

Harris County Schools

Attendance Protocol

**Harris County School System
132 Barnes Mill Road
Hamilton, Georgia 31811**

Judge Kenneth Followill, Chief Superior Court Judge

Dr. Susan C. Andrews, Superintendent and Chairperson

Harris County School System

Members of Attendance Protocol Committee

Chief Judge of the Superior Court	Honorable Judge Kenneth Followill
Juvenile Court Judge	Honorable Judge Wayne Jernigan, Sr.
District Attorney	Mr. Mark Post
Department of Juvenile Justice System	Mr. Chris Walker
Superintendent of Schools	Dr. Susan C. Andrews
Certificated School Employee	Mr. Alton White
School Board Member	Mrs. Diane Sandifer
Certificated School Social Worker	Mrs. LaChundra Brundage
Sheriff	Sheriff Mike Jolley
Chief of Police of Hamilton	Chief Dan Colberg
Chief of Police of Pine Mtn.	Chief David White
Chief of Police of Waverly Hall	Chief Archie Hand
Chief of Police of West Point	Chief David Kerr
Department of Family and Children's Services	Mrs. Josephine Bray
Board of Health	Mr. Danny Bridges
Mental Health Organization	Mrs. Ann Riley
Family Connections	Mr. John Winchester

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Harris County School System Student Attendance Protocol

Purpose

The citizens of Harris County recognize the relationship between daily school attendance, student performance, graduation, and habits in the workplace. It is acknowledged that the amount of time actually spent in class is a good measure of a student's academic success. Each tardy or absence means a student has lost an opportunity to learn.

In order to address truancy and attendance, Georgia law §20-2-690.2 requires that communities and schools work together to address truancy through the recommendations of a local Student Attendance Protocol Committee. This committee's responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies and programs involved in compulsory attendance issues,
- Reducing the number of unexcused absences from school and
- Increasing the percentage of students who take tests required by state law.

The student attendance protocol is written as required by the State of Georgia §20-2-690.2 in an attempt to improve student attendance through the utilization of targeted strategies and interventions for reduction of unexcused absences and truancy.

Operational Authority

The Student Attendance Protocol Committee is authorized under the authority of the Chief Superior Court Judge as defined in O.C.G.A. §20-2-690-.2. Following adoption of this written protocol and the filing of it with the Georgia Department of Education, the committee will meet quarterly during the first year of implementation and twice annually thereafter for the purpose of evaluating compliance, effectiveness and to modify the protocol as appropriate.

Definitions of Terms

Parent – In this document, the term “parent” refers to the legal parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of the student in the public school system.

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

Tardy to School – Any student arriving at school following the ringing bell, chime, or other audible signal established by the Principal and intended to indicate the start of the school day. Any student who is on school property but who is not in his or her assigned classroom or other authorized area following the bell, chime, or other audible signal will be considered tardy to school.

Tardy to Class – Any student arriving to class following the ringing bell, chime, or other audible signal indicating the beginning of instructional time.

Excused Tardy – Being late to school or class due to events beyond a student’s control such as an accident, road closed due to an accident, area power outage, late bus, or other excuses determined by the Principal or designee as acceptable. Documentation is required to excuse a tardy.

Early Checkout – Leaving school prior to the end of instructional time and/or the end of the official school day.

Excused Absences – Lack of school attendance for the following circumstances, as a minimum:

- When personally ill and when attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others;
- When in the student’s immediate family there is a serious illness or death which would reasonably necessitate absence from school;
- On special and recognized religious holidays observed by their faith;
- When mandated by order of governmental agencies;
- When prevented from such attendance due to conditions rendering school impossible or hazardous to health or safety;
- When students at least 13 years of age are serving as Pages of the Georgia General Assembly; and

- In order to vote, not to exceed one day.
- High school juniors and seniors will be allowed two (2) excused days during the course of a school year to visit colleges.

Unexcused Absences – Students who are absent from school without documentation of an approved reason.

Principal – In this document, the term “Principal” refers to the head administrator at the school site or his/her designee.

Procedures/Consequences

Consequences for Tardiness

- Elementary School – Students who are tardy must sign the check-in sheet in the office. After three counts of being tardy the counselor will call the parents to discuss the importance of students arriving at school on time. After five counts of being tardy a parent conference with the principal is requested.
- Harris County Carver Middle School – A tardy record is kept for each student. On the occasion of the third tardy per nine weeks, the grade level counselor will call the parent. On the fourth offense per nine weeks, the students will be assigned morning detention. On the fifth and subsequent tardy per nine weeks, the student will be assigned to one day of Saturday School. A note from doctor, dentist, or court official will be the only acceptable excuse for tardiness. The penalties for being tardy are for each nine week period. Students begin each new nine weeks with a clean slate concerning being tardy.
- Harris County High School - Students will be given a warning on the first three counts of tardiness. On the third tardy, parents of students will be contacted to communicate the consequences of additional counts of tardy. Upon the fourth tardy, students will be assigned to in-school suspension (ISS) for the day. On the fifth tardy, students will be assigned ISS for one day and out-of-school suspension (OSS) for one day. On the sixth through ninth tardy, students are suspended out of school for two days. Beginning with the tenth tardy, students are suspended OSS for five days. The penalties for being tardy are for each nine week period. Students begin each

new nine weeks with a clean slate concerning being tardy. If a student is suspended due to excessive tardiness, the resulting absences will be considered unexcused absences.

