

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is the position of the Citrus County School Board that students must attend school on a regular and timely basis to maximize educational opportunities offered in Citrus County Schools. Regular and timely student attendance can be successfully achieved through a strong partnership between the home and school representatives.

This policy is applicable for all Pre-K-12 students in Citrus County, both in brick-and-mortar schools or online through virtual learning. The superintendent may approve exceptions to this policy for special programs, such as alternative education, magnet programs, and adult education programs for the purpose of enhancing the goals of these programs.

I. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The parents or guardians are responsible for their child(ren)'s attendance and to follow compulsory attendance laws.

Florida Statute 1003.21 requires: All children who have attained the age of 6 years or who will have attained the age of 6 years by February 1 of any school year or who are older than 6 years of age but who have not attained the age of 16 years, except as otherwise provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. Students are obligated to attend one hundred eighty (180) days of school each year. Regular attendance is a critical component for student success. Students between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years of age who plan to terminate their school enrollment must complete a formal Declaration of Intent signed by the student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the termination going into effect.

Pursuant to Florida Statute 1003.26(1)(b) If a student has had at least five unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within a 90-calendar-day period, the student's primary teacher shall report to the school principal or his or her designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal shall, unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the school's child study team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. If the child study team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential remedies, and the principal shall notify the district school superintendent and the school district contact for home education programs that the referred student is exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance.

A. Parent Responsibilities

1. Florida Statutes 1003.21 and 1003.24 clearly define the responsibility of parents for the attendance of their child(ren) at school. The school district expects parents to fulfill their responsibilities to ensure student attendance in school.

2. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to be aware of all absences and the penalties associated with excessive absences and unexcused absences and tardies. Schools will provide information to parents about attendance requirements, will make reasonable attempts to notify parents of student absences, and will work with parents to resolve attendance concerns. The principal/designee will contact the parent or guardian to determine the basis for unexcused absences or absences when the reason is unknown.
3. If a student has unexcused absences and it is determined that the student's parent or legal guardian is at fault for these absences, the appropriate school personnel will adhere to Florida Statutes 1003.24, 1003.26 (Enforcement of School Attendance), and 1003.27 (Court Procedures and Penalties).

B. Non-enrollment of Compulsory Attendance Age Students

Written notice shall be given in person or by return-receipt mail to the parent(s) or guardian(s) or other person exercising in loco parentis, when no valid reason is found for a child's non-enrollment. If the notice and requirement are ignored, the designated school representative shall report the case to the superintendent and refer the case to the Student Services Department for compliance with the Florida Compulsory Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).

C. Notification of Loco Parentis

In cases in which a student is not residing with his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), the parent of the student must designate in writing the adult person(s) with whom the student resides who stands in loco parentis so that the student may be admitted to or continue in school. This statement must be notarized and presented to the principal/designee for acceptance.

II. STUDENT ABSENCES

A. Excused Absences

1. Excused absences, tardies, and permission to leave school early will be allowed only for the following:
 - Illness of the student when provided medical documentation.
 - Medical appointments of the student seen by a medical provider. This does not apply to students with documented chronic conditions.
 - Treatment of autism spectrum disorder by a licensed health care practitioner or certified behavior analyst
 - Head lice, a maximum of two (2) days for each occurrence
 - Major illness in the immediate family of the student
 - Death in the immediate family of the student
 - Religious holiday of a student must be documented by parent/guardian (3) days in advance
 - Subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency to fulfill civic duties, (A copy of the subpoena or court summons must be presented to the principal or designee.)
 - Major disaster that would justify absence in the judgment of the administration

- Planned absences approved in advance by the principal/designee
2. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide a written statement indicating the reason for the absence within two (2) days of the student's return to school. If the written statement is not provided by the parent, the absence(s) will be unexcused. The written statement must include the following information for each absence:
- Date the excuse is written
 - Date(s) of the absence(s)
 - Full name of the student
 - Reason for the absence
 - Day time telephone number of parent or guardian
 - Signature of the parent or guardian

Final determination of whether an absence, tardy, or early dismissal is excused or unexcused is the responsibility of the local school principal/designee. Any planned absences, other than medical appointments, must be approved in advance by the principal/designee.

