



Book	District Policy
Section	J - Students
Title	Absences and Excuses
Code	JBD
Status	Active
Legal	O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1 SB 160-5-1-.10 O.C.G.A. 20-2-692, 20-2-693, 20-2-694, 20-2-692.2
Cross References	JB - Attendance JD - Student Discipline/Code of Conduct JD - Student Discipline/Code of Conduct JB - Attendance IFBGA - Responsible Use of Enterprise Network JBCC - Withdrawals
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In order for students in Fulton County Schools to learn and achieve, it is critical that they attend and engage in the learning process. Student absences impact a child's ability to succeed.

The Board supports enforcement of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law which makes school attendance the responsibility of the parent and the student. Parents should avoid scheduling or arranging activities that require absences during the school day due to the detrimental impact on the student's access to, and progress in, their educational program. Any child in the state of Georgia subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five (5) days of unexcused absences is considered truant (Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10). Board Policy JD, Student Discipline, outlines consequences for failure to comply with this law.

Definitions

Late Arrival – Any time a student arrives after the beginning of the instructional day.

- Late arrivals follow the same rules for excused and unexcused as listed below
- Late arrivals follow the same rules for documentation, but have different thresholds (see below)

Early Checkout – Any time a student leaves school before the end of the instructional day.

- Early Checkouts follow the same rules for excused and unexcused as listed below
- Early Checkouts follow the same rules for documentation, but have different thresholds (see below)

Tardy – Any time a student arrives after the beginning of a specific class period.

- Tardies will be handled at the school level with guidance from the principal

Excused Absences – A hold harmless absence that has been documented, and relates to one of the following circumstances in accordance with State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1.10 and Georgia State Code, O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1:

- Personal illness or when attendance in school would be detrimental to the health of the student or others
- A serious illness in the student’s immediate family necessitating absence from school[1]
- A death in the student’s family necessitating absence from school
- Observance of religious holidays necessitating absence from school
- Compliance with a court order or an order issued by a governmental agency mandating an absence from school
- Visitation with an immediate family member who is on leave from or is being deployed to military service
- Important family events/celebrations for an immediate family member (graduation, wedding, religious ceremony, etc.)
- Compliance with an order for a pre-induction physical examination for service in the armed forces
- An absence for registering to vote or participating as an active voter in a local, state, or federal election
- A verified interview for college admission or a documented college visit
- A specialized, supplemental, or extracurricular program/event
- Other absences pre-approved by the principal[2]

Unexcused Absence – Any absence not accompanied with a note or documentation or any absence that does not relate to the circumstances listed above is considered unexcused. The following non-exhaustive list includes examples of unexcused absences[3]:

- Bad weather
- Missing the school bus
- Car trouble
- Shopping
- Babysitting
- Oversleeping

In-School Suspension (ISS) – the removal of a student from his/her class for at least half of a school day by the principal or a designee and assignment to a location supervised by appropriate personnel in another room on the school premises.[4]

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) – the removal of a student from his/her school for at least half of a school day by the principal or a designee and assignment to the student’s home/residence.[5]

- Students who are assigned a suspension/expulsion for twenty (20) school days or less who are not participating in the alternative education program are permitted to make-up their work pursuant to the provisions of this policy.

Absences Recorded as Present:

- Per State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.10 and O.C.G.A. 20-2-692 & 20-2-292-2, students must be counted present under the following instances:
 - A student who is a Student Teen Election Participant (Maximum Two Days Per Year)
 - A student who is serving as a page in the Georgia General Assembly
 - A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to the student’s foster care
- Per Fulton County Schools, students must be counted as present under the following instances:
 - Students attending a school field trip or other school-sponsored event
 - Students participating in dual enrollment or virtual school classes[6]
- Students can substitute up to 5 absences per semester (a max of 10 per year) with a remote learning day by meeting the remote learning participation benchmarks (listed below). This would result in the student being counted as present for the day(s) they participate remotely.
 - For security reasons, students who are out of the country may not participate in remote learning.

