“Model” (example) Student Attendance and School Climate Protocol

Definitions for Student Attendance Protocol

Tardy (the following definitions for “tardy” are only examples)

Elementary School – A student is tardy to school when he/she arrives after the _________ a.m. bell.

- On the fourth & subsequent tardy in any quarter, lunch-recess detentions will be assigned.

Middle & High School - A student is "tardy to school" when he/she arrives at school after the _________ a.m. bell.

- When a student arrives to school after one half or more of first period has elapsed, he/she will be considered absent from first period, as well.

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

Excused tardy - includes events that are physically out of your control such as: an accident, road closed due to an accident, power outage, etc.

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

1. On the fifth and subsequent tardy in a quarter, detentions (or other consequences) will be assigned.

2. On the eight and subsequent tardy in any quarter, the student will be required to attend Saturday School.

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

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
Local boards of education shall adopt policies and procedures excusing students from school under the following circumstances, as a minimum.
In the case that a student’s personal illness or attendance in school endangers a student’s health or the health of others, local boards may require students to present appropriate medical documentation upon return to school for the purpose of validating that the absence is an excused absence. With proper verification a student may be eligible for hospital/homebound instruction (S.B.O.E. Rule 160-4-2-.31);

In the event of a serious illness in a student’s immediate family, local boards may require students to present appropriate medical documentation regarding the family member upon return to school for the purpose of validating that the absence is an excused absence.

A court order or an order by a governmental agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absence from school.

Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.

Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.

Local boards of education may allow a period not to exceed one day for registering to vote or voting in a public election.

Local boards of education shall count students present when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly.

**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.
   Local boards of education are not required to provide make-up work for unexcused absences.

The __________________Local Board of Education adopts the following policies and procedures to reduce unexcused absences.

**Parental Notification**

The __________________school system will notify the parent, guardian or other person who has control or charge of the student when such student has five unexcused absences. The notice will outline the penalty and consequences of such absences and that each subsequent absences will constitute a separate offense.
Notification by Certified Mail

After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian or other person who has charge of the student, the ________________________school system will send written notice via certified mail with return receipt requested; and,

The _____________________School system 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.

Statement of Receipt

By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student’s enrollment in the ____________________________school system, 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 local system’s policy.

Drivers License Denial

The __________________________ Board of Education requires the local school superintendent or the superintendent’s designee to use his or her best efforts including certified mail to notify students age 14 and older when the student has only three absences remaining before violating the state’s attendance requirements pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 40-5-2 regarding the denial of driver’s permits and licenses.

Truancy

The __________________________ Board of Education adopts, as a part of the student codes 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 summary of possible consequences for students

The __________________________ School System will include possible dispositions for unruly children, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 15-11-67, including the possible denial or suspension of a driver’s license for a child.

[Insert System Code of Conduct/Progressive Discipline Policy as it relates to Attendance]
SAMPLE LOCAL POLICY:

Excessive Absences

1. The following provisions apply to absences during a school year.

2. Days students are absent due to out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused absences for the purposes of determining truancy (S.B.O.E. 160-5-1-.10).

3. After ________ Absences:

   a. Excused Absences: The teacher will contact the parent or guardian by telephone or parental conference regarding attendance when possible. If contact is unsuccessful, then a letter or postcard will be sent.
   
   b. Unexcused Absences: After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a child of five unexcused absence without response, the school shall send a notice to such parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested. The letter is to include a copy of the Compulsory Attendance Law (O.C.G.A. 20-20690.1)

4. After __________ Unexcused Absences by students 14 years old and older, schools and/or school social workers shall notify students they have only three unexcused absences remaining prior to violating the attendance requirements contained in subsection (a.1) of O.C.G.A. 40-5-22.

5. After _______ Absences:

   a. Excused: A letter will be sent from a school administrator to the parent or guardian regarding attendance. This letter should not be sent for a child with documented illness unless the school’s administration and/or the school social worker determines it necessary. In addition, an administrator shall confer with a School Social Worker to determine whether a referral is warranted, at this time.

   b. Unexcused: A letter will be sent from a school administrator to the parent or guardian regarding attendance. If the student is between 14 and 18 years of age and the ten unexcused absences are within one semester or two consecutive quarters, his/her eligibility to obtain or retain an instruction permit or driver’s license may be impacted.

6. After _______ Absences:

   a. Excused: A school administrator shall confer with a School Social Worker to determine whether a referral is warranted, at this time.

   b. Unexcused: A referral shall be made to the School Social Worker using the social work form.

   c. If a referral is made to the School Social Worker, an administrator must sign the form and all relevant correspondence and documentation must be attached. The Social Worker will work with the student and family in order to address the attendance problem. The Social Worker shall involve agencies and services such as mental health, social service agencies, clinic assistant or school nurse, student and parent groups, truancy panel, and Department of
Family and Children Services. If the Social Worker interventions are unsuccessful, a complaint shall be filed in the appropriate court of law.

