

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1.0 PHILOSOPHY

The Summers County Board of Education believes that regular attendance is a requirement for the delivery of formal education to the students of Summers County Schools. The Summers County Board of Education also realizes that a program promoting regular attendance is a shared responsibility between the school and the student's parents; thus we encourage parental support for daily school attendance. The basic intent of this policy is to insure co-operation between the school and the home in promoting school attendance and in meeting the individual needs of students to help them reach their potential. Since programs of study are planned and taught so that each day's work builds on the previous day's work, all students are expected to attend school regularly and to be on time for classes. A direct relationship exists between good attendance and student performance and between graduation and good work habits in the market place. It is the intent of the Summers County Board of Education to increase attendance by creating a positive and safe environment that is conducive to learning and to helping students develop responsibility, self-discipline, and other good work habits.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1. Absence - Not being physically present in the school facility for any reason.

2.2. Allowable deductions - Absences that result from school-approved curricular/co-curricular activities; failure of the bus to run/hazardous conditions; Homebound students; Students suspended for Level 4, Safe Schools Act Behavior.

2.3. Attendance - For statistical purposes, attendance will be reported and aggregated to the nearest half day. Full-day attendance is being present at least .74 of the school day. Half-day attendance is being present at least .50 of the school day.

2.4. Attendance Rate - The number of days present divided by the number of days of membership, multiplied by one hundred, equals attendance rate for students on the attendance registers in classes K-12.

2.5. Dropout - A dropout is an individual who was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled on October 1 of the current school year; or was not enrolled on October 1 of the previous school year although expected to be in membership (i.e., was not reported as a dropout the year before); and has not graduated from high school, obtained a GED diploma, or completed a state- or district-approved education program; and does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions:

- a. transfer to another public school district, private school, registered home school, or state- or district-approved education program;
- b. temporary school-recognized absence due to suspension or illness or c. death.

2.6. Dropout Date - For students of ages 17 or older, the dropout date is defined as the school day after the student's last day of attendance.

2.7. Enrollment - A student is officially enrolled when one of the following conditions occur:

- a. student was enrolled the previous year;
- b. student appears at school to enroll with or without a parent/guardian; or
- c. student and/or parent/guardian appear at school to enroll with or without records.

2.8. Enrollment Count - A status count that reports the number of students on the attendance register as required by the West Virginia Department of Education.

2.9. Membership Days - The days present plus the days absent.

2.10. Excused Student Absence- Absences that result from school-approved curricular/co-curricular activities; failure of the bus to run/hazardous conditions, and other county board approved excused absences.

2.11. Transfer - A process by which a student ends enrollment or attendance in one location and begins enrollment or attendance in a second location (e.g., within a county, between counties, or out of state). This can be evidenced through a transcript request or other documentation that the student is continuing elementary or secondary education.

2.12. **Homeless Children and Youths** - Homeless children and youths as defined in Subtitle B of the title VII of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C 11431 et seq.) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence which includes:

- a. children or youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- b. children or youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- c. children or youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- d. migratory children or youths that qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances as described in the above descriptions.

