

## STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS

### Attendance

School attendance is critical for academic achievement and the preparation of students for the world of work and personal success. State law requires each parent or guardian whose child is within the compulsory attendance age be responsible for the child's regular and punctual attendance at school. For students age 18 or over, the requirements will apply to the student directly. Every teacher shall keep an accurate, daily class record of attendance of all assigned students. The Superintendent shall provide a copy of the compulsory school attendance law and this attendance policy within the first calendar month of each school year.

#### A. Expectations

A student is expected to arrive on time and attend class for the full instructional day. A student who is tardy to or leaves early from school may disrupt the learning environment for all. Tardiness to or early dismissals from school will be considered excused for the same reasons listed for absences in Section B.

Students shall attend school unless otherwise excused. James Monroe High School students shall be scheduled for a full school day unless they are enrolled in a cooperative work-study program. A student who is approved to participate in a school-sponsored field trip or other activity shall be counted as present. The Superintendent or designee must approve exceptions to a full day schedule on an individual basis.

Walker-Grant and James Monroe students who accumulate three unexcused tardies to class within a nine week period will be considered absent in that class. Furthermore students are considered absent if they miss over one-third of a class period.

#### B. Absences

There are times when a student is unable to attend school. Each parent or legal guardian shall inform the school each time his or her child is absent for all or part of any day. Schools will make a reasonable effort to notify a parent or legal guardian of each student's absence, and a log will be kept of notification attempts.

Absences that may be considered excused require receipt of a valid, written note from the parent or guardian within two days and are listed below:

- Illness (For excessive absences, the school may require a note from a physician)
- Medical and dental appointments
- Court appearance
- Death in the family
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Extenuating circumstances as determined by the school administration.

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C. Excessive Absences

Excessive absences may lead to actions that could include a conference with the parent or guardian, Saturday School, or referral to the court system.

Once a student fails to report for a total of 5 days for the year and no excuse has been received from home, the principal or his designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the parent or guardian, either in person, or through telephone conversation to obtain an explanation of the absences and try to develop a plan to resolve the student's nonattendance. (A 5-absence letter may be sent after all reasonable efforts have been attempted.) Upon the sixth unexcused absence, the principal or his designee shall schedule a conference, which must take place no later than fifteen days after the sixth absence, to resolve the issue. Following the seventh unexcused absence, the principal or his designee shall enforce the compulsory rules as noted in Policy JED. A 7-absence letter should also be sent. In addition to the policy, if a student is under 18 years of age and has more than 10 unexcused absences on consecutive days, the principal may notify the court, which may take action to suspend the student's driver's license.

**K-5 (Hugh Mercer Elementary and Lafayette Upper Elementary)** – Students with twenty-five (25) absences (excused or unexcused) may be retained. This decision may be appealed as described in Section G.

**Walker-Grant Middle School** – Students with sixteen (16) absences (excused or unexcused) may be retained. This decision may be appealed as described in Section G. Students may be directed to make up missed days by attending Saturday School, enrolling in Summer School for the entire session, or completing an approved online/correspondence course with commensurate hours.

**James Monroe High School** - Any student whose absences exceed 8 days in a course will not receive credit for the course unless the student completes Saturday School or alternate learning modules as prescribed by the principal or designee. The principal may waive this requirement upon consideration of extenuating circumstances. This consequence complies with the state Standards for Accrediting Public Schools that define the standard for awarding course credit for graduation. A student will be an "attendance failure" until the student makes up the absences as described in Section F.

D. Make-up Work

It is the student's responsibility to communicate with the teacher on the day he or she returns to class to schedule the make-up of missed work. Students are expected to make up all work missed within a time period not to exceed the total number of days absent. All missed work that is not made up within the time limit will receive no higher than a grade of 63. A student whose work earns a grade below 63 will receive the grade earned. The principal or designee may consider extenuating circumstances in extending the time limit.

**K-5 (Hugh Mercer Elementary and Lafayette Upper Elementary)** students will be permitted to make up work. At Hugh Mercer, the parent/guardian must request assignments through the teacher. At Lafayette, the parent/guardian must request assignments through the guidance secretary.

**Walker-Grant Middle School** students will be permitted to make up work for excused absences to school. In the event that your student will be absent from school (for two or more days) due to illness, work may be requested from the Counseling Department.

**James Monroe High School** students will be permitted to make up work missed for any excused absence up to 8 class periods in order to receive the grade earned. Once a student has missed in excess of that limit, the student will be permitted to make up work for full credit only for those absences that are excused. A student who is absent without being excused in excess of 8 class periods must make up work as described in Section F. Work may be requested from the Counseling Department.

E. Release of Students

Principals shall not release a student during the school day to any person not authorized by the parent or legal guardian. The burden of proof that the release is authorized is on the person receiving the student.

Students with their own transportation shall be released only on the written request and authorization of the parent or legal guardian. All schools will maintain a formal checkout system to ensure this requirement is met.

F. Saturday School

Students who are excessively absent from school may be required to participate in Saturday School or complete alternate learning modules as prescribed by the principal or designee. The principal may waive this requirement upon consideration of extenuating circumstances. Attendance at one full day of Saturday School will equal one day of school missed. Saturday School will be offered to students on Saturdays from 8 A.M. to 11 A.M. Students are to provide their own transportation to Saturday School.

G. Appeals

Parents may appeal, in writing, an attendance failure within three school days. The Principal, who is a member of the Attendance Committee, will present the written appeal to the Attendance Committee, and parents will be notified, in writing, of the decision of the Attendance Committee within five school days. The decision of the Committee is final.

Legal Reference:

Code of Virginia Section 22.1-254, 22.1-258, 22.1-259, 22.1-262-263, 22.1-267.  
8 VAC 20-131-110 Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia  
8 VAC 20-110-40 Regulations Governing Pupil Accounting Records

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