* * *

Student Withdrawals (limitations)

The _____________________________ School System is authorized to withdraw a student who:

- Has missed more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences;
- Is not subject to compulsory school attendance; and
- Is not receiving instructional services from the local school system through homebound instruction or instructional services required by the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Parental Notification of Student Withdrawal

The Superintendent or the superintendent’s designee shall use his or her best efforts to notify the parent(s), guardian(s), or other person(s) who has charge of a student 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 the superintendent’s designee has determined the student is no longer a resident of the local school system or is enrolled in a private school or home study program.

Example of a Local Attendance Checklist
(Steps to be taken prior to Court referral)

1. Before any court referral is considered, casework should have been initiated with students and their families, including a minimum of ________ home visits or other forms of direct contact (phone call) with the family (where a home visit is not possible or appropriate).

2. For families where there has been little or no direct contact, court referrals should be considered where the family has consistently failed to comply with appointments or refused to work with ____________ (i.e., Social Services/School Personnel).

3. Court referral should also be considered
   - in cases where students are not attending school at all and no resolution can be reached;
   - in cases where poor attendance is ongoing over a period of time and no sustained improvement is seen, and
• in certain cases where tardiness is a chronic problem.

4. The case should then be discussed with _____________ and if it is agreed that court referral is suitable, the _____________ should complete the court progression sheet, which is countersigned by _____________ and passed to _____________ who will issue a “Court Warning” letter. It is the responsibility of the _____________ to ensure that copies of the letter are filed, and sent to school and _____________ (other agencies and/or people).

5. If, following a period of approximately 2 - 4 weeks, during which time casework is ongoing, there is no improvement, the _____________ should re-submit the Court referral.

6. The _____________ should provide a brief written report detailing the circumstances and work undertaken. This report should be given to the Court.

7. For Court prosecutions, the _____________ will need to complete a witness statement.

8. The _____________ is expected to attend hearings at the designated Court.

9. Finally, throughout the course of any legal action being taken, school system casework should continue because it is critical, particularly in cases where students are completely out of school, that truancy does not go unattended.

**Items to Consider Regarding School Climate**

A new Georgia law requires that every county’s Superior Court create a committee to improve school climate, student attendance, and school safety. This resource page provides information about these committees and provides tools to help the committees comply with this new requirement.

Definition of school climate: A school’s climate is the overall quality and character of school life. School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures. In a positive school climate, students and adults:

- Feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe;
- Engage with each other and respect each other;
- Share a vision for the school and work together to make it happen—each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of its physical environment; and
- Model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
Each county’s Student Attendance and School Climate (SASC) committee must include representatives from certain county agencies and programs. The Superior Court Chief Judge creates the committee if one does not already exist.

SASC committee members work together and with other officials, agencies, and programs to:

- Reduce the number of unexcused absences from school;
- Increase the percentage of students present to take state-mandated tests; and
- Improve School Climate

The law requires that SASC committees review county court and school practices and school discipline data, Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0, and School Climate Ratings, student discipline data, and recommend reforms that:

- Improve school climate for the purpose of improving student achievement scores, school safety, student and teacher morale, community support, and student and teacher attendance, and
- Decrease student suspensions, expulsions, dropouts, and other negative aspects of the total school environment that disrupt school operations and the safety of students and staff members.

**Methods and Processes (examples)**

Review existing data sources and the elements that are related to the outcomes. Consider using the following to guide discussions and build future agendas:

1. **School Climate Star Ratings** – The Georgia Department of Education provides these at [http://www.gadoe.org/Georgia-Insights/Pages/School-Climate-Star-Rating.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/Georgia-Insights/Pages/School-Climate-Star-Rating.aspx)
   a. For more insight, considering reviewing results of the Georgia Student Health Survey 2.0 for each school at [http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/GSHS-II/Pages/GSHS-Results.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/GSHS-II/Pages/GSHS-Results.aspx). GSHS 2.0 is used as part of the calculation of the School Climate Star Ratings.

2. **Out of School Suspension Rates** – Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice publishes these at [https://gaappleseed.org/initiatives/toolkit/suspension-rate](https://gaappleseed.org/initiatives/toolkit/suspension-rate).

3. **Student Achievement K-12 Student Discipline Dashboard** – The Governor’s office provides suspension, expulsion, and other relevant information at [https://public.gosa.ga.gov/noauth/extensions/DisciplineDASHV1](https://public.gosa.ga.gov/noauth/extensions/DisciplineDASHV1)
   a. /DisciplineDASHV1.html

4. **College and Career Ready Performance Index.** [http://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/CCRPI/Pages/default.aspx)
5. Other Data Collected by the school district.

Documents to Review (examples)

The school district and the Committee may establish additional discussion items by reviewing the school district’s

1. Safe School Plan (not for public review due to safety concerns)
2. School climate improvement plans (i.e., Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports – PBIS)
3. Access to mental health services (i.e., APEX Program)
4. Access to teacher and staff training on mental health and trauma awareness
5. Physical condition of schools
6. Other relevant documents/plans/programs

Action Items (examples)

1. List short-term action items to improve school climate.
2. List long-term action items to improve school climate.
3. What is needed to assist schools to improve school climate (resources, training, etc.)?
4. Determine how to measure progress during the school year. Consider formative assessment of school climate by using 15-item elementary GSHE 2.0 questions with a random set of students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to gauge progress of school climate initiatives during the school year
5. Determine how to measure progress at the end of each school year.