



Revised Attendance Procedures (Effective July 1, 2024)

Attendance Procedures

Attendance on a daily basis is a mandatory requirement for all students. The Code §22.1-254, requires that all children who have reached their fifth birthday on or before September 30th and who have not yet reached their eighteenth birthday must attend school. This requirement does not apply to any child who has obtained a high school diploma, its equivalent, or a certificate of completion or who is exempted pursuant to the provisions of the law.

The attendance officer/superintendent's designee will enforce the provisions of state attendance laws by engaging in the truancy intervention process described in the Code §22.1-258 which includes (1) filing a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision in circumstances in which the student is resisting parental efforts to comply with compulsory attendance requirements or (2) instituting proceedings against the parent for contributing to the delinquency of a minor in circumstances in which the parent is intentionally noncompliant with compulsory attendance requirements.

Absences

Students are expected to attend school every day. Parents are expected to contact their child's school on the day of the child's absence to inform the school of that absence. Parents are encouraged to notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the date of such appointments is known. When such notification is made, the Parent need not contact the school on the first day of the absence. For any reason, a written note providing the dates of and reasons for the child's absence is required from the Parent within five days of the child's return to school. Parents/Guardians can provide their child's school with a note via the school's website. The purpose of this note is to determine whether or not the student's absence is excused or unexcused. This note will be maintained until the end of the school year for documentation purposes.

Excused Absences

In support of the mandatory attendance law, Newport News Public Schools defines the following conditions as the only acceptable reasons for a student's absence from school.

Illness - When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness, a note written by the Parent or a physician documenting the illness will provide evidence of the illness for the school.

Mental or Behavioral Health - Consistent with Virginia Department of Education guidelines, students will be granted an excused absence from school due to the student's mental or behavioral health.

Chronic/Extended Illness - For students who are absent because of chronic or extended illnesses, the Parent must complete a Chronic/Extended Illness Notification form annually and submit it to the principal at the beginning of each school year or upon the onset of the student condition that affects regular attendance. The notification form must be accompanied by documentation from a physician. This documentation will only support the absences related to the child's medical/mental health reason(s) and will be reviewed throughout the school year.

Students who have excessive excused absences due to illness (over 15 days) are required to have a completed the Chronic/Extended Illness Notification Form on file with supporting documentation from a

physician. If the Parent does not complete the form or does not provide documentation from a physician or other mental health professional of a chronic or extended illness, the principal will review the child's attendance for needed services and/or applicable sanctions of the attendance law (Code §22.1-258). Failure to provide documentation may result in the absences being unexcused.

Prearranged Appointments - For appointments with the court, social services or other state agencies and appointments with health care providers, official documentation must be presented to the school.

Family Death or Emergency - For absences because of a death in the family or an emergency beyond the family's control, the Parent must notify the school and provide documentation for the absence.

Religious Observances - Absences as a result of observances of religious holidays should be prearranged by the Parent, who is responsible for notifying the child's school of the religious holiday(s) to be observed. If the Parent is unable to prearrange the absence, a request for exemption must be received no later than the second day after the student's return to school from the absence occasioned by the religious observance.

Civic Engagement - Consistent with Virginia Department of Education guidelines, any middle school or high school student will be granted a one school day absence per school year to engage in a civic or political event.

4-H Participation - A maximum of 5 school days per academic year are permitted and will be excused for a 4-H educational program or activity.

Participation in Tribal Nation Gathering - Students who are members of a state-or federally recognized tribal nation that is headquartered in Virginia shall be granted one excused absence per academic year to attend such nation's pow wow gathering provided that the student's parent provides the student's school with advanced notice.

Exclusions/Suspensions - For absences because of an exclusion or suspension, the Parent will be notified of the suspension/exclusion and the date when the student will be expected to return to school. The student must return on the indicated date. If the student does not return on the indicated date, the student's absence will be recorded as unexcused unless the parent is able to provide documentation for the reason for not returning when eligible.

Exceptional Circumstances - The principal may approve prearranged absences for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interests of the student and his/her family. Prior to the student's absence, the Parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form. The Parent will document on this request the rationale for the absence, dates of absence, and siblings within the school division for whom the exception will be also requested. The principal must provide the response to the Requests for Exceptional Circumstances in writing to the Parent. In documented extenuating circumstances, the principal may approve an absence after-the-fact as exempt from the sanctions of the attendance policy.

For those circumstances which cause the student to be absent and prior request for approval is not possible, the Parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstances within two days of the student's return to school. No more than five (5) days may be approved by the principal for exceptional circumstances during a school year.

Parent Notification Procedures

Excused and Unexcused Absences

For all absences, the school will contact the home on each day of the child's absence from school using the automated dialing system.

Unexcused Absences

In accordance with state law, whenever any student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent "is aware of and supports the student's absence" (unexcused absence), a reasonable effort to notify by telephone the parent to obtain an explanation for the student's absences shall be made by the principal's designee(s), or volunteers.

Truancy Intervention Procedures

In compliance with the Code of Virginia §22.1-258 and Regulations Governing Collection and Reporting of Truancy Related Data and Student Attendance Policies (8VAC20-730-20), the school division has established procedures that school division personnel are required to follow when a student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the student's absence.

