

# GCPS Attendance Policy 2018-2019

## School Attendance Policy

Regular attendance in school is the responsibility of students and their parent(s) or guardian(s). Learning experiences that take place in the school environment are essential to the educational process. The regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and other teacher-supervised activities is vital in reaching educational goals. Regular classroom attendance is an important factor in academic achievement because it develops good habits for advanced study and/or employment and is a significant factor as to whether a student will be promoted.

Principals must establish adequate procedures for student accounting, for determining the nature of absences, and for making reports as required by local and state authorities. Principals will comply with all school laws in student accounting including the State Compulsory Attendance Law. Students receiving homebound instruction are considered present for attendance accounting. The principal or designee will distribute copies of the attendance policy and procedures to all students and devise a procedure for explaining the attendance policy and procedures to all students.

## Attendance Policy Guidelines

### Number of Allowable Absences

The 2018-2019 school calendar has 176 days of instruction. The Virginia Department of Education's public school accountability reporting system defines "chronic absenteeism" as students who miss 10 percent or more of the school year. Therefore, it is imperative for students to attend school daily. Middle and high school students who miss more than fifty (50) percent of a class **will** be counted as absent in that class. The following attendance requirements apply in order for students to earn passing credit or grade-level advancement:

**High School:** In order to remain eligible for course credit, **students are limited to eight (8) unexcused absences per semester class or for a class that meets every other day during the school year and sixteen (16) unexcused absences for a class that meets every day during the school year.** Students exceeding the number of unexcused absences per class **will** forfeit credit for the course regardless of their course grade, but may earn credit through one of the following recovery options:

- a) Repeat the course successfully in summer school, or
- b) Repeat the course successfully in a subsequent school term.

**Middle School:** In order to remain eligible for course credit and/or be promoted to the next grade level, **students are limited to eight (8) unexcused absences per semester class or for a class that meets every other day during the school year and sixteen (16) unexcused absences for a class that meets every day during the school year.** Students exceeding the number of unexcused absences per class **will** forfeit credit for the course regardless of their course grade, but may earn credit through one of the following recovery options:

- a) Repeat the course successfully in summer school, or
- b) Repeat the course successfully in a subsequent school term.

The Review Panel, which shall consist of a school administrator, a school counselor and a school teacher, may consider a request for a waiver of the attendance regulation for extenuating circumstances beyond the parent's and/or student's control. However, only verified absences will be considered for an attendance waiver; consideration will not be given to classes that a student has academically failed. Each waiver request will be considered on an individual basis, taking into consideration documentation provided and extenuating circumstances. The Review Panel may request that the parent or adult student provide documentation from a medical professional when absences due to illness are excessive and/or a pattern appears to exist. Approvals of attendance waivers by the review panel must be unanimous.

➤ A parent/eligible student may submit an attendance waiver no earlier than fifteen school days before the end of the course.

The Review Panel shall act on the waiver within ten (10) administrative days after receiving it. The parent/guardian shall be notified of the decision in writing within five (5) days after the Review Panel's decision has been made. In cases where an attendance waiver has been denied, no grade higher than a 59 can be awarded.

➤ Appeal of Waiver Decision: The parent may appeal the decision of the Review Panel by submitting a written request to the Director of Student Services within three (3) days of receipt of the decision from the Review Panel. The decision of the Director of Student Services is final.

The school shall have available in the main office and/or school counselor's office the Gloucester County Public Schools Attendance Waiver Request Form.

#### Tardiness and Early Dismissals

It is important for students to be in school for the entirety of the school day. Medical appointments should be arranged before or after school whenever possible. However, when this is not possible, a doctor's note is required upon the student's return to school. A written note from the parent/guardian must accompany all nonmedical related tardies and/or early dismissals.

Tardies or early dismissals for reasons other than personal illness, required court/agency appearances, or emergency reasons, as determined by a building principal or designee, will be considered unexcused and will be counted toward an absence.

- Middle/High School – Three (3) unexcused tardies/early dismissals to the same class will be counted as one full day unexcused absence.
- Elementary School – Three (3) unexcused tardies/early dismissals will be counted as one full day of absence from school when excessive tardies/early dismissals occur.
- Notification will be provided to the parent/guardian of any student with three unexcused tardies/early dismissals and a conference with the student and parent, and teacher, counselor, and/or administrator may be required.

#### Makeup Work

Students who are absent from school may make up and receive credit for all missed assignments. Makeup work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction. In the middle and high school, it is the student's responsibility to ask the teacher for the makeup work. Parents of elementary

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 he missed by reason of such absence, if the absence is verified in an acceptable manner.

Students shall attend school for a full day unless otherwise excused. Secondary students shall be scheduled for a full school day unless they are enrolled in a cooperative work-study program. All other exceptions to a full day schedule must be approved on an individual basis by the superintendent or designee.

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 attendance law.

## II. Compulsory Attendance Procedures

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

If (1) a student fails to report to school for a total of five schedule school days for the school year, and (2) there is no indication that the parent is aware of and supports the absence; and (3) reasonable efforts to notify the parent of the absences have failed, then the principal or his designee or the attendance officer shall make a reasonable effort to ensure that the direct contact is made with the parent, either in person or through telephone conversation, to obtain an explanation for the pupil's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance. The school principal or his designee or the attendance officer, the pupil, and the pupil's parent shall jointly develop a documentation of the reasons for the pupil's nonattendance.

### B. Upon Sixth Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

If the pupil is absent an additional day after direct contact with the pupil's parent and the attendance officer has received no indication that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, either the school principal or his designee or the attendance officer shall schedule a conference within ten school days, which must take place no later than the fifteenth school day after the sixth absence. At the conference, the pupil, his parent, and school personnel, shall meet to resolve issues related to the pupil's nonattendance. Other community service providers may also be included in the conference.

### C. Upon Additional Absence Without Parental Awareness and Support

Upon the next absence after the conference without indication to the attendance officer that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the pupil's absence, the principal or designee shall notify the attendance officer or superintendent or his designee who shall enforce the compulsory attendance rules by either or both of the following: (i) filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in § 16.1-228 or (ii) instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to § 18.2-371 or § 22.1-262. In filing a complaint against the student, the attendance officer shall provide written documentation of the efforts already undertaken to resolve the pupil's absence. If the student's parents have joint physical custody of the student and the school has notice of the custody arrangement, then both parents shall be notified at their last known addresses.