</p> <p>AC/AD contacts emergency contacts and other known contacts and consults with their Central Services Attendance Specialist and the ECE Division prior to making a <b>withdrawal determination</b>.</p> <p>Pre-K students may, but are not required to be, unenrolled due to unexcused absences. Pre-K students cannot be unenrolled unless the</p>  |

<sup>42</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c).

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>student has reached 20 full-school-day consecutive unexcused absences and the school has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• documented all instances of family outreach and offers of support services;</li> <li>• complied with all special education notice requirements; and</li> <li>• received approval from the Central Services ECE Division.</li> </ul> <p>No Pre-K student may be unenrolled due to late arrival to school.</p> |
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### G. Prohibited Actions Related to Absenteeism

Students in DC may *not* be withdrawn at the beginning of the school year unless they fail to attend at least one (1) day of school in the first three (3) weeks of school without notification for such absence or transfer to another educational institution. Schools are required to meet the “no show” protocol prior to withdrawing any student. The “no show protocol” is a process through which students are withdrawn from school when they are enrolled but fail to attend.

Students also may *not* be unenrolled for absenteeism unless they have accumulated twenty (20) or more *consecutive* full-school-day unexcused absences and the school has taken and documented all required actions as well as contacted the student’s family.<sup>43</sup>

Students may *not* be transferred from their school for absenteeism, including students who are attending an out-of-boundary school.<sup>44</sup> Students may only be unenrolled if they have accumulated twenty (20) or more *consecutive* full-school-day unexcused absences.<sup>45</sup>

Students may *not* be expelled or subject to an out-of-school suspension or disciplinary unenrollment for an unexcused absence or late arrival to school, with the exception of students over 18 years of age at a school where more than half of the students are over 18 years of age.<sup>46</sup>

### H. Late Arrival for Secondary Students

Students will be marked tardy if they arrive in class five (5) minutes or more after the official start of the period. Students who enter class late should be given clear guidance regarding how to catch up with the class. Students must always have access to make-up work.

Students will be allowed to enter their scheduled course regardless of what time they arrive. There is no point in a class period that a tardy will convert to an absence. If a student arrives late and attends a portion of the class, they will be considered present and tardy. Multiple instances of a student being tardy may not be accumulated to count as an absence. Responses to student tardiness should be appropriate and logical. A student cannot be suspended because of tardiness.

<sup>43</sup> D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c).

<sup>44</sup> D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c).

<sup>45</sup> See D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c).

<sup>46</sup> D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c). The Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018 defines a “disciplinary unenrollment” as the expulsion or involuntary transfer of a student from school. (D.C. Official Code § 38-236.01(3))

Teachers must review attendance at the conclusion of each class to ensure that late students are marked tardy rather than absent.

### **I. Early Dismissal for All Students**

Given the importance in being in school for students' academic and emotional development, DCPS strongly discourages parents/guardians from removing their students from school for an early dismissal, unless that dismissal is related to an excused absence. Parents/guardians must notify the school when requesting an early dismissal.

### **J. Grading and Promotion**

Grading for secondary students can be impacted by the accrual of unexcused absences. For additional information, please see the DCPS *Secondary Grading and Reporting Policy*.<sup>47</sup>

Promotion and retention decisions for students in grades Pre-K through 8 will consider the student's grades, academic progress, and attendance. For additional information, please see the DCPS *Student Promotion Policy*<sup>48</sup> and related guidance.<sup>49</sup>

### **K. Amending an Attendance Record**

#### **1. Requesting to Amend an Attendance Record**

A parent/guardian or student has the right to seek amendment to educational records believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of a student's privacy, including records of a student's attendance. An initial request to amend an attendance record must be directed to the school principal in writing and must describe the attendance record(s) in question and include all related documentation.

The burden to show why the absence(s) in question should be changed is on the requester, and strict rules of evidence will not apply. An absence can only be changed if:

- The absence(s) was determined to have been inaccurately entered (e.g., the student was late for school, but was marked absent), or
- The student was inadvertently marked present, absent, or tardy and there is evidence to support a change.

The principal will review the request and issue a determination in writing to the requester within ten (10) school days of receipt. If the principal determines that the record should be amended, the requester will be notified in writing and the amendment will be made promptly. If the principal determines that the record should not be amended, the requester will be notified in writing of the decision and of their right to appeal the determination through a grievance as described below.

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<sup>47</sup> Available at [dcps.dc.gov/publication/secondary-grading-and-reporting-policy](https://dcps.dc.gov/publication/secondary-grading-and-reporting-policy).