2.13. **School of Origin** - As defined in Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 3.1. The Summers County Board of Education shall hire an attendance director and provide support for attendance activities (WV Code 18-8-3, 18-8-4).
- 3.2. The attendance director shall be responsible for administration and implementation of the attendance program including both state and local requirements. All required state attendance reports and dropout reports shall be submitted to the WVDE via WVEIS.
- 3.3 The principal or designee at each school shall be responsible for collecting and maintaining classroom attendance data and dropout data via WVEIS and for making referrals to the attendance director.
- 3.4. Each school shall establish a program that encourages student responsibility, self-discipline, and other good work habits.
- 3.5. Each school shall establish student involvement programs such as Peer Mediation and Natural Helpers that promote a positive safe environment for all students.
- 3.6. Each school shall establish a Student Assistance Team to aid students and parents with attendance plans and dropout prevention plans. The Students Assistance Team may refer students to other community agencies or to the Summers County Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) whenever such referral, in their estimation, is in the best interest of the student or his/her family. The SAT shall review any interventions to determine their effectiveness.
- 3.7. Each school shall maintain an accurate attendance record with an up-to-date register/record of attendance for every student enrolled in the school. Students who are physically absent from school must be documented as absent as this documentation may become a legal record.
- 3.8. Each school shall establish written procedures for notifying parents about absences, for monitoring absences, and for notifying the county attendance director of excessive absences. These procedures will be submitted to the county attendance director by the end of the second week of school.
- 3.9. It shall be the responsibility of the school principal or designee to inform parents and staff of the attendance policy and of the programs that are available at the school to help students who are at risk of becoming truant.
- 3.10. Each parent, guardian, or custodian shall have the responsibility of fully cooperating in and completing the enrollment process by providing: immunization documentation (W.Va Code §16-3-4), copy of a certified birth certificate or affidavit (W.Va. Code §18-2-5c), signed suspension and expulsion document (W.Va. Code §18-5-15), and any other documents required by federal, state, and/or local policies or code.
- 3.11. The attendance director shall serve as the liaison for homeless children and youth as defined in Subtitle B of the Title VII of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C 11431 et seq.) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as described above in 2.12.

The attendance director is required to:

- (a) ensure that public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services.
- (b) ensure that parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- (c) ensure that parents or guardians are informed of, and assisted in accessing, all transportation services for their children, including to the school of origin.

(d) help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes, and provide the youth with notice of his or her right to appeal the school district's decision.

(e) immediately assist in obtaining immunizations or record of immunizations or other medical records for those students who do not have them, and assure that students are enrolled in school while the records are being obtained.

(f) ensure that homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.

(g) ensure that homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that local educational agency.

(h) ensure that homeless families, children, and youths receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by Summers County Schools, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.

(i) ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated as outlined in Paragraph (3)(E) of Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.).

4.0 PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION:

All students who are not in school shall be counted absent or non-member, however a student shall not be denied any incentive reward for absences resulting from failure of bus operation.

The compulsory school attendance law applies to all children between the ages of 6-16 (6-17 beginning with 2010-11 incoming freshman class).

Legal exemptions from State Code 18-8-1

1. Instruction in a private, parochial or other approved school.
2. Instruction in home or other approved place.
3. Physical or mental incapacity.
4. Hazardous conditions.
5. High School graduation or alternate secondary program completion.
6. Work permit.
7. Serious illness or death in the immediate family of the pupil.
8. Destitution in the home.
9. Church ordinances, observances of regular church ordinances.
10. Enrollment in Exemption K School.

The county attendance director shall verify these exemptions. If a parent feels that his/her child is exempt under these provisions he/she should notify the school where the child should attend or the county attendance officer. Failure to do so will be considered illegal absence from school. All exemptions shall be reported to the superintendent of schools.

Excused Absences:

1. Illness or injury of the student requiring physician's verification.
2. Medical and/or dental appointment which cannot be scheduled outside the school day when the absence is verified in writing by the physician or dentist.
3. Illness of student verified by parents/guardian not to exceed ten (10) total days per year. Verification by a physician will be required if absences exceed ten (10) days.
4. Illness or injury in family when student absence verified as essential by physician.
5. Calamity, such as fire in the home, flood, or family emergency upon approval by the school principal.
6. Death in family, limit three (3) days for each occurrence except in extraordinary circumstances. * "Family" defined as mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, aunt, uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother's children, sister's children, student's child(ren), or any person living in the same household.
7. Leaves of educational value or school approved extra-curricular activities adhering to these stipulations:
 - a. prior approval of school administrator
 - b. prior submission and approval of educational plan detailing objectives and activities
 - c. leave not to exceed 10 days annually or 5 days per semester-verification of implementation of the education plan upon student's return

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Reference: WV Constitution, Article XII, WV Code 18-2-5 and 18-1-1, WVDE Policy 4110

