

VII. ATTENDANCE (TARDIES, EARLY DISMISSALS, AND ABSENCES)

Compulsory Attendance

Georgia's Compulsory Education Law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1) requires that students in the state of Georgia between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) attend a public or private school or a home study program. However, if a child is under 6 and has attended more than 20 days in a public school, he/she is then subject to the compulsory attendance laws (20-2-150(C)). Public Kindergarten is available in every school system, but it is not mandatory.

The attendance policy for Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. is taken very seriously. Chronic absenteeism results in tremendous gaps in learning. The Attendance Protocol policy will be followed and judicial action may result. Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter will work closely with the local Truancy Intake Officer and judge.

Under and by virtue of the school laws of this state, any person in Georgia who has control or charge of a child between the ages of six and sixteen must enroll and send that child to school including public, private and home schooling and is required to cause the continuous attendance of said child/children in a school. Failure to do so will make anyone who has control or charge of school age eligible children liable to the penalties provided therein. Violation of the law is a misdemeanor, and violation makes you subject to a fine of up to \$100.00 and 30 days in jail, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court. Each day of absence from school in violation of this law shall constitute a separate offense.

Regular school attendance is mandated by the state and necessary for students to make adequate progress each year. As we are committed to each child's mastery of all essential skills, we will continue to closely monitor absences, tardies, and early checkouts.

Excused Tardy

Late arrival to school or class as a result of verifiable reasons defined herein as excused absences or as a result of events physically out of one's control such as inclement weather, documented transportation delays, health related emergencies, power outage, compliance with the court order, necessary medical or dental appointments, etc.

Unexcused Tardy

Arriving late to school or class with or without the knowledge of parent/guardian, as a result of oversleeping, parent errands, etc., unless it is an excused tardy. 15 unexcused tardies result in a referral to social worker.

Early Check-out/Dismissal

Students who have been in attendance for more than half of the school day but check-out of school before the end of the day.

Excused Early Check-out/Dismissal

Check-outs for Medical/dental appointments (must have documented excuses from medical or dental facility) personal illness, or family emergencies or other extenuating circumstances.

Unexcused Early Check-out/Dismissal

Check-outs for any other reason other than necessary medical/dental appointments, personal illness, or documented family emergencies or other extenuating circumstances

Full Day Attendance

All students are expected to be in attendance every day/all day as attendance is an essential component of their academic success. Elementary students must remain in school until 12:00 pm to be counted present for the entire day. It is understandable that it is sometimes difficult to arrange medical/dental appointments after school, but parents should make every attempt to arrange those appointments at the end of the school day.

Excused Absences

State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10 delineates absences which all schools must consider excused. As permitted under the state law and State Board of Education policies, students may be excused lawfully from attendance for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness or when attendance in school would endanger the student's health or the health of others;

Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter 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 160-5-1-.10 (Continued) 2 hospital/homebound instruction as outlined in State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.31 Hospital/Homebound (HHB) Services.

2. Serious illness or death in a student's immediate family (mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent, or legal guardian) that necessitates absences from school;

In the event of a serious illness in a student's immediate family, Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter 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.

3. The observation of religious holidays, necessitating absence from school.
4. 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 (high school). The first day for armed forces will be counted present.
5. When registering to vote or voting in a public election, which shall not exceed one day
6. Conditions rendering school attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
7. A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five school days per school year, for the day or days missed from school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian prior to such parent's or legal guardian's deployment or during such parent's or legal guardian's leave. Nothing in this Code section shall be construed to require a local school system to revise any policies relating to maximum number of excused and unexcused absences for any purposes (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-692.1).
8. Local boards of education shall count students present when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly as set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-692.
9. A student who successfully participates in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program shall be counted as present and given full credit for the school day during which he or she served

in the STEP program. No student shall be permitted to be absent from school or participate in the STEP program for more than two school days per school year.

