# Fannin County Attendance Protocol

Committee Members:

Frank Wood, District Attorney
Darvin Couch, School Resource Officer
Mark Knowles, Department of Family and Children Services
Sheriff Dane Kirby, Fannin County Sheriff
Chief Robbie Stuart, City of Blue Ridge
Chief Michael Earley, City of McCaysville
Jacqueline McKee, Family Connections
Shannon M. Dillard, Fannin County Schools Superintendent
Gini Tipton, Fannin County Schools and Committee Chair
Bobby Bearden, Chairman of Fannin County Board of Education
Tara Cantrell, Fannin County School Social Worker
Lisa Jackson, Fannin County Central Registrar
Richard Worsley, Juvenile Justice Department
Krystal Sumner, Fannin County Health Department
Honorable Brenda Weaver, Superior Court Judge
Honorable Judge Keith Galligan
Honorable Judge Patricia A. King

FANNIN COUNTY
SCHOOLS

Submitted to Fannin County Board of Education – May 12, 2005
Adopted by the Fannin County Board of Education – June 9, 2005
Revisions Effective June 2026

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Fannin County Attendance is to work collaboratively with the Fannin County School System (FCSS) to improve student attendance, improve school climate, raise student achievement, foster parent/student responsibility, and provide home support with the ultimate goal of ensuring quality learning for all.

## Causes of Truancy

Through working closely with students, families, and community stakeholders in an effort to decrease truancy, several causes of poor attendance have been identified. Absences, tardies, and early dismissals have been related to:

- Illnesses of the child or a relative
- Doctor/dental appointments for the child or a relative
- Religion related conventions
- Family related events (e.g. weddings, funerals, emergencies)
- Family vacations
- Lice
- Inclement Weather
- No available babysitting when parent/guardian must go out of town for the day
- Child simply refuses to attend and parent "cannot make them come"
- Child feigns illness
- Ballgames
- Dance classes
- Car trouble, including flat tires
- Visiting grandparents
- Missed bus
- Overslept
- Injury at school
- Shopping
- Out of town
- Parent gets off work early and does not want to make two trips to pick up child
- Migraine headaches
- Power outages
- Parent wants to beat the parent pickup line traffic
- Skipping school
- Mental health problems (e.g. anxiety attacks and depression)
- Alcoholic parent/guardian so child is caretaker
- Child dawdles/does not report directly to class
- Poor organizational skills of child and/or parents
- Court appearance
- No immunization record/birth certificate
- Single parent family with discipline issues
- Parental and student apathy
- Drugs/alcohol
- Out of school suspension for discipline infractions at school

## Solutions for Truancy

The Fannin County Board of Education implements the following procedures to reduce unexcused absences:

Parental Notification- The FCSS requires that all its public schools provide the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student enrolled in public school a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance. The FCSS notifies the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of the student by letter and phone call when such student has five unexcused absences. This notice will explain to the parent/guardian that a home visit may be the next step. The FCSS notifies again by letter and phone call when such student has seven unexcused absences. This notice will outline the penalty and consequences of continued absences. At the seventh unexcused absence, the parent will be asked to meet with the Attendance Support Team.

Notification by Certified Mail- **If** a student reaches ten unexcused absences**;** FCSS will send written notice via certified mail with return receipt requested, to inform them that they are being referred to Juvenile Court pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-735 and State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10.

Statement of Receipt- By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the FCSS, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of such student must sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties.

- In addition, students age ten or older by September 1 must sign a statement indicating receipt of written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the FCSS's policy.

Other efforts that have aided in improving attendance are:

- Accurate record keeping
- Willingness of stakeholders to cooperate
- Use of good judgment in making decisions related to attendance issues
- Consistency for all students and parents
- Local School Board support
- Support of the Juvenile Court System
- Support of Community stakeholders
- Open communication between parents and school employees

## Definitions for Student Attendance Protocol

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

Excused absences: The Fannin County Board of Education uses the following state approved guidelines for excusing students from school:

- personal illness and when attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others (S.B.O.E. Rule 160-4-2-.31);
- a serious illness or death in their immediate family necessitates absence from school;

- mandated by order of governmental agencies, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, or by a court order;
- celebrating religious holidays;
- conditions that render attendance impossible or hazardous to their health or safety;
- registering to vote or voting, for a period not to exceed one day
- a maximum of five days per school year to visit with a parent or legal guardian prior to his or her deployment or during his or her leave to or from a combat zone or combat support posting.

The principal may require students to present appropriate medical or other documentation upon return to school for the purpose of validation that absences are excused.

In addition to the reasons listed above, the principal may approve an absence as excused if the principal determines that the situation is justified, appropriately documented when necessary, and supports the health, safety, or welfare of the student.

Students Counted Present:

- A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to their foster care shall be counted present.
- Serving as a page of the Georgia General Assembly

Excused tardy:
This includes events that are physically out of the parent's or student's control such as: an accident, road closed due to an accident, power outage, etc.

Tardy:
A student is "tardy to school" when he/she arrives after the 8:00 a.m. bell (High School is 8:10 a.m.). Please refer to your student's school handbook for consequences of excessive tardies.