- d. leave to extend more than 10 days require county board approval
8. Legal obligation with verification.
9. Failure of bus to run or extremely hazardous conditions.
10. Observance of religious holidays.
11. Handicapped students' absences will be addressed in accordance with Policy 2419, Regulations for the Education of Exceptional Students
12. Homebound services are provided in accordance with State Policy 2510 and the Summers County Homebound Policy. In cases of extended hospital confinement and/or prolonged illness, injury, or health condition, the parents are responsible for contacting the director of student services at the board office. Arrangements can be made for a homebound teacher to be assigned to the student when the necessity is certified by a licensed physician and the condition has lasted or will last for more than two weeks.
13. Alternative setting absences due to in-school or out-of-school suspensions (in-school suspensions or alternative education).
14. Health exclusion for contagious parasite conditions, such as lice, limited to 3 days for each occurrence.
15. Military - requirements for students enlisting into the military when verified. Parent/guardian on leave for visitation with family, limited to 3 days for each occurrence.

Unexcused Absences:

Any absence not meeting the excused absences requirements shall be considered an unexcused absence. Any absence that is not verified in writing will be considered an unexcused absence. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to obtain and provide such verification to the school. Written verification shall be provided to the attendance authority of the school the first day the student returns to school. If a student fails to turn in written verification within three days after returning to school the absence will be recorded as unexcused unless the principal or designee makes an exception

NOTE: Once the pupil has entered the school premises an excuse must be secured by the student from the office of the principal prior to his/her leaving the school before dismissal time. The student is on school premises from the time he/she gets on the school bus until he/she gets off the bus, if he/she is transported to school by bus. Written verification must be provided for any absence no matter what the length. Each school principal shall establish a system of approving or disapproving such excuses and notifying persons involved such as teachers and/or parents. **A student may not be suspended solely for failure to attend class.** Other methods of discipline, to be decided by individual schools and made a part of their discipline policy, may include but are not limited to parental conferences, detention, extra class time, or alternative class settings.

Tardiness

Tardiness to school shall be determined by the time set at individual schools for the start of the school day. This information will be part of the student handbook. All instances of tardiness to school shall be verified in writing and marked excused or unexcused. The parent shall be notified by mail or phone upon the student's third tardy to school. If a child accumulates seven tardies to school, parents must come to the school for a conference to correct the problem. At Summers County High School, beginning with the fifth tardy and each one thereafter, the student will be assigned to in-school suspension by the administration. Tardiness will be reported to the register of attendance and reported to the parent on the report card. Tardiness to individual classes will be handled by each school's policy on tardiness and shall also be a part of the school's handbook.

Make-Up Work

While recognizing that there is no satisfactory "make-up" for work missed in the classroom it is necessary that missed assignments be completed. The following shall be the make up policy for Summers County Schools: All work missed because of student absence will be made up according to the make-up policy of each school. Students will be given at least one day for each day of absence whether excused or not excused to make up missed work assignments. Work missed during unexcused absences must be made up by the end of the nine week grading period unless exceptions are made by individual teachers/schools. It is the responsibility of the student/parent to request the missed assignments and return the work as directed by the policy or classroom teacher. Teachers may, at their discretion, require alternative work assignments and/or evaluation procedures and may extend the make-up time for excused absences. Individual school attendance procedures shall establish a means whereby written notice of the make-up requirements and deadlines are provided the student and parents.

Individual Exception to Four-Year Attendance Requirement

Attendance for all four-years during grades 9-12 is important to attain full benefit from the educational programs Reference: WV Constitution, Article XII, WV Code 18-2-5 and 18-8-1, WVDE Policy 4110 offered by the Summers County Board of Education. Therefore, all students shall be scheduled for the full school day for all four years. Exceptions may be made by the Summers County Board of Education to accommodate placement into college courses, advanced vocational/technical programs, participation in the WV Virtual School, or for other compelling circumstances.

Compelling Circumstances:

- A. Family responsibility upon proper verification
- B. Extreme financial need as evidenced through proper documentation
- C. Employment upon regular verification

5.0 MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS/CORRECTIVE MEASURES - The attendance director shall file with the county superintendent and county board of education, at the close of each month, a report showing activities of the school attendance office and the status of attendance in the county at the time due to provisions in WV Code 18-8-4; support and require the school principal to implement and execute the duties as defined in WV Code 18-8-5. The principal shall compare school numbers with school enrollment monthly.