Remote Learning Attendance:

Students must meet the following participation benchmarks[7] to receive credit for attending in a remote learning setting:

- Elementary School (Daily Attendance)
 - Participation in synchronous RELA and Math instruction remotely,
 - or, participates asynchronously as defined by the teacher
- Middle & High School (Period Attendance)

- Must participate in at least over half of the school day to be given credit for attendance
- Participation in synchronous instruction remotely,
- or, participates asynchronously as defined by the teacher

To be considered absent but present, work that is assigned must be submitted within 2 days of absence. Students may not use a remote learning day on a summative assessment day.

Students can be designated as Assigned Remote by the district based on guidance from state/local health officials if they need to be placed in medical quarantine. The Assigned Remote designation is an excused absence and does not require any documentation from the student. Students may participate remotely during an Assigned Remote designation.

For security reasons, students who are out of the country may not participate in remote learning. Refer to Policy IFBGA for more information.

Documentation and Thresholds

Documenting illness or the illness of family members:

- After 3 consecutive absences, late arrivals, or early checkouts a doctor's note may be required
- After 7 cumulative absences and/or 10 cumulative late arrivals or early checkouts, a doctor's note may be required for any subsequent illness-related absences, late arrivals or early checkouts
- If there is an on-going medical circumstance that requires a student to be absent, late, or checkout early from school frequently or intermittently, a doctor's note will be required to address medical concerns and need for absences
- In the event of a serious illness in the student's immediate family, schools may require students to present medical documentation regarding the family member upon return to school for validating the excused absence, tardy, or early checkout

Excused Absence Allowances for a death in the family:

- Four days for immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, or anyone else living in the student's household)
- Two days for non-immediate family (any family member not included in the definition of immediate family)

Documentation Requirements

Documentation for any absence type must be provided within five days of returning to school for an absence to be excused. Parents and/or guardians may send an email or handwritten note to the school to document a student absence. If needed, the principal or designee will verify the email address and the credibility of the email. The following must be included in all documentation:

- Student Name
- Student FCS ID Number (lunch number)
- Parent/Guardian Name
- Parent/Guardian Email & Phone Number
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Excuses will be kept on file per the [Fulton County Schools Records Retention Schedule](#).

Any student who accumulates seven or more days in a given school year for any reason may be required to provide additional documentation (doctor's note, court order, etc.) for any subsequent absence, whether that absence is excused or unexcused. This excludes days accumulated during an Assigned Remote designation.

Student attendance records shall be corrected from unexcused to excused after proper documentation is provided.

Family Events and Pre-Approved Absences

Students/families must formally request for students to be absent for family events or other pre-approved absences. These requests should be made five school days in advance of the absence. Schools should create their own procedures to collect and approve requests for absences related to family events and/or other pre-approved absences. Only the principal or assistant principal(s) can approve these absence requests.

Before approving these requests, school administration should consider the student's complete attendance record including excused, unexcused, disciplinary, or other absence types. The school administration should also consider the student's academic standing before approving these absences.

If a student will be absent for 10 or more consecutive days due to international travel, the student should be withdrawn from their school and then re-enrolled upon their return. Students will be coded with the appropriate withdrawal code. See Policy JBCC Withdrawals.

School Protocols

Recording Attendance

Elementary School students' attendance shall be marked within the first hour of the instructional day. Middle and High School students' attendance shall be marked each period.

If a student misses more than half of an instructional school day, they will be marked absent for the day.

Locate, Assess, and Connect

To be proactive in identifying students who may need attendance/engagement support, school social workers will utilize the locate, assess, and connect protocol (LACP). The locate, assess, and connect protocol should be used for students who demonstrate the following attendance concerns in either a virtual or traditional school format:

- Students who do not attend during the first two days of school (no shows).
 - LACP must be conducted before these students are withdrawn
- Missing three consecutive or more days of school without documentation
- Any student who has missed 10% or more of the school year at any given time

The LACP should include the following preventative measures (not an exhaustive list):

1. School social worker should connect with families on their current caseload who are exhibiting attendance concerns
2. School social worker will organize a team and create lists for team members of students that need to be located and assessed
3. Support staff will connect with all students on their respective lists (phone/text/email)
4. After three unsuccessful attempts to locate and assess student (phone/text/email), a home visit will be conducted
5. School social worker will organize supports and materials to student and family to remove barriers to attending/engaging

Documenting Lost Instructional Time

- Ten late arrivals or early checkouts will result in a parent notification
- Fifteen late arrivals or early checkouts will result in a referral to the school social worker

