

Attendance

Regular school attendance is not only an important part of your child's educational success, it is a mandate that is required by law per the Virginia Code 22.1-254. In an effort to support students in reaching their full potential and establish positive attendance habits, we encourage parents/guardians to ensure that their children are in school on time, every day. When parents help their children establish positive attendance habits starting in Kindergarten, these habits benefit children throughout their schooling as well as when they enter the workforce. Alexandria City Public Schools strictly adheres to the Commonwealth of Virginia's Compulsory Attendance Law, which requires school personnel to make reasonable efforts to contact a parent or guardian when any student is absent from school for a total of five school days or more within a given school year, when absences are without excuse and no indication has been received to verify such occurrences. When students have accrued an excessive amount of unexcused or unverified absences, the school social worker, along with the parent and other school support team members, must develop a plan to resolve the student's non-attendance. Virginia Code 22.1-262 suggests that failure to adhere to a school attendance support plan may result in very serious outcomes for students as well as parents/guardians.

Such outcomes may include, but are not limited to the following measures:

1. Referring a student to the Alexandria Court Services Unit Attendance Review Panel
2. Initiation of a complaint to the Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court against a parent or guardian, pursuant to Virginia Code 22.1-262
3. Filing a CHINS (Child in Need of Supervision) Petition with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court as defined in Virginia Code § 16.1-228 and authorized by § 16.1-241.2
4. Participation in juvenile probationary supervision services
5. Loss of student's driver's license

Please note that any student who is absent from school without verification for 15 consecutive days will be officially withdrawn from school per the compulsory attendance expectations noted in the Virginia Code 22.1-254. The principal or stated designee will alert parents/guardians in writing at such time that a student is removed from school records. In an effort to prevent the above stated scenarios, it is imperative that parents/guardians provide verbal and/or written notification to school personnel each time their child will be absent from school.

Student absences may be excused, pending verification from the guardian and/or another designated professional. Examples of excused absences may include, but are not limited to, the following conditions defined in the Alexandria City Public Schools Attendance Policy Regulation (JEA-R):

1. Medical Illnesses (Physical or Mental). A principal may request that documentation from a physician be provided after the student has accrued 3 consecutive absences or 10 or more absences within a given school year.
2. Medical and dental examinations
3. Observance of a religious holiday
4. Student court hearings
5. Students who have been approved to participate in school sponsored activities (inside and outside of the school building)
6. Students who have been assigned In-School (ISS), Alternate Instructional Support (AIS) or Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
7. Family emergencies (loss of a loved one, unexpected residence dislocation, critical injuries to family members, etc.). Parents/guardians are expected to plan extended travel and vacations days around ACPS scheduled breaks and approved holidays
8. ACPS transportation services related delays

Timeliness is also a core expectation of the ACPS student attendance policy. Tardiness to school is a critical factor that impacts the overall academic experience and success of students. Tardiness encompasses any variation of time that extends beyond the principal's documented start time for the school day or class period. Parents/guardians are expected to provide verbal and/or written notification to designated school personnel each time a child is late to school. Examples of excused tardies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Medical Illnesses (Physical or Mental). A principal may request that documentation from a physician be provided after the student has accrued 10 or more tardies within a given school year

2. Medical and dental examinations
3. Student court hearings
4. Students who have been approved to participate in school sponsored activities (inside and outside of the school building)
5. Critical or isolated family emergencies (death of a loved one, unexpected residency dislocation, critical injuries to family members, etc.). Parents/guardians are expected to plan extended travel and vacations days around ACPS scheduled breaks and approved holidays
6. ACPS transportation services related delays
7. Weather related conditions
8. Tardies to class during the school day will be excused at the discretion of the principal or designee

When students have accrued an excessive number of unexcused or unverified tardies, the school social worker, along with the parent and other school support team members, must develop a plan to resolve the situation as soon as possible.

It is quite difficult for a student to fully engage in school when he or she misses an excessive amount of school days and instruction time. When students miss school, they miss the opportunity to be part of the school's community and often start to feel behind academically. Research shows that chronic absenteeism, which is missing school for ten percent of the school year for any reason, of any kind, can lead to poor academic achievement, feelings of isolation and disengagement, and can impact a student's decision to drop out of school altogether. Consistent school attendance, in conjunction with other positive behaviors, resources and venues of support will help to strengthen student's academic functioning as well as their social, cognitive and emotional development. Parents are encouraged to partner with school staff to improve school attendance. Working together to create solutions will give students the best chances of academic success.