10. A foster care student who attends court proceedings relating to the student's foster care shall be credited as present by the school and shall not be counted as an absence, either excused or unexcused, for any day, portion of a day, or days missed from school as set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-692.2
11. Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the local school board of education to have merit based on circumstances.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences will be issued and subject to attendance investigation that can result in penalty as imposed by the Compulsory Education Law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1) and Student Attendance Failure to attend school, with or without the knowledge of the parent/legal guardian, for reasons other than those specifically outlined as excused absences. **An absence is considered unexcused until proper written and signed documentation is provided.**

Tardy

A student is tardy when he/she arrives to school after the beginning of the official school day or is not in the assigned class at the official beginning of the class period.

Tardy

Each accumulation of (5) unexcused tardies will equal one unexcused absence

Early Check-Outs

Students are expected to attend school all day every day. Students who check-out early must be signed out at the office by a parent. Please also note that if half of the class is missed, the student will be marked absent for the entire class period (middle school students).

Students who need to leave before the end of the school day must present a note from a parent/guardian to the office/teacher. The note must include the date, time, the student's name, and the reason for leaving.

Each accumulation of (5) unexcused check-outs will equal one unexcused absence. Students who return to school before the day is over must sign back in. Otherwise, the student is marked absent for the rest of the day. Students must remain in school until 12:00 noon to be counted present for the entire day. Students must attend half of the school day (half of the academic class sessions, excluding lunch, to be considered present for the day). In order to be eligible for Student of the Month, students can have only 1 unexcused early check-out for the month. Students with more than 5 unexcused early check-outs will not be eligible for perfect attendance.

Failing to sign in or out properly could result in disciplinary action.

Absences

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the school in writing of the date and reason for the absence within three (3) school days of the absence. The parent/guardian must note the student's name, the date(s) of absence(s), and the reason for the absence. If a student is being checked-in or checked-out for a doctor's appointment, a physician's note or appointment card may be required to be considered excused. Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M.

Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter adopts, as 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).

Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter 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.

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter will take the following action related to absences:

1. **Three (3) unexcused absences or a total of five (5) absences (excused or unexcused):**

Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter will initiate phone contact with the parent/guardian and mail an attendance letter via first class mail to the parent notifying them of the number of absences and a summary of the penalties and consequences. Students with 3 unexcused absences or a total of five (5) absences (excused or unexcused) shall be referred to the school principal or attendance designee for remediation. This process may include a conference with the student and/or his or her parent, legal guardian, or other person having charge. The student's attendance is monitored by the attendance designee or Attendance Support Team (AST).

2. **Five (5) unexcused absences or seven (7) total absences (excused or unexcused):**

Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter will initiate phone contact with the parent/guardian and will mail notification through certified mail of the number of absences and a summary of the penalties and consequences. Parents/guardians will also be required to attend a scheduled meeting with the social worker, attendance officer, or the AST. Parents/guardians will be required to enter into an attendance agreement. A home visit may also be necessary at this time. If no response is received from the parent/guardian or no improvements are noted, Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter will by certified mail, issue an attendance letter to the parent/guardian to provide notification again of days absent and a summary of the penalties and consequences and to let parents/guardians know that a referral has been made to the truancy officer.

3. **Seven (7) unexcused absences or ten (10) total absences (excused or unexcused):**

Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter may turn the case over to the magistrate court/truancy officer. Violation of the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law OCGA 20-2-690.1 requires any person in the state of Georgia who has charge of a child between the ages of six and sixteen to enroll and send that child to school. This law further states that any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this State who has control or charge and who shall violate this code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to:

- a. a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00,
- b. imprisonment not to exceed 30 days
- c. community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction.

Prior to any action to commence judicial proceedings to impose a penalty on a parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of the school aged child for failing to comply with compulsory attendance, a Southwest Georgia S.T.E.M. Charter shall send a notice to such parent, guardian, or other person by certified mail, return receipt requested