5.1 An up-to-date register/record of attendance shall be kept for every student.

5.2. All absences and tardies will be recorded on the report card.

5.3. Any student who accumulates 3 unexcused absences shall be referred to the school counselor. The counselor shall confer with the student and the parent to determine a solution to the attendance problem. If the counselor feels an alternative program would be helpful then the student will be referred to the Student Assistance Team. Any recommendation of the Student Assistance Team will be discussed with the parent, student, and appropriate changes in the student's program will be made. The SAT will review the interventions to determine effectiveness. In cases of extreme problems the SAT may refer the student to the county Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT).

5.4 In the case of five total unexcused absences, the attendance director or assistant shall serve written notice to the parent, guardian or custodian of the student that within five days of receipt of the notice the parent, guardian or custodian, accompanied by the student, shall report in person to the school the student attends for a conference with the principal or other designated representative of the school in order to discuss and correct the circumstances causing the unexcused absences of the student, including the adjustment of unexcused absences based upon such meeting.

5.5. In the case of ten total unexcused absences of a student during a school year, the attendance director or assistant may make complaint against the parent, guardian or custodian before a magistrate of the county. More than one parent/guardian/custodian may be charged in the complaint. For students age 12-17, the Attendance Director may file charges with the Circuit Clerk.

5.6 Students who are age 17 or over, but who have not reached their 18th birthday, may legally withdraw from school, but must have written permission from a parent/legal guardian. Students age 16 (17 beginning with the 2010-11 freshman class) and over who have excessive unexcused absences and have been determined by the attendance director as not returning to school will be reported to the attendance director and the proper legal measures will be pursued. Names of students who withdraw from school will be supplied as appropriate to DHHR, Dept. of Motor Vehicles, Veteran's Administration, Social Security Administration, and Mountaineer Challenge Academy. Dropouts will be reported through the WVEIS drop out data file.

6.0 DRIVER'S LICENSE REQUIREMENTS (See WVDE Policy 4150 Student Driver Eligibility Certificate)**7.0 INCENTIVES**

Regular attendance is imperative for a student to gain the skills and competencies necessary to go on for further training or to take his/her place in the world of work. Recognizing the importance of good attendance, each school shall offer a program designed to improve school attendance. These programs may include but are not limited to any

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Reference: WV Constitution, Article XII, WV Code 18-2-5 and 18-/-1, WVDE Policy 4110

of the following incentives and shall be included in the school's attendance policy:

- A. Awarding certificates or pins for perfect or faithful attendance.
- B. Movies for rooms with the best average daily attendance each month.
- C. Principals may reward students on a monthly basis with pencils, T-shirts, or any appropriate reward for perfect attendance.
- D. Schools may recognize good attendance by providing the local radio and TV stations with public service announcements that announce the names of those students with perfect or faithful attendance.
- E. Schools may contact the superintendent in order to recognize students with good attendance at a board of education meeting at the end of each grading period.

8.0 PUBLIC AWARENESS

- 8.1. A summary of this policy including the individual school's incentive program shall be included in the student handbook or provided as a separate handout by each school for each parent. The complete policy will be available at the central office and in each school for review by the public.
- 8.2. The attendance director, principal, or designee shall present programs explaining the policy and the importance of attendance to PTOs and other parent groups.
- 8.3. The attendance director shall contribute articles to the local newspaper concerning school attendance.

9.0 APPEALS PROCEDURE

Parents have the right to appeal the application of this policy through the Appeals Procedure for Citizens (7111) available at the Summers County Board of Education office at 116 Main Street, Hinton.

10.0 POLICY APPROVAL AND REVIEW

This policy and any revisions will be approved by the West Virginia Department of Education. This policy will be reviewed annually to determine its effectiveness. All members of the public are always invited to contribute to policy revisions through the county policy review process.