Consequences for Early Check-Out

Early checkouts for verified emergencies such as serious illnesses or death of immediate family (father, mother, sister, brother, grandmother, grandfather), school sponsored programs, visits to postsecondary schools, serving as pages in the Georgia General Assembly will be excused. Documentation is required to excuse an early dismissal. Records will be kept at each school to document the number of days a student misses due to early checkouts.

Students leaving early or arriving late to class may be counted absent from the class or classes missed if they are not present for the entire instructional period. At Harris County High School, students must be present for sixty minutes of the ninety minute class period in order to be counted present for the class.

Excessive incidents of unexcused early checkouts will result in disciplinary action or referral to the Student Support Team (SST).

Middle school students missing more than ten days in a class will lose credit for the course. High school students missing more than five days in a class will lose credit for the course. See schools' Student Handbook for appeal information.

Consequences and Notification for Unexcused Absences

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

- Absences are excused
- Make up work for excused absences were completed satisfactorily. Make up work will be provided for excused absences only.

Parent Notification – The Harris County School System will provide parents or guardians a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance laws.

By September 1 of each school year or within thirty days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parents or guardians of each student must sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties.

Consequences and Penalties for Violation of Compulsory Attendance

The principal or principal's designee will assign consequences and penalties for unexcused absences and/or early checkouts at any time deemed appropriate. Consequences and penalties may include, but are not limited to the following:

The principals must notify the parents after three unexcused absences and must get a response from the parent. The response may be in the nature of:

- Documented phone call
- Letter from parent
- Return statement on letter that notification has been received
- Documented parent conference

If the parents does not respond after two attempts to notify parent, a certified letter is sent to the parent with a copy of Harris County Board of Education policy JBA, Harris County Board of Education policy, JBD and a copy of O.C.G.A. §20-2-690-.1.

The Parent must sign a statement of receipt of information. Children over ten years of age must also sign a statement of receipt of information.

After two attempts to get signatures, the principal must send information out via certified mail, return receipt requested.

Signed copies of statements must be retained through the end of the school year.

Upon a student's accumulation of seven unexcused absences in the school calendar year, a student's counselor will make a referral to the Principal and the Student Support Team coordinator for SST intervention. Prior to the first SST meeting, the school counselor or other appropriate staff member will notify the parent of the student. At the meeting, the parents and the staff will develop interventions and strategies for improvement of the student's school attendance.

Also upon a student's accumulation of seven unexcused absences, the parent or parent(s) of the student must report at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Attendance Protocol Committee the reasons for the excessive unexcused absences

and their planned solution to the problem. The Attendance Protocol Committee will also provide the parents with suggestions/assistance for improving the student's attendance.

When a student has accumulated eight unexcused absences, the parent of the student will receive a letter from law enforcement stating that the behavior is unacceptable and may result in their being charged with violating the compulsory attendance law.

Students who accumulate ten or more unexcused absences will receive one or more of the following consequences:

- A tribunal will determine additional school-level consequences;
- Criminal charges will be filed against the parent. Parents and students will be reported to the proper authorities for truancy and could face a fine of up to \$100.00, imprisonment of up to 30 days, and/ community service.

Note that the ten unexcused absences are cumulative, not necessarily consecutive, absences.

Exception for Suspension – School days missed as a result of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy unless the suspension is a result of excessive tardiness.

Attendance Procedures Regarding Driver's License

The Board of Education is required to submit notification to the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety that a student, age 15 through 17, has dropped out of school and has not enrolled in a private school or a general educational development (GED) program_or has violated the following conditions for a period of one academic year prior to the student making application for a driver's license:

- Has had more than ten unexcused absences during the current academic year or ten or more school days of unexcused absences in the previous academic year.
- Has been found in violation by a tribunal, has received a change in placement, or has waived his or her right to a hearing and pleaded guilty to one of the following offenses:
 - Threatening, striking, or causing bodily harm to a teacher or other school personnel (O.C.G.A. 20-2-751.6).

- Possession or sale of drugs or alcohol on school property or at a school sponsored event (O.C.G.A. 20-2-11-84).
- Any sexual offense prohibited under Chapter 6 of Title 16 (O.C.G.A. 20-11-84).
- Causing substantial or visible bodily harm to or seriously disfiguring another person, including another student (O.C.G.A. 20-2-751.4)
- Possession or use of a weapon on school property or at a school sponsored event. (O.C.G.A. 16-11-127.1)

The local school superintendent or designee will use best efforts, including first-class mail, to notify students age 14 and older when the student has only three absences remaining before violating the state’s attendance requirements regarding the denial of a driver’s permit and license.

Withdrawal of Students Due to Absenteeism

The Harris County School System is authorized to withdraw a student for the following reasons:

- Missing more than ten consecutive days of unexcused absences;
- Is no longer subject to compulsory school attendance
- Is not receiving instructional services from the local school system through homebound instruction or instructional services required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Has been expelled due to a decision rendered in a tribunal hearing.

The superintendent or designee shall use his best efforts to notify the parents if the school system plans to withdraw such student who is younger than 18 years of age and is not subject to compulsory school attendance.

The school system is authorized to withdraw a student subject to compulsory attendance only if the local superintendent or designee has determined that the student is no longer a resident of the local school system or is enrolled in a private school or home study program.

Monitoring of Attendance

In order to decrease the number of absences, each school will develop an incentive program that encourages daily on-time attendance.

The Principal or his designee will continuously monitor student absenteeism to determine when a student becomes eligible for the notification and consequences as described in this protocol.

The Principal of each school will also review attendance records at the end of each school year for the purpose of identifying students for attendance monitoring at the beginning of the next school year. Students referred to the Student Support Team for violation of compulsory attendance during a school year will be considered as an active referral for continued monitoring at the beginning of the following school year.