III. TARDIES & UNEXCUSED DISMISSALS

- A. A tardy is defined as an arrival to class or school after the designated starting time or the tardy signal has sounded. Reasons for excused tardies are the same as for excused absences. Three (3) unexcused tardies are equivalent to one (1) unexcused absence.
- B. Students may leave early for those reasons accepted for excused absences. To leave school early without an acceptable reason is an unexcused absence/early dismissal. Three (3) unexcused early dismissals are equivalent to one (1) unexcused absence.
- C. Parents are encouraged to maintain student attendance for the entire school day with minimal interruptions or unnecessary requests to leave school early. For high school, a student must attend each class period a minimum of 50% to avoid being marked absent.
- D. When tardies or early dismissals become excessive, the problem may be addressed through a required parent conference with the school principal/designee, and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken. The disciplinary actions may include, but not be limited to:
 - Detention
 - In-School Suspension
 - Saturday School

IV. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

- A. After 10 days of excused or unexcused absences, a written statement of illness from a licensed health care practitioner will be required for subsequent absences due to illness indicating they are under the supervision of the physician. Absences previously documented by a licensed health care practitioner, a court official, a church official and out-of-school suspension are excluded from the 10-day absence count.

(NOTE: For purposes of this policy, a licensed health care practitioner is defined as follows: medical doctors and persons who are licensed to practice medicine in psychiatry, osteopathy,

podiatry, optometry, dentistry, or chiropractic medicine. An Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP) or a Physician's Assistant (PA) practicing under the protocol of a supervising physician is also allowed to sign.)

If no medical documentation is provided, further absences are considered unexcused. Failure to comply with these requirements, followed by continued absences of the student, may result in disciplinary action as defined in the Code of Student Conduct (i.e., detention, in-school suspension, Saturday school, etc.) and considered appropriate by the school principal.

A parent conference with the school's social worker may also be required to discuss compliance with the Florida Compulsory Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).

- B. If a student has had at least five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reason is unknown, within a calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reason is unknown, within a 90-calendar day period, the student's primary teacher shall report to the school principal/designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of non-attendance. The principal shall, unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the school's child study team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. If the child study team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential remedies.
- C. After fifteen (15) unexcused absences accumulate within any ninety (90) calendar days, District Student Services will determine the appropriate steps for the enforcement of the Florida Compulsory Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).

V. PROVISIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR MAKE-UP WORK

A. Excused Absences

1. Students with excused absences are given the privilege of making up work for credit. Students are allowed the same number of days for make-up work as the number of days absent, not to exceed six (6) school days. The principal/designee may grant extensions to the make-up time limit for extenuating circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to obtain and complete all make-up work within the time specified.
2. All scheduled tests and assignments that were due on the first day of a student's absence will be taken or turned in on the day the student returns to school.
3. Planned absences, other than medical appointments, must have the prior approval of the principal/designee. At least three (3) school days prior to the absence, students are to make pre-arrangements for their test(s) and schoolwork to be completed. Tests are to be taken and work will be due the day the student returns to school.

B. Suspensions

Students suspended out of school may be denied the opportunity to makeup work for credit. Determination of this consideration is the responsibility of the local school principal/designee.

VI. ENFORCEMENT OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

In cases of excessive absences, tardies, or early dismissals, a school social worker may visit or make other contact with the parent(s) or guardian(s) at the home or other places to discuss the attendance problem for the purpose of returning the student to regular attendance. Legal action against a student and parent(s) or guardian(s) may be taken for not complying with the Florida Compulsory School Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).

VII. DRIVING PRIVILEGES

Students who fail to comply with attendance requirements will lose their driving privileges. Pursuant to Section 322.091, Florida Statute requires schools to report to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle (DHSMV) the names of minors who attain the age of 14 and above that have accumulated 15 unexcused absences in a period of 90 calendar days. The school principal/designee is the contact for additional information regarding these requirements.

VIII. ATTENDANCE RECORDING

Student attendance records are to be maintained in accordance with School Board Policy. Students who are on hospital/homebound or home placement instruction are counted as present.