The following truancy intervention steps shall be implemented to respond to unexcused absences from school and to engage students in regular school attendance.

1. Whenever a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no information has been received by school personnel that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence, the school principal or designee, attendance officer, or other school personnel or volunteer will notify the parent by phone or email or any other electronic means to obtain an explanation. The school staff shall record the student's absence for each day as "excused" or "unexcused." Early intervention with the student and parent or parents shall take place for repeated unexcused absences.
2. When a student has received **five unexcused absences**, the school principal or will make a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent/guardian. The parent will be contacted in a face-to-face conference, by telephone, or through the use of other communication devices. During the direct contact with the parent and the student (if appropriate), reasons for nonattendance will be documented, the consequences of nonattendance will be explained and an attendance plan will be developed.

"Attendance plan" means a plan developed jointly by a school representative, such as a school principal or the principal's designee; parent; and student to resolve the student's nonattendance and engage the student in regular school attendance. The plan identifies reasons for nonattendance and academic, social, emotional, and familial barriers that impede daily attendance along with positive strategies to address such reasons and impediments and support regular attendance. This plan may include school-based activities or suggested referrals to community supports, or both.

3. When the student accrues a **7th unexcused absence** the school principal or designee will schedule an attendance conference with the multi-disciplinary team, which may be held face to face or through the use of communication technology. The conference must be held within 10 school days of the 10th unexcused absence. The conference will be held even after reasonable efforts have been made but the parent is not willing or unable to attend. During the attendance conference, the multi-disciplinary team will review and revise the attendance plan as needed to

address the nonattendance issues. A student success team meeting may serve as an attendance conference.

"Multi-disciplinary team" means a conference team that participates in the prevention, early intervention, and provision of support services. Team members may include but are not limited to, the following: an administrator, school counselor, attendance officer, student involvement specialist, teacher, and other student support personnel. The team may also include community service providers.

4. The student's attendance will be monitored by a member of the multi-disciplinary team and, as necessary, meet again to address concerns and plan additional interventions if the student's attendance does not improve. All meeting dates and intervention efforts will be documented in the student's attendance plan.
5. In circumstances in which the parent is intentionally noncompliant with compulsory attendance requirements or the student is resisting parental efforts to comply with compulsory attendance requirements, the school principal or principal's designee will make a referral to the attendance officer or student involvement specialist. The attendance officer will schedule a conference with the parent within 10 days after receiving the referral to determine whether the school's multi-disciplinary team has exhausted all efforts to improve the nonattendance issues. Based on that determination, the attendance officer may recommend that the division i) file a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations district court alleging the student is a child in need of supervision as defined in § 16.1-228 of the Code of Virginia or ii) institute proceedings against the parent pursuant to § 18.2-371 or 22.1-262 of the Code of Virginia. The Program Administrator of Outreach Services will file the complaint and ensure that the intake worker is provided with written documentation of the efforts to comply with truancy intervention requirements, including, all records of intervention regarding the student's unexcused absences, such as copies of the conference meeting notes, attendance plan, and description of the supports offered or made available to the student.

Unexcused Absences in High School Credit Classes for Middle and High School Students

At the secondary level (Middle and High) the parent and student will be notified in writing or other documented method of communication of a semester grade not exceeding a 59, should the student reach nine (9) unexcused absences in a class for a given semester. Notification will include a process for the parent to request a waiver of one or more unexcused absences. The request for a waiver must be filed within (10) days to the principal after the conclusion of the semester. Documentation must accompany the request in order to be considered.

Principals must consider the student's participation in "flexible instructional time" learning recovery opportunities when considering a waiver of one or more absences. Secondary students must attend three hours of flexible instructional time to reduce a traditional full day absence by one day. For the purposes of this procedure, flexible instructional time must meet the following criteria:

- Be taught by a licensed teacher;
- The flexible, instructional time must be in-person;
- Cannot exceed pupil to teacher requirements outlined in the standards of quality;
- Student must be engaged in instruction tied to Virginia content standards that is consistent with the curriculum the student missed during the regular school day or curriculum areas with which the student has struggled;

- Interactions and engagements between teacher and student are consistent with regular school day classrooms interactions; and
- Must be outside of normal school hours (before or after the official school day begins/ends or Saturday).

Chronic Absenteeism

Virginia Department of Education Accreditation Standards (effective 2018/2019 school year) include Chronic Absenteeism as a School Quality Indicator. Chronic absenteeism (or excessive absences) is defined as missing ten percent or more of the school year for any reason, including excused absences, unexcused absences and suspensions.

Newport News Public Schools seeks to reduce chronic absenteeism of our students by taking a tiered intervention approach. The principal or designee of each school will establish a school attendance team that will be tasked with organizing and facilitating a schoolwide multi-tiered attendance strategy that begins with prevention and early intervention.

School attendance teams will meet regularly to examine attendance data and identify tiered interventions based on identified needs. School attendance teams are led by the principal or designee and may include the school's: attendance clerk or secretary, school counselor, school nurse, attendance officer/student involvement specialist, family and community engagement specialists, expanded learning staff, and other student support personnel. Teams should prioritize incorporating input from families, students and the community.

