



ATTENDANCE POLICIES

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

School achievement begins with regular attendance. As a result of the Education Improvement Act of 1984, guidelines have been established for student attendance and absences. Attendance is a requirement for promotion and/ or credit. **Students must complete the State of South Carolina required amount of seat time in each course to receive one unit of credit.**

Parents/guardians have the responsibility to ensure that all school-age children in their care are in school and on time every day. Students have the responsibility to be on time and attend all classes. Failure to attend class constitutes an absence. Students previously enrolled in the district and those residing in the state that are entering for the first time shall be counted absent without excuse (for promotion/credit consideration) for each day missed due to late enrollment. All absences are defined as lawful or unlawful. Students are not permitted to make up work for unlawful absences.

STUDENT ABSENCES

All excuses for absences must be documented in writing and delivered to the School Office within three (3) school days of return from the absence. It is the responsibility of the parent/student to submit a note signed by a parent or physician confirming the reason for the absence. Electronic mail and faxes may be accepted as long as the information can be verified with the parent/guardian of record in PowerSchool. All student business regarding their attendance, should be conducted outside of class hours. The Attendance Office is open 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. daily. Taking class time to submit an excuse or obtain an ID card does not exempt a student from the attendance/tardy policy.

Note: No student who misses any portion or all of a school day, unless excused by the principal, shall be permitted to participate later that day or that evening in any extracurricular or school-sponsored, authorized/ related activity or event.

ABSENCES: LAWFUL (EXCUSED)

Per state law, lawful absences have been defined as follows:

1. Students who are ill and whose attendance would endanger their health or the health of others may be temporarily excused from attendance.
2. Emergency medical or dental appointments that **cannot be scheduled outside of school hours**. Beginning and ending times must be recorded on the appointment slip by the doctor's office and only the appointment time and minimum travel time will be excused.
3. Students may be excused from attendance in school if they are required to be present in a court of law. Judge or attorney verification is required in writing.
4. Students in whose immediate family there is serious illness or death.

DOCUMENTATION FOR STUDENT ABSENCES

All absences require a written explanation from the parent/guardian within three (3) school days of return from the absence. All absences will be listed as unverified until the student brings in a written explanation to the office. When an excuse requires additional documentation, the three-day limitation will be extended to five days. Excuses for absences received after the designated deadlines will be marked "U" for unexcused or may not be accepted at all. **After ten (10) absences for any reason which cannot be substantiated by medical statements, future absences will be marked "U" for unexcused.** Written explanation of absences must include the student's name, parent/guardian's full name and telephone number(s), dates of absence(s), and documentation of the reason for the absence. Excuses must be presented to the Attendance Office before the first period to receive verification of the excuse permitting the classroom teacher(s) to provide makeup work and/or tests. These notes are crucial in determining whether credit can be awarded.

5. Students may be excused from attendance in school for recognized religious holidays of their faith.
6. Students who are absent due to suspension.
7. Students who have pre arranged absences for other reasons and/or extreme hardships at the discretion of the principal.

ABSENCES: UNLAWFUL (UNEXCUSED)

Per state law, unlawful/unverified absences have been defined as follows:

1. Students absent for any portion of the day without the prior knowledge of the parents/guardians.
2. Students absent from school for any portion of the day without acceptable cause with the knowledge of their parents/guardians.
3. Students absent from planned home-bound sessions.
4. Students suspended from the school bus and not reporting to school.
5. Parental notes for student illnesses in excess of 10 days which cannot be substantiated by medical statements.
6. Routine appointments for medical, dental, or counseling services once a student has exceeded five absences per term course.

ABSENCES: CHRONIC ILLNESS

Parents of a student with a chronic illness (one which recurs and may cause the student to miss excessive days) must contact administration to discuss options to maintain academic performance. Those options may include schedule changes, homebound services, tutoring, etc.

ABSENCES: COLLEGE VISITS

Seniors and Juniors are permitted two (2) college visit days each year with official documentation. Official College Visit forms are available in the School Counseling Office or from the college. These forms should be completed, stamped and signed by college officials. Catalogs, brochures, parking stubs, and parent notes are not sufficient to document an official college visit.

ABSENCES: EARLY DISMISSAL

Students are expected to attend all classes each day of the school year. **Once a student arrives on campus he/she is present for the day and may not leave unless properly dismissed.** Parent request for a student's early dismissal should be sent to the Attendance Office in a note with the student and should include the student's full name, time and reason for the absence, parent name, contact phone number, date, and parent signature. The student should bring the appropriate excuse back upon his/her return to school. Example: Parent request for early dismissal due to student's doctor's appointment followed by a doctor's excuse when student returns to school. In cases where a student must leave school before the end of the school day, please adhere to the following procedures:

1. A student should present a note written by a parent/guardian for early dismissal to the Attendance Office before the first period. Notes presented after the first period may require a verbal confirmation from a parent/guardian or may not be honored.
2. Each note should include the student's full name, reason for dismissal, signature of parent/guardian, and a phone number where the parent/guardian can be reached for verification. If the student is leaving with someone other than the parent/guardian of record in PowerSchool, that individual's name must be included in the dismissal note from the parent. Electronic mail requests for early dismissal will not be honored.
3. Dismissal notes for the end of class periods are encouraged to avoid class interruptions.
4. Students who drive to school must sign out at the Attendance Office before leaving school grounds. Students who do not drive to school must have a parent/guardian report to the main office to verify he/she is authorized to sign out his/her student. If a student returns the same day from an early dismissal, he/she must sign back into school through the office immediately upon returning to campus.
5. Except in emergency situations, students should not be checked out early after 1:50pm..

