

Book	ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS POLICY MANUAL
Section	J: STUDENTS
Title	STUDENT ABSENCES/EXCUSES/DISMISSALS
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### I. Student Attendance Policy.

Student attendance is a cooperative effort and the 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. All parents/guardians should inform the school regarding all absences. Absences for which the school receives no information are considered unexcused. Excused and unexcused absences are defined in the Parent/Student Notification Handbook that is published annually at the beginning of each school year.

A reasonable effort shall be made to contact a parent/guardian of each absent student every day, and to obtain an explanation for the student's absence, where there is no indication that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence. A log will be kept of call attempts.

Parents of students who are absent must provide a valid note stating the reason for the absence upon return to school. 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. 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.

An attendance officer, or a division Superintendent or the 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, the school Principal, Principal's designee, attendance officer or other school personnel notifies the parent by phone, email or other electronic means to obtain an explanation. School 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. Responsibilities

**Parent/Guardian-** It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to:

- facilitate communication by providing accurate information to the school staff regarding an emergency telephone number and current mailing address, and anticipated absences;
- notify the school staff of any change of pertinent information; and
- promote the proper attendance of their child by adhering to the Orange County Public Schools attendance policies and supporting school officials in their efforts.

**Student-** It is the student's responsibility to

- be present at school every scheduled school day for the entire day unless meeting the criteria for an excused absence;
- make up all school work when absent from school.

**School** – It is the responsibility of the school to:

- attempt to contact the parent/guardian whenever their child is absent from school; and
- document that a reasonable effort to contact parents was made. The documentation of each accumulated absence shall be the responsibility of the school. Late arrivals (tardies) and early dismissals will also be documented by each school. The determination of excused or unexcused will be in accordance with state and county policy. The principal or designee is to enforce and implement the Orange County Public Schools attendance policies and regulations and apply them to all students and parents.

#### B. Compulsory School Attendance Procedures for Absences

##### a. Upon Third Consecutive Absence

If (1) a student accrues a total of three consecutive absences or more than five absences total, for the school year, and (2) reasonable efforts to notify the parent of the absences have failed, then the Principal, or Principal's designee shall make 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 student's absence and to explain to the parent the consequences of continued nonattendance.

Upon the sixth absence the Principal or Principal's designee will require an in-person or over the phone meeting with the parent or guardian and student to create a plan for improving the student's attendance. The purpose of the school attendance meeting is to:

- 1) discuss and document the problems causing unsatisfactory school attendance;
- 2) formulate reasonable solutions to those problems;
- 3) assign responsibilities and requirements to the parent and student for implementing the plan; and
- 4) outline the legal and educational consequences for failure to follow the school attendance plan.

A school administrator, and/or school counselor and/or designee will attend the meeting and be responsible for developing the school attendance plan. A copy of the school attendance plan will be given to the parent/guardian (sent by postal mail at last known address if not present in person), a second copy is to be filed in the student's cumulative educational records and a third copy will be sent to the school divisions Attendance Officer. Special Education students may have an IEP committee meeting to review the student's current educational goals and accommodations to add proper school attendance goals if needed.

##### b. Upon Additional Absences

If a school attendance plan has been adopted and the pupil is absent for more than one additional day after five absences, a documented reasonable effort of contact by the school Principal or Principal's designee with the student's parent/guardian will be made to conference with the pupil, the pupil's parent and school personnel by either telephone, email, postal mail, school meeting or home visit. 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 his 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 students 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 student. Students are released only on request and authorization of parent or guardian. The Superintendent establishes procedures for release of students 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 when a student's parent or guardian requests an early dismissal.

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Legal 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 References [IGAJ: Driver Education](#)  
JED-R: Guidelines for School and Class Attendance  
JFC: Student Conduct