Each year, school attendance teams will develop the School's Attendance Plan, which will identify specific interventions or strategies to be implemented at each tier of intervention. The School's Attendance Plan will guide the school's chronic absenteeism strategy and may be revised as needed based on emerging needs identified through data and/or stakeholder input.

Intervention Tier	Sample Intervention Strategies
Tier 1 Universal Supports: Students who have missed less than 10% of the school year	Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations Routines, rituals and celebrations related to attendance and engagement Personalized positive communication to families when students are absent Recognition of good and improved attendance Impact of attendance on learning widely understood (e.g. teachers, families) Connection to a caring adult in the school
Tier 2: Students who have missed between 10% and 19% of the school year	Common community and school barriers identified and addressed Development of individualized student success plan that includes attention to attendance Mentor programs Targeted family visits

	<p>Intensive tutoring / expanded learning opportunities / flexible instructional time for attendance recovery</p> <p>Small group interventions and supports for students</p> <p>Engagement in youth development activities</p>
<p>Tier 3: Students who have missed more than 20% of the school year</p>	<p>Hold 1:1 student and family intervention meetings</p> <p>Provide outside referrals and collaborations</p> <p>IEP review and added supports when disability impacts attendance</p> <p>Court involvement for attendance compliance (see truancy intervention procedures)</p>

Sanctions for Students who have Met or Exceeded Chronic Absenteeism Thresholds

Elementary:

The principal will convene a meeting with the student’s teacher, parent, and school counselor up to 30 days prior to the end of the academic year once the student has met or exceeded the end-of-year threshold for chronic absenteeism (17 days). At the conclusion of the meeting, the parent will be notified in writing whether the student will be promoted, retained, or required to attend summer school.

Secondary:

The principal or designee will review the attendance record of all students who have met or exceeded the end-of- year threshold for chronic absenteeism (17 days) to determine whether the student will retain all privileges of a student in good standing. The building principal may determine which (if any) student privileges are removed or suspended.

Waiver of Retention or Grade Reduction

A parent/guardian may request a waiver of the attendance sanction or retention or grade reduction. The Newport News Public Schools Attendance Waiver Request form shall be available at each school. The Waiver form must be completed and submitted to the principal prior to the close of a school year for students recommended for retention or remediation.

For students enrolled in a credit bearing class at the middle or high school, the parent/guardian may submit a waiver request to the principal at the close of the semester, but no later than 10 days after the close of a semester.

Principals must consider the student’s participation in “flexible instructional time” learning recovery opportunities when considering a waiver of attendance sanctions. (See previous section on Unexcused Absences in High School Credit Classes for Middle and High School Students.)

Appeal of Waiver Decision

A parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the principal by submitting the appeal to the School Leadership department within three (3) days of the receipt of the principal’s decision.

Additional Sanctions related to Excessive Absences

Students who accrue excessive daily absences from grades 8 through 12 may lose privileges related to attendance at special school events such as school dances, prom, school parking privileges and off campus passes.

Make-Up Work

1. When students are absent (except for circumstances included in #2 below), an opportunity to make up work will be provided. Make-up work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction. In middle and high school, it is the student's responsibility to ask the teacher for the make-up work. Work (including tests) missed due to an absence may be made up and credit given for such work. Upon the student's return to school, the student must make up the work within five school days. Additional time may be granted by the teacher due to extenuating circumstances. A student will not be penalized for a teacher's absence. Students are encouraged to get make-up work assignments before returning to school. They may do this by:
 - Reviewing class assignments in Canvas or Seesaw (elementary)
 - Contact the teacher via email or call the school office requesting assignments remembering that teachers need 24 hours to prepare assignments.

Students who are absent due to a suspension will have the option to access and complete graded work during and after the suspension. Please contact the school or teacher directly to request assignments.

2. When students cut class or cut school, teachers shall assign a failing grade for any work or test missed due to an absence that resulted from class cutting or truancy.

Perfect Attendance

For purposes of determining perfect attendance, the student must be in attendance for a period of two hours to be counted as present for the school day. Pre-arranged absences for religious observance will not count against perfect attendance.

Tardies

Tardiness to school or to class is addressed as a discipline issue in the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook. Students with excessive tardies at the high school level may lose parking privileges or the possibility of obtaining parking passes in the future. Refer to the Student's Rights and Responsibilities Handbook for additional information on tardiness.

State Reporting of Attendance Data

The number of students with five or more unexcused absences and the number of students with 10% of any type of absence within the student's yearly enrollment period will be reported to the Superintendent of Public Instruction annually.

Learnfare Agreement and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Learnfare is a Virginia Welfare Reform initiative which ties welfare payments to the school attendance of students under the age of 18 who are TANF recipients.

Newport News Department of Human Services and the school division will coordinate efforts to identify those students who are deemed truant and not in compliance with attendance requirements. When students with attendance problems are identified by the division, the Newport News Department of Human Services will be contacted to develop a plan with the parent/guardian.