Tardy to Class:
A student is "tardy to class" when he/she arrives to class after the tardy bell.

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

Unexcused tardy:
This includes: over-sleeping, traffic too heavy, errand for parents, delayed at train crossing, flat tires, etc.

## Consequences of Truancy

The Fannin County Board of Education has adopted, as a part of the Student Code of Conduct developed pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-735, a definition of truancy that contains the minimum standards related to student attendance and a summary of possible consequences and penalties for truancy established in State Board Rule (160-5- 1-.10).

The Fannin County Student Code of Conduct provides a systematic process of behavioral corrections in which inappropriate behaviors are followed by consequences. Disciplinary actions are designed to teach students self-discipline and to help them substitute

inappropriate behaviors with those that are consistent with the character traits from Georgia's Character Education Program.

Included in the section **"**BEHAVIORS WHICH WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES" are**:**

Unexcused absence, chronic tardiness, skipping class, leaving campus without permission, and failure to comply with compulsory attendance law.

The following disciplinary actions may be imposed for any violation of this Code of Conduct:

- Warning and/or Counseling with a School Administrator or Counselor
- Loss of Privileges
- Isolation or Time-out
- Temporary Removal from Class or Activity
- Notification of Parents
- Parent Conference
- Corporal Punishment
- Detention/Saturday School
- Temporary Placement in an Alternative Education Program
- Short-term Suspension
- Referral to a Tribunal for Long-term Suspension or Expulsion
- Suspension or Expulsion from the School Bus
- Referral to Law Enforcement or Juvenile Court Officials: Georgia Law requires that certain acts of misconduct be referred to the appropriate law enforcement officials. The school will refer any act of misconduct to law enforcement officials when school officials determine such referral to be necessary or appropriate.

The degree of discipline imposed will be in accordance with the progressive discipline process unless otherwise stated.

## Grades and Absences

Final student course grades shall not be penalized because of absences if the following conditions are met:

1. Absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons.
2. Make up work for excused absences was completed satisfactorily. Students may request makeup work at the convenience of the teacher. It is the responsibility of the student to ask for and seek out make-up work.

## Out of School Suspensions

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

## Rewards for Good Attendance

Countywide recognition for good attendance comes in the form of Perfect Attendance certificates and T-shirts that are provided to the FCSS by a local bank.

Individual schools may include, but are not limited to, offering incentives to students for good attendance. Examples of possible rewards include:

- Announcing students' names and classes with 100% attendance for specified time periods.
- Placing 100% Perfect Attendance stars on teachers' doors for daily attendance.
- Giving small prizes (pencils, stickers, candy, etc.) to students with chronic absenteeism problems to encourage better attendance

**Student Withdrawals**

Schools in the FCSS may withdraw any student who meets either of the following criteria:

1. The student has missed more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences; the student is not subject to compulsory school attendance; and the student is not receiving instructional services from the local school system through homebound instruction or instructional services required by the federal I.D.E.A.
2. The student is no longer a resident of the FCSS or is enrolled in a private school or home study program.

Also, the superintendent or his/her designee shall use his or her best efforts to notify the parent/guardian if the school system plans to withdraw such student who is younger than 18 and is not subject to compulsory attendance.

In addition, the FCSS shall retroactively withdraw students from the first day of consecutive absences.

**Certificate of Attendance**

The FCSS will issue certificates of attendance to students trying to acquire their driver's permit. During the regular school year, the Certificate of Attendance is good for 30 days after the date it is notarized. During the summer months of June, July, and August, when most schools are not in session, the Department of Driver Services will accept Certificates of Attendance that are dated near the end of the school year (late May or early June).

The Certificate of Attendance should not be issued to students who have graduated from high school, have earned a GED, or are enrolled in college or postsecondary school. Such students must furnish acceptable proof of their status to the Department of Driver Services.

It is required that students obtain a Certificate of Attendance when receiving a driver's instruction permit, and obtain another Certificate of Attendance when receiving a driver's license.

It shall be the responsibility of the parent or guardian of a student who transfers from an out-of-state public, private, or home school to provide for the transmission of attendance records in order to be eligible for the receipt of a Certificate of Attendance. The official record of attendance must be received before a Certificate of Attendance can be prepared.

# Guidelines for Attendance

Fannin County School System guidelines:

- Excuses must be turned in within three days after the child's absence
- All doctor notes turned in on time are accepted as excused absences
- FIVE absences per semester may be excused by parent/guardian notes. After five absences in one semester are excused by parent/guardian notes, guardians must obtain a medical note/excuse, or the absence may not be excused.

Absences:

1. At five unexcused absences, the Family Support Worker will mail a letter and attempt to call the parent/guardian.
2. At six unexcused absences, the principal may choose to send the school attendance officer to the child's home for a home visit.
3. At seven unexcused absences, the Family Support Worker will mail a letter to the parent/guardian. At this time, the parent will be contacted to meet with the Attendance Support Team to discuss ways to help improve attendance. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, the FSW will send written notice via first class or certified mail, return receipt requested.
4. At ten unexcused absences, a student will be referred to juvenile court. Prior to any action to commence judicial proceedings to impose a penalty on the parent for failing to comply with compulsory attendance law, the FSW will notify by certified mail, return receipt requested.