Mandatory Withdrawal

- All attempts should be made using the Locate, Assess, and Connect protocol before withdrawing a student
- If a connection cannot be made and a student is absent for 10 consecutive days with no parent notification/documentation, on the 11th day they will be withdrawn
- Schools must demonstrate documentation from the LACP before withdrawing a student
- Withdrawn students are not excused from mandatory school attendance requirements and are expected to reenroll as soon as possible
- Students who withdraw to attend a non-FCS school should notify FCS as soon as possible and make reasonable attempts to follow the withdrawal procedures as determined by the school
- School principals must sign off on all mandatory withdrawals before they are processed
- Prior to withdrawal for non-attendance, school staff may refer the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student to judicial proceedings per O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1

Make-Up Work

Schools and teachers will make a good faith effort to have structures in place to clear late/missing assignments before grades are impacted.

When a student has missed instruction, the teacher should work with the student to ensure the delivery of content before the student is assessed.

Should there be an extenuating circumstance for a prolonged absence and/or missing assignments/assessments and/or tasks, the teacher and student will create an appropriate plan to deliver content and assess student learning. (Cross Reference: Policy IHA Grading and Reporting.)

Student Misses Work Due to Absence (Excused/Unexcused)

- Upon return to school, students will have an equal number of days as they were absent to complete any late/missing assignment, assessment, and/or task(s) for full credit.
- After the deadline of an equal number of days a student was absent, teachers may begin deducting points from a late/missing assignment, assessment, and/or task(s) (maximum 25% deduction).
- If a student fails to turn in a late/missing assignment, assessment, and/or task(s), then a zero may be entered in the grade book.

Student Present but Fails to Turn in Assignment, Assessment, and/or Task(s)

- Teachers may begin deducting points from a late/missing assignment, assessment, and/or task(s) (maximum 25% deduction).

- If a student fails to turn in a late/missing assignment, assessment, and/or task(s), then a zero may be entered in the grade book.

Teachers should make every effort to make sure make-up work is standards-based and focused on learning objectives that are necessary and crucial to master the content. Teachers should work within their professional learning communities to determine the appropriate amount of make-up work to determine student mastery. The following provisions should be considered when assigning make-up work:

- Textbooks or other instructional materials may be requested for the student's use during the period of absence and must be returned promptly when the student returns to school.
- All efforts should be made to conduct student assessments in-person rather than remote.

Exam Exemption

Attendance should not be used to determine exam exemptions status for students. Please see Board Policy IHA: Grading and Reporting System for guidance on exam exemption.

Parent Notification & Involvement

It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to take attendance and notify the school administration of absences. Local school administrators shall establish effective means of communicating with parent(s)/guardian(s) about students regarding individual student attendance. Schools will review student attendance as a part of the multi-tiered system of supports and should be considered during any and all discussions about student performance, behavior, and needed interventions.

Each school is required to notify the parent, guardian or other person who has control or charge of the student when a student accrues the following:

- Three consecutive unexcused absences without notification from parents
- Five cumulative unexcused absences
- Seven cumulative absences
- Ten late arrivals or early checkouts

The communication should include, at a minimum, the importance of attending school and the total number of attendance records to date.

After two (2) reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian or other person who has charge of the student the school shall send a written notice via first-class mail.

School staff may refer the parent/guardian(s) of the student to judicial proceedings per O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1.

[1] Immediate family is defined as a parent/guardian, sibling, grandparent, or any other family member living in the student's household

[2] See Operating Guideline JBD: Excuses and Absences for more information on pre-approved absences

[3] Unexcused absences and/or the accumulation of unexcused absences will result in school-based interventions and/or disciplinary action. For more information, see Operating Guideline JBD: Excuses and Absences and Operating Guideline JD: Student Code of Conduct

[4] In-School Suspension (ISS) will be coded on the student's attendance record by the appropriate staff.

[5] Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) will be coded on the student's attendance record by the appropriate staff.

[6] Virtual classes are a designation separate from remote learning.

[7] Parent/guardian or student must notify teacher prior to the start of the instructional day to utilize the participation benchmark rule. Teachers will make a concerted effort to provide synchronous and/or asynchronous learning opportunities for students who provide sufficient notice.