<sup>48</sup> Available at [dcps.dc.gov/publication/student-promotion-policy](https://dcps.dc.gov/publication/student-promotion-policy).

<sup>49</sup> Available for DCPS staff at [SharePoint: Promotion and Retention](#).

### 2. Filing a Grievance for a Request to Amend an Attendance Record

A parent/guardian or adult student may file a grievance of the principal's determination of a request to amend an attendance record by submitting a written grievance to the DCPS Comprehensive Alternative Resolution & Equity (CARE) Team at [dcps.dc.gov/page/grievance-form](https://dcps.dc.gov/page/grievance-form) within ten (10) school days of receipt of the principal's determination.

The CARE Team will conduct an investigation of the grievance<sup>50</sup> and will issue a letter of resolution containing the final outcome of the investigation within thirty (30) calendar days within receipt of the grievance. The grievance outcome will be based solely on the evidence reviewed during the investigation.

If the CARE Team determines that the record should be amended, the amendment will be made by DCPS. If the CARE Team determines that the record should not be amended, it will inform the parent/guardian or adult student of this decision in the letter of resolution. For additional details on the grievance process, please see [dcps.dc.gov/page/studentparentvisitor-grievance-process](https://dcps.dc.gov/page/studentparentvisitor-grievance-process).

## V. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

All DCPS employees are required to comply with the requirements set forth in this policy. To support its implementation, principals are expected to make all staff aware of required actions and timelines on an annual basis. The implementation of this policy will be reinforced through a central oversight process that includes regular data reviews, record sampling, reviews of underlying documentation, and site visits as needed.

Teachers enter attendance daily and are responsible for correcting attendance errors. School-based attendance POCs are responsible for ensuring attendance data is accurately entered and corrected in a timely manner as needed in Aspen. School principals are responsible for certifying the accuracy of school level attendance.

For key guidance and support with questions, training, or implementation, please contact the school's attendance POC.

DCPS is committed to serving every student with equity, excellence, transparency, and accountability. For any concerns about this policy or to report violations of it, contact the Office of Integrity by completing the Online Referral Form or sending an email to [dcps.cio@k12.dc.gov](mailto:dcps.cio@k12.dc.gov).

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<sup>50</sup> 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.20 – .22.

## Appendix A: Virtual Instruction for Secondary Students

DCPS may offer virtual instruction for a limited number of secondary students through programs at select DCPS' Opportunity Academies.<sup>51</sup> Additional information about this limited virtual option, including eligibility requirements, can be found at [dcps.dc.gov/page/opportunityacademy](https://dcps.dc.gov/page/opportunityacademy).

Students accessing virtual instruction will be required to attend daily synchronous or asynchronous instruction with their assigned teachers according to their course schedules.

### A. Recording Student Attendance

Students participating in synchronous virtual instruction will be asked to turn on their cameras to confirm their "presence" during roll call.<sup>52</sup> To support equity and privacy, students should be provided clear instructions on how to blur their background or use an alternate background.

If a student has a technology or internet connectivity issue that prevents them from accessing synchronous instruction for all or part of a school day, the student or their parent/guardian must immediately call the school to report the issue and receive instruction about adjustments to the student's schedule on that day. The AC/AD will enter the "Emergency/Other Approved" code for any classes the student will miss as a result. The school should immediately work with the family to address any technology issues preventing students from accessing virtual instruction.

Students participating in asynchronous virtual instruction will be required to complete an output during the module to be marked present.<sup>53</sup>

### B. Absences

Absences for virtual students will be reviewed by the Attendance POC and coded as "excused" or "unexcused" according to [Section C](#) of this policy. However, if a family is unable to submit documentation electronically due to challenges with technology, the family should contact the school attendance POC to describe the documents and maintain a copy of the documentation to provide to the school in hard copy if requested.

### C. Attendance Interventions

In addition to the standard attendance interventions described above in [Section F](#), the AC/AD will also be required to conduct a wellness check phone call when a student reaches three (3) unexcused absences to identify any technical barriers or other challenges and document the outcome of the phone call in the Aspen communication journal.

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<sup>51</sup> DCPS' opportunity academies (e.g., Roosevelt STAY, Luke C. Moore) must offer in-person activities to those students who request it, but students may also elect virtual learning and are not required to use the medical certification process to do so.

<sup>52</sup> 5-A DCMR § 2101.12.

<sup>53</sup> 5-A DCMR § 2101.13.