Note: Once a student arrives on campus he/she is present for the day and may not leave unless properly dismissed.

ABSENCES: HOMEBOUND INSTRUCTION

Homebound instruction may be provided to students who cannot attend public school because of illness, accident, or pregnancy even with the aid of transportation. The parent/guardian should request a medical homebound instruction application prior to or immediately following the start of the student's non-attendance. The application for medical homebound instruction may be obtained from the St. John's Counseling Office. The Medical Homebound Instruction Form must be fully completed and certified by a licensed physician. Homebound services will not be approved for periods exceeding 45 instructional days. If it is necessary for homebound instruction to continue beyond this period, a new Medical Homebound Instruction Form and physician verification will be required. A completed and signed Medical Homebound Instruction Form does not guarantee approval for the student to participate in the homebound program. The district superintendent/designee will review all applications for approval or denial.

Homebound instruction does not guarantee that students will pass courses or advance to the next grade. Seniors on homebound status who plan to participate in the graduation ceremony and/or be listed in the graduation program must complete all requirements for graduation by the time senior grades are finalized. Homebound students must adhere to CCSD attendance policies or homebound services may be terminated. Questions regarding homebound should be referred to the administrator in charge of Homebound Services.

ABSENCES: SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In rare cases, students may be absent due to extenuating circumstances but the absence does not fall within the State list of defined lawful absences. In such cases, the parent should send a written request with an explanation of the need for the absence to the student's assistant principal as soon as possible. The administrator will review the information, the length of the proposed absence, the student's academic record, his/her attendance record, and may confer with the student's teachers regarding the academic impact of the proposed absence. Missing instructional time must be minimized as much as possible.

If the absence is approved, the student is expected to seek assignments from his/her teachers well in advance of the absence and take full responsibility to make up any work missed promptly. In some cases, the total number of absences for the course may exceed the state requirement for "seat time" therefore, the student will have to make up the time in order to salvage the credit.

Absences for family vacations, trips, and other activities which are scheduled during school holiday periods will not be approved nor will absences during final exam periods.

ABSENCES: TRUANCY

As parents, your responsibility is to ensure your child is attending school as required by **South Carolina attendance laws**. If absent, it is necessary to provide appropriate documentation to the attendance office for verification purposes. Unexcused absences and unexcused parent notes are considerable offenses – often leading to truancy. Failure to submit the proper documentation is the most common factor of the truancy protocol. Truancy is a serious matter that should not be taken lightly. **Any student who misses three (3) consecutive unlawful absences or five (5) non-consecutive unlawful absences is considered truant.** Unlawful absences can be unverified absences or absences with the parent's knowledge but are unacceptable reasons for missing school. For example, a family trip. If a student is found to be truant, a truancy conference will be required and an intervention plan will be instituted to help encourage the student's presence in school. The levels of truancy are listed below.

Per state law, there are **three** levels of truancy:

1. **Truant:** A child who has accumulated three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.
2. **Habitual Truant:** A child who (1) fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, and the parents/ guardians, and (2) accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences.
3. **Chronic Truant:** A child who (1) has been through the school intervention process; (2) has reached the level of a habitual truant and has been referred to family court and placed under an order to attend school; and (3) continues to accumulate unlawful absences.

TARDIES TO SCHOOL

Students who are tardy miss valuable instructional time and disrupt the learning of other students. Students are expected to be in their classrooms wearing their IDs when the bell rings at the beginning of each block/period. **Only a medical or judicial excuse presented at check-in will excuse a tardy arrival.** Students who arrive after half the class time has passed, will be counted absent for the entire period/block. Disciplinary consequences for tardiness may include detention, parent-student conferences, In School Suspension (ISS), school probation, loss of parking privileges, and other disciplinary action(s).

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

Students who become ill may report to the Health Office for evaluation. Students should always obtain a pass to go to the clinic. Students who fail to report to class or to the office because of illness are subject to disciplinary action. If the student's condition warrants leaving school, the nurse will try to contact a parent or designated person on the emergency card. If a student leaves school through the nurse's office, he/she will be permitted to return to school that day only with prior administrative approval.

CREDIT DENIAL

Credit for any course may be **denied** if a student does not meet attendance requirements. Credit will be denied regardless of whether absences are lawful: **excused (E), unexcused (U), unverified (A), cut (C) or truant (C).**

Exceptions for Denial of Credit are limited to:

- a. Court intervention with appropriate documentation
- b. Serious illness (chronic or long term) or a disabling injury with medical documentation
- c. Death in the immediate family with appropriate documentation
- d. Other extraordinary hardships with appropriate documentation

CLASS SEAT TIME MAKEUP

To avoid **credit denial**, students may have the opportunity to participate in seat time interventions. Each student is required to accrue **120 seat time hours in each class**. Students may also be at risk for Chronic Absenteeism, which is defined as students who are absent for 10 percent or more school days during the year. Students are considered absent if they miss more than 50 percent of the instructional day. Medical, bereavement, legal and religious excuses are excluded from seat time. Students needing seat time hours will: 1) meet with an administrator, 2) review interventions to support making up seat time hours, 3) sign a seat time contract. If additional absences are accumulated after signing the contract, it is the student's responsibility to ensure they make up the supplementary hours. If a student needs assistance with calculations, they must see an administrator. Once seat time hours are fulfilled, students must return the completed form to the office with appropriate signatures. **Failure to make up seat time hours will result in credit denial.**