

## STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS

### I. Student Attendance Policy

Student attendance is a cooperative effort and the Essex County School Board involves parents and students in accepting the responsibility for good attendance.

Each parent/guardian or person having control or charge of a child within the compulsory attendance age is responsible for such child's regular and punctual attendance at school as required under provisions of the law.

Parents of students who are absent must inform the school of the reason for the absence no later than upon the student's return to school. Absences are excused for the following reasons:

- for middle and high school students, one<sup>1</sup> school day per school year to engage in a civic event
- out of school suspension, illness, court subpoena, death in the family, religious holidays, or other just cause as approved by the principal.

The superintendent, by regulation, establishes procedures for appropriate interventions when a student engages in a pattern of absences for less than a full day, the explanation of which, if it were a full-day absence, would not be an excused absence.

The superintendent's regulations include procedures for excusing students who are absent by reason of observance of a religious holiday. Such regulations ensure that a student is not deprived of any award or of eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award, or of the right to take an alternate test or examination, which the student missed by reason of such absence, if the absence is verified in an acceptable manner.

Students shall attend school for a full day unless excused by the principal or principal's designee.

High school students may spend a maximum of 2 school days each academic year participating in High School to Work Partnerships established pursuant to guidelines developed by the Board of Education. Students who miss a partial or full day of school while participating in Partnership programs are not counted as absent for the purposes of calculating average daily membership. The superintendent's regulations

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**FOOTNOTES ARE FOR REFERENCE ONLY AND SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM FINAL POLICY.**

<sup>1</sup> Virginia law requires school boards to excuse a one school-day absence for middle school and high school students to engage in a civic event. School boards may permit additional excused absences for such purpose. School boards may require that the student provide advance notice of the intended absence and require that the student provide documentation of participation in a civic event.

include procedures by which students may make up work missed while participating in a High School to Work Partnership.

An attendance officer, or a division superintendent or superintendent's designee when acting as an attendance officer pursuant to Va. Code § 22.1-258, may complete, sign, and file with the intake officer of the juvenile and domestic relations district court, on forms approved by the Supreme Court of Virginia, a petition for a violation of a school attendance order entered by the juvenile and domestic relations district court pursuant to Va. Code § 16.1-278.5 in response to the filing of a petition alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code § 16.1-228.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit in any way the authority of any attendance officer or the division superintendent to seek immediate compliance with the compulsory school attendance law.

## II. Compulsory Attendance Procedures

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, or the parent provides a reason for the absence that is unacceptable to the school administration, the school principal, principal's designee, attendance officer or other school personnel or volunteer notifies the parent by phone, email or other electronic means to obtain an explanation. Essex County Public Schools staff records the student's absence for each day as "excused" or "unexcused". Early intervention with the student and parent or parents takes place for repeated unexcused absences.

### A. Upon Fifth Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

If (1) a pupil fails to report to school for a total of five scheduled school days for the school year, and (2) there is no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the absence; and (3) a reasonable effort to notify the parent has failed, then the principal or principal's designee makes a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent in person, through telephone conversation, or through the use of other communication devices to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. The school principal or principal's designee, the pupil, and the pupil's parent shall jointly develop a plan to resolve the pupil's nonattendance. Such plan shall include documentation of the reasons for the pupil's nonattendance.

### B. Upon Additional Absences Without Parental Awareness and Support

If the pupil is absent for more than one additional day after direct contact with the pupil's parent and school personnel have received no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the school principal

or principal's designee shall schedule a conference with the pupil, the pupil's parent and school personnel. Such conference may include the attendance officer and other community service providers to resolve issues related to the pupil's nonattendance. The conference shall be held no later than 10 school days after the tenth absence of the pupil, regardless of whether the student's parent approves of the conference. The conference team shall monitor the pupil's attendance and may meet again as necessary to address concerns and plan additional interventions if attendance does not improve. In circumstances in which the parent is intentionally noncompliant with compulsory attendance requirements or the pupil is resisting parental efforts to comply with compulsory attendance requirements, the principal or principal's designee shall make a referral to the attendance officer. The attendance officer shall schedule a conference with the pupil and pupil's parent within 10 school days and may (i) file a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations district court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in Va. Code § 16.1-228 or (ii) institute proceedings against the parent pursuant to Va. Code § 18.2-371 or § 22.1-262. In filing a complaint against the student, the attendance officer shall provide written documentation of the efforts to comply with the provisions of this policy. In the event that both parents have been awarded joint physical custody pursuant to Va. Code § 20-124.2 and the school has received notice of such order, both parents shall be notified at the last known addresses of the parents.

### III. Report for Suspension of Driver's License

In addition to any other actions taken pursuant to this policy, if a student who is under 18 years of age has 10 or more unexcused absences from school on consecutive school days, the principal may notify the juvenile and domestic relations court, which may take action to suspend the student's driver's license.

### IV. Attendance Reporting

Student attendance is monitored and reported as required by state law and regulations. At the end of each school year, each public school principal reports to the superintendent the number of pupils by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled pursuant to Part II (B) above. The superintendent compiles this information and provides it annually to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

### V. Dismissal Precautions

Principals do not release a student during the school day to any person not authorized by the student's parent/guardian to assume responsibility for the pupil. Students are released only on request and authorization of parent or guardian. The superintendent establishes procedures for release of pupils who are not residing with or under the supervision of a parent/guardian. The burden of proof on the authority of the person to receive the student is on the requesting party. A formal check-out system is maintained in each school.

Adopted: April 9, 2012  
Revised: December 11, 2017  
October 8, 2018  
October 12, 2020  
August 9, 2021

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Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-227.1, 22.1-254, 22.1-258, 22.1-260, 22.1-279.3, 46.2-323, 46.2-334.01, and 54.1-3900.

8 VAC 20-730-10.

8 VAC 20-730-20.

Cross Refs.: IGAJ  
JFC

Driver Education  
Student Conduct