

## **Student Absences/Excuses/Releases Regulation**

### **Attendance**

The Southampton County Public School Division is committed to preparing students to progress academically, to achieve success and to accept responsibility for themselves. As a part of this commitment, the school division has established attendance performance guidelines for all students in grades K-12.

Code of Virginia §22.1-254 requires every parent, guardian or other person in the Commonwealth having control or charge of any child who will have reached the fifth birthday on or before September 30th of any school year and who has not passed the 18th birthday shall, during the period of each year the public schools are in session and for the same number of days and hours per day as the public schools, send each child to a public school or to a private denominational or parochial school or have such child taught by a tutor or teacher of qualifications prescribed by the Board of Education and approved by the Division Superintendent or provide for home instruction of that child as described in § [22.1-254.1](#). The Code further explains in §22.1-258 what action must be taken when a student fails to attend school.

### **Absence**

**Absence** - For state reporting purposes, a student is considered to be absent if the student does not attend school for at least a portion of the regularly scheduled school day.

**Excused absence** - Absences which include circumstances beyond the control of students, parent/guardians, and the school may be grounds for an absence to be excused. Legitimate reasons for excused absences include: illness, quarantine, natural disaster, religious holiday, death in immediate family, legal or medical appointments, and school sponsored/related activities.

Current Code of Virginia also allows for one excused absence per school year with appropriate documentation for the following reasons: participation in civic event, participation in 4-H activity, and participation in tribal gathering for members of a recognized tribal nation.

Exceptional circumstances may be excused up to a maximum of 5 days per student, per school year.

**Unexcused absence** - Any absence which keeps a student away from school AND is not excused by reasons above. Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to, vacation, personal travel (including travel sports), missing the bus, child care, and truancy (student is absent from class and the school has not received notification from the parent that they are aware and support the absence).

**Parent Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**SCPS Personnel Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

### **Documentation of Absence**

The parent or legal guardian shall provide a written letter or other requested documentation for an absence to be excused. If circumstances permit, the parent/guardian should provide the school administration with the reason for the nonattendance prior to the absence.

A student who is absent from school without advance notice or approval will automatically be coded as unexcused. In instances where advance notification is not possible, a note or documentation explaining the reason for the absence should be submitted to the school within 5 school days of the student returning from the absence.

Up to 10 absences per student per year may be excused with a note from parent/guardian. Additional absences may require medical or other external documentation to support the absence. All notes or other documentation related to student attendance will be kept on file in the attendance office or other designated location as appropriate.

### **Parent Notification Procedures**

Phone calls will be used to notify parents/guardians of absences each day.

After two (2) consecutive absences without parent contact, designated school staff shall make reasonable efforts to ensure direct contact with parents to obtain reason for the absences and remind parents/guardians to provide appropriate documentation upon the student's return to school.

In accordance with § 22.1-258, the school principal or designee will track attendance concerns and send written notification to the parent/guardian to document attendance requirements as follows:

1. **Third Unexcused Absence** - When a student accumulates three (3) daily unexcused absences (i.e., no indication has been received by the school that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence) and a reasonable effort to contact the parent has failed, an initial letter will be sent home from the school documenting the absences and reminding parents/guardians to submit documentation supporting absences. The letter will also inform of the consequences of continued non-attendance.
2. **Fifth Unexcused Absence** - For any student who accumulates five (5) unexcused absences, the principal or designee will send home a meeting notice to the parent/guardian within three (3) school days following the fifth (5th) unexcused absence inviting the parent/guardian to a required attendance meeting in order to jointly develop an Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP).

**Parent Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**SCPS Personnel Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

3. **Seventh Unexcused Absence** - If the student has more than one additional unexcused absence (i.e., 7th accumulated day) after an AIP is developed, a follow up conference shall be held within ten (10) days of the 7th unexcused absence. The principal or designee shall send parents appropriate written notice to inform them of the required attendance meeting.
4. **Tenth Unexcused Absence** - If a student accumulates ten (10) unexcused absences, the principal or designee shall inform the parent/guardian in writing of the school division's intent to enforce Code of Virginia §22.1-258 attendance requirements through either of the following:
  - i. Filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the student is a child in need of supervision (CHINS) as defined in §16.1-228 or
  - ii. Instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to §22.1-262 (i.e., refusal to comply with law and /or refusal to participate in AIP conferences).

### **Chronically Absent**

A student is considered to be chronically absent if they are absent from school, whether excused or unexcused, for more than 10% of the days in which they are enrolled. As chronic absenteeism negatively impacts student progress as well as school accreditation, the school division will implement the following measures:

1. **Chronically absent letter to parents** - Students who meet thresholds of trending toward chronically absent, excused or unexcused, will receive a letter notifying the parent/guardian that their student is at risk of being chronically absent and what that entails.
2. **Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP)** - When a student meets the threshold for chronic absences in any quarter, the school principal or designee will be responsible for working with the student and parent/guardian to develop an attendance improvement plan. The purpose of the Attendance Improvement Plan will be to identify barriers and work collaboratively on strategies for improving attendance. The attendance improvement plan may include: additional documentation requirements for excusing absences, loss of privileges or participation in school activities, or other interventions or administrative consequences as appropriate.
3. **Withdraw from School** - In accordance with Code of Virginia §22.1-258, at fifteen (15) days of *consecutive* absences, excused or unexcused, a student will be unenrolled from school. Parents/guardians will be notified of this action in writing and be provided with information on how to re-enroll the student or provide evidence of the student's enrollment in another school.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SCPS Personnel Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Grade Reduction or Retention**

Any student who exceeds the annual threshold for chronic absenteeism may be denied course credit or grade level promotion.

1. **Elementary and Middle School** - Students who exceed the threshold for chronic absenteeism for the school year will be required to participate in a student assistance plan to address attendance. Students who do not successfully meet the conditions agreed to in the student assistance plan may be denied promotion to the next grade level.
  - i. The principal will convene a meeting with the student's teacher, school counselor and parents/guardians within 30 days prior to the end of the school year to review progress on the student assistance plan for any student who is passing their classes but has exceeded the threshold for chronic absenteeism for the current school year.
  - ii. At the conclusion of the meeting, the parent/guardian will be notified in writing whether the student will be retained, promoted, or required to attend summer school as a condition of promotion to the next grade level.
2. **High School (and credit bearing courses taken in middle school)** - Students with 4 (for quarter courses) or 8 (for semester courses) absences or greater in any course within a given semester will not receive credit for the class, unless a waiver is obtained as described below or attendance recovery is successfully completed.
  - i. A parent or guardian may request a waiver of the grade reduction or retention by completing and submitting the SCPS Attendance Waiver Request form. All waivers must be received by the building principal at least one week prior to the close of the semester.
  - ii. Each waiver will be considered on a case-by-case basis and the parent or guardian will receive a decision in writing within 10 business days of submitting the waiver to the building principal.
  - iii. To be eligible for an attendance waiver, the student must have a passing grade in the class for which the waiver is submitted. Attendance waivers will not be considered for any class in which the student does not have a passing grade.

### **Make Up Work**

When a student is absent from school, an opportunity will be provided for the student to make-up work. At the elementary level, teachers will provide make-up work directly to the student. Middle and high school students have the responsibility to check with the teacher to get the missing assignment(s). All make-up work should be turned in within 5 days of returning from absence. Students who are absent due to suspension will have the opportunity to access and complete the missing work.

**Parent Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**SCPS Personnel Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**\_\_\_\_\_