Section 9-8.1:1 Consistent school attendance is essential; chronically absent defined; elementary students; middle school students; high school students; excused and unexcused, and out of school suspensions considered; make up days allowed; superintendent to develop procedures. — A. It is the policy of the School Board that consistent school attendance is essential to achieving Suffolk Public Schools mission of producing 21st century learners that will become productive citizens in society. The School Board and Suffolk Public Schools view school attendance as one of the key metrics in working towards this mission. Students who miss critical instruction in key concepts quickly fall behind in school and are less likely to achieve academic success.

B. The Virginia Department of Education considers a student who misses 10% or more school days to be chronically absent. When a student is chronically absent from school whether the absence is excused, unexcused, or the result of out of school suspensions, this can lead to difficulty learning to read by the 3rd grade, achieving academically in middle school, and graduating from high school. To ensure that students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment, Suffolk Public Schools will abide by the following policies in relation to chronic absenteeism:

C. Elementary who miss more than 10% or 17 school days will be at risk of being retained for the succeeding school year. When a student reaches this level, the school will:

(a) Hold a meeting that includes the parent and the school principal, or principal designee, school counselor, teacher(s), social worker, and family member to review the student's absences and academic progress.

(b) Based on the student's level of academic progress or extenuating circumstances, it will be determined whether the student will be promoted or retained for the next school year.

(c) Evidence of sufficient mastery must be fully documented.

D. Middle School students who miss more than 10% or 17 school days from any class will be at risk of failing the class. When a student reaches this level, the school will:

(a) Hold a meeting that includes the parent and the school principal, or principal designee, school counselor, teacher(s), social worker, and family member to review the student's absences and academic progress.

(b) Based on the student's level of academic progress or extenuating circumstances, it will be determined whether the student will be promoted or retained for the next school year.

(c) Evidence of sufficient mastery must be fully documented.

D. High School students who miss more than 10% or 9 school days per semester on the 4 x 4 Block schedule from any course will be at risk of failing each course in which they are chronically absent for the semester. When a student reaches this level, the school will:

(a) Hold a meeting that includes the parent and the school principal or principal designee, school counselor, teacher(s), social worker, and family member to review the student's absences and academic progress.

(b) Based on the student's level of academic progress or extenuating circumstances, it will be determined whether the student will be promoted or retained for the next school year.

(c) Evidence of sufficient mastery must be fully documented.

E. Excused, unexcused and out of school suspensions are included in the 10% calculation when determining chronic absences under this policy.

F. Any student who is at risk of being retained under this policy, will be afforded the opportunity to make up a maximum of 4 days of lost instruction due to absences by attending either before and after school tutoring or Saturday school, which will count as either three hours of instructional time or a half school day.

G. The school superintendent is granted the authority to develop procedures in order to implement this policy.

Legal Authority — Virginia Code §§ 22.1-78, 22.1-254, 22.1-254.01, 22.1-258, and 22.1-279.3

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