



Elementary Attendance Guidelines

Please carefully read the following information about South Carolina School Attendance Laws and District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties Guidelines for student attendance. Attendance is a vital factor in student achievement, and any absences from school represents a potential educational loss to the student. However, there are some absences that cannot be avoided so District 5 has established attendance guidelines to assist with these types of absences.

Students are expected to attend school each day in accordance with the approved school calendar. Any student who misses school must present a written excuse within **3** days (Board Policy JH), signed by a parent/guardian, or the medical professional who treated the child. If the student fails to submit a valid excuse to school, he/she will automatically receive an unexcused absence. The building principal must approve or disapprove individual absences in excess of ten days regardless if those absences are lawful, unlawful, or a combination of the two.

Absences:

In accordance with *State Board Regulation 43-274*:

Students are considered lawfully absent when:

1. They are **ill** and their attendance in school would endanger his or her health or the health of others
2. There is a **death or a serious illness** in their immediate family - with proper documentation (i.e. bulletin, death notice, obituary, etc)
3. There is a **recognized religious holiday** of their faith
4. The student is **suspended** from school
5. There is an absence due to an **activity that is pre-approved** by the school building principal

Please keep in mind that parent notes are considered excused within the first 10 absences **only** if the reason for the absence is lawful

Students will be considered unlawfully absent when:

1. There is an absence **without** the knowledge of the parent/guardian
2. There is an absence with the knowledge of the parent/guardian but is **not considered a lawful absence**

Parents will be notified daily when their child is absent from school via the school messaging system (Blackboard). If a student misses 3 full-day consecutive unlawful/unexcused days and/or misses a total of 5 or more full-day unexcused absences, then the student is considered **truant** (*South Carolina State Board Regulation 43-274*). Once a student is determined to be truant, parents/guardians will receive a letter requesting a conference so that an **Attendance Intervention Plan (AIP)** can be put into place. It is imperative that the school and family collaborate in order to ensure the student's attendance improves. In the event of continued unlawful absences after the AIP has been held, the child/family may be referred to Family Court.

Chronic Absenteeism:

In accordance with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), schools are now required to capture the exact amount of instructional time that a student is missing throughout the day. The OCR deems a student to be defined as "chronically absent" when meeting the following:

Students are considered chronically absent if/when:

1. Any student in grades K-12 who **misses 50 percent or more of the instructional day** for any reason for 10% or more of the enrollment period
2. **ANY and ALL** absences contribute to chronic absenteeism (lawful, unlawful, or suspensions)

As a result, all elementary schools will track the exact minutes students are on campus. Therefore, it is imperative that students are on time to school and remain at school, when possible, for the entire instructional period.

