

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School

Policy S10: Attendance Policy

Adopted: September 17, 2020

I. COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

A. 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. While public Kindergarten is offered at all public schools it is not mandatory. 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))

B. Chronic absenteeism results in tremendous gaps in learning.

C. The maximum number of days absent (excused or unexcused) is 6. A student with more than 6 absences may be considered truant under Georgia law.

D. Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this State who has control or charge of a student and who violates the Compulsory Attendance Law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to:

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

II. EXCUSED ABSENCES

A. Southwest Georgia STEM Charter shall excuse students who are absent for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness or when attendance in school endangers the student's health or the health of others.
2. Serious illness or death in a student's immediate family.
 - a) Immediate family is defined as mother, father, sister, brother, grandparent or legal guardian.
3. The observance of religious holidays that necessitates absences from school.
4. Compliance with a court order or order by a governmental agency, including a pre-induction physical examination for service in the armed forces.
5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
6. One day absence to register to vote or voting in a public election.

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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.

8. Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the local school board of education to have merit based on circumstances.

B. 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.

C. The school may require students to present appropriate medical or other documentation upon return to school to validate that the absence is an excused absence.

D. Students with extended absences may be eligible for hospital/homebound instruction. See State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.31.

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

F. 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.

III. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

A. 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.

B. Truant - Any child who is subject to the compulsory attendance law who has more than five (5) days of unexcused absences during calendar school year or has more than 15 days absences, excused, unexcused or unverified is considered truant.

C. School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not be counted as unexcused for the purpose of determining truancy.

IV. TARDINESS

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- A. 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.
- B. Students should be in class by 8:15 for homeroom to be considered at school on time. The tardy bell will ring at 8:15 a.m
- C. 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.
- D. 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. Fifteen (15) unexcused tardies result in a referral to social worker.
- E. Students who arrive after the tardy bell must be signed in by a parent/guardian or have a signed note from the parent/guardian which must include: date, time, the student's name, and the reason for being tardy.
- F. If half of a class period is missed, the student will be marked absent for the entire class period (middle/high school students).
- G. Effects of Tardies
 - 1. Each accumulation of (5) unexcused tardies will equal one unexcused absence.
 - 2. Reward trips/movies/activities may be affected by the accumulation of unexcused tardies.
 - 3. In order to be eligible for Student of the Month, students can have only 1 unexcused tardy for the month.
 - 4. Students with more than 5 unexcused tardies/will not be eligible for perfect attendance

V. EARLY CHECK OUT

- 1. 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 will be marked as "Early Check Out."
- 2. Excused Early Check Outs
 - a) Checