



Attendance Policy

Coweta Charter Academy emphasizes the importance of daily school attendance, as regular participation positively impacts learning and helps develop good habits for future work life. Students are expected to be present every day unless they have a legitimate excuse for being absent. The academy believes that every day in school matters and that absences should be limited to exceptional circumstances.

Absences and Excuses

In accordance with Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-5-1.10, students may be **temporarily** excused from school who are:

1. Personally ill and whose attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others.
2. A serious illness or death in a student's immediate family which would reasonably necessitate absence from school.
3. Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.
4. A court order or an order by a government agency, including pre- induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces.
5. Registering to vote or voting for a period not to exceed one day.
6. When conditions render school attendance impossible or hazardous to the student's health or safety; or
7. Mandated by order of governmental agencies, including pre induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces and court orders.
8. Visitation if a student has a parent or legal guardian that is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. This shall not exceed a maximum of five school days per school year.
9. A student whose parent or legal guardian is currently serving or previously served on active duty in the armed forces of the United States, in the Reserves of the armed forces of the United States on extended active duty, or in the National Guard on extended active duty may be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five school days per school year, not to exceed two school years, for the day or days missed from school to attend military affairs sponsored events, provided the student provides documentation prior to absence from: (i) A provider of care at or sponsored by a medical facility of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; or (ii) An event sponsored by a corporation exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Any absences, which are not permitted under the Compulsory School Attendance Law and by policies and regulations of the school system Board of Education will be considered unlawful (unexcused).

Students who are not present at school shall be counted as present for any of the reasons allowed by state law and State Board of Education Rules. Such reasons include, at a minimum:

1. Children who are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly shall be marked as present by the school for days missed for this purpose in the same manner as students on a field trip.
2. A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to the student's foster care shall be credited as present by the school and shall not be counted as an absence, either excused or unexcused, for any day(s) or portion of a day missed from school.
3. Children who successfully participate in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program shall be counted as present and given full credit during the day of participation in STEP, for up to a maximum of two school days per school year. STEP is a program designed to permit students the opportunity to volunteer to work as poll officers during any primary, special or general election.

Students are required to provide documentation to support any absence that is to be considered excused. At a minimum, a written excuse from the parent, guardian, or enrolling person must be submitted, explaining the reason(s) for the absence. Schools may also request additional documentation, such as a letter from a licensed physician detailing the reasons for the student's or family member's absence. If a written excuse is not submitted within three (3) school days after the student returns, the absence may be marked as unexcused.

School days missed because of an out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

Additionally, students must be present on the day of extracurricular activities to be eligible to participate.

Important Information: Please Read Carefully

Georgia law requires that parents, guardians, or anyone responsible for a child between the ages of six and sixteen ensure that the child is enrolled in and attends school, whether it be public, private, or a home study program. This requirement also applies to students placed in alternative schools. Coweta Charter Academy follows all state regulations regarding attendance and will stay informed about any temporary waivers or orders issued by government and public health authorities during emergencies, such as widespread health risks. In such cases, the school may temporarily adjust attendance policies to comply with official directives and protect the health and safety of students and staff. If changes need to be extended beyond a temporary period, formal policy amendments may be made.

According to Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1), failure to send a child to school can result in misdemeanor charges. Each violation may lead to fines ranging from \$25 to \$100, up to 30 days in jail, community service, or a combination of these penalties. After five unexcused absences, each additional day missed is considered a separate offense.

A student is considered truant if they have more than five unexcused absences in a school year. If a student has over ten unexcused absences, they may be classified as a child in need of services, according to O.C.G.A. § 15-11-2.

Definitions

Tardy-to-class - Arrival at a classroom after the tardy bell at his/her school.

Tardy-to-school - Arrival to homeroom in the morning after the tardy bell.

Early-check-out - Signing of a student out of school before the end of the school day by a parent or designated individual.

Exception-for-suspension School days missed because of an out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

Excused Absence - The reason for a student being absent from school meets the established criteria set forth above. Submission of appropriate documentation is required.

Unexcused Absence - The absence from school does not meet the established criteria set forth by the school board policy and state board rule for consideration for excused absences.

In Attendance – to be considered “in attendance” for a school day, a student must be present for at least one-half of the school day, excluding the lunch period. Students leaving school before meeting that requirement or arriving at school too late to meet the requirement, will be considered absent for the day.

Truant – any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences.

Foster Care Student – a student who is in a foster home or otherwise in the foster care system under the Division of Family and Children Services of the Department of Human Services.

Notification

Schools will provide to the parent/guardian/enrolling person a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance.

1. The parent/guardian/other person having control or charge of such a student shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties.

2. Students aged ten or older by September 1 shall sign a statement indicating receipt of a written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the attendance policy.

When a student accumulates five (5) unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent, guardian, or person in charge of the student. This notice will detail the penalties for these absences and explain that each further unexcused absence will be treated as a separate offense. If the school is unable to contact the responsible party after two reasonable attempts, it will send a written notice via certified mail with a return receipt requested or through first-class mail.

Before initiating any legal action to penalize a parent, guardian, or other responsible person for failing to comply with compulsory attendance, the school will send a notice via certified mail with a return receipt requested.

Excessive Absences

Coweta Charter Academy will maintain daily attendance records, which will be verified by the teacher responsible for them. These records are available for inspection by the school social worker or any authorized representative during the school day.

The Student Attendance Committee is responsible for ensuring collaboration between officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory attendance matters. The committee's goal is to reduce unexcused absences, increase student attendance, and address school climate concerns.

The school counselor will receive information about students who have violated the attendance policy or show patterns that suggest future excessive absences. The counselor may also initiate further contact with parents, guardians, or enrolling persons as necessary to address ongoing attendance issues.

Truancy may lead to referrals to law enforcement or court authorities at any time.