Tardies or Early Dismissals:
Please consult your school's handbook for consequences for excessive tardies or early dismissals.

Consequences for truancy at the school may consist of allowable forms of discipline as stated in the Student Code of Conduct. Consequences for truancy, should a child be referred to Juvenile Court, may include fines and/or imprisonment for the parent/guardian, as well as community service for middle and high school students.

***New additions to the 26-27 protocol are highlighted in yellow***

**Letter on Fannin County Website**

Dear Parents,

Please review the information about the Fannin County School System's Attendance Support Team in our Fannin County Attendance Support Team Protocol (linked above). The Attendance Support Team (AST) cares about Fannin County students and wants to help them succeed in school. We believe that regular attendance is crucial to academic success.

All counties in Georgia are required by law to implement an attendance support team. Ours has been in effect for several years, and we have modified our procedures slightly each year to serve our families best. One of the current procedures this law requires is that all parents and students aged ten or over sign a notice for the School System that they have received the guidelines of their county's AST. This year you will acknowledge receipt of our AST Protocol through our online registration in Infinite Campus.

***Statement included in Online Registration***

My child and I have received a copy of the Fannin County Attendance Support Team (AST) information. We understand the AST's procedures and the consequences that may occur should my child have ten unexcused absences.

We understand that there are times when your children will have to miss school. When this does happen, we must receive a written excuse **within three days** after the child's absence, even if you have already called the school. All excuses should include the date, parent/guardian's signature, and state the specific reason for the absence. Notes can be sent via email. Please visit https://www.fannin.kl2.ga.us/electronicabsencenotes to locate the correct email address for each school. **This is a reminder that the number of absences allowed by parent notes is limited to FIVE per semester. After five absences are excused by parent notes each semester, doctor's notes are required.**

State law and the State Board of Education policy permits students to be excused for the following reasons:

- personal illness and when attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others;
- a serious illness or death in their immediate family necessitates absence from school;

- mandated by order of governmental agencies, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, or by a court order;
- celebrating religious holidays;
- conditions render attendance impossible or hazardous to their health or safety;
- registering to vote or voting for a period not to exceed one day; and a maximum of five days per school year to visit with a parent or legal guardian prior to his or her deployment or during his or her leave to or from a combat zone or combat support posting.
- A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to their foster care shall be counted present.

If you have any questions about the Attendance Support Team or referral procedures, you can contact your school principal or family support worker at the individual school, or you may also contact me at the Fannin County Technology Center, 706-258-2791.

Sincerely,
Gini Tipton
Director of Communications and Information Services

## Committee Signatures

To ensure that these written procedures are followed, the Protocol Committee will meet bi-annually, as required by law. The Committee's goal will be to improve communication between agencies, encourage inter-agency cooperation, and update the protocol as necessary. Agencies are not limited to the minimum requirements of the protocol if additional strategies are implemented. Each participation agency should monitor and evaluate compliance with the protocol and as needed, recommend protocol revision and implementation that best meets the needs of the community and complies with Federal, State, and local statues, as well as agency policy.

This protocol is adopted by the Fannin County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee on April 24, 2026. The committee will file the adopted protocol with the Georgia Department of Education consistent with statutory requirements.

Fannin County Schools
Attendance Protocol

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This protocol is adopted by the Fannin County Student Attendance and School Climate Committee on June 10, 2026. The committee will file the adopted protocol with the Georgia Department of Education consistent with statutory requirements.

This the 10th day of June, 2026.

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Frank Wood, District Attorney
_____
Committe Member Name, Department

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_____ _____
Committe Member Name, Department

Darrin Couch
FCSO

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_____

_____, Fannin Co. Sheriff
Committe Member Name, Department

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Chief of Police, City of Blue Ridge
Committe Member Name, Department

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[signature], chief of police, city of McCaysville
Committe Member Name, Department

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This the 10th day of June, 2026.

Jacqueline McKee

Executive Director, Fannin County Family Connection
Committe Member Name, Department

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Shannon M. Willard, FCSS Superintendent
Committe Member Name, Department

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Gini Tipton

Gini Tipton, Fannin County Schools
Committe Member Name, Department

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Bobby Bearden

Bobby BEARden Board Chair
Committe Member Name, Department

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Tara Cantrell System Social Worker
Committe Member Name, Department

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Lisa Jackson FCSSCR

Fannin County School System Central Registrar

Committe Member Name, Department

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RICHARD WORDLEY GA. DEPT. OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
Committe Member Name, Department

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Krystal Sumner, RN BSN

Krystal Sumner, RN BSN Fannin County Health Department

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Brenda S Weaver
Chief Judge

Committe Member Name, Department

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Keith Gulligan, Juvenile Court
Committe Member Name, Department

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Patrick A. Ly

Juvenile Court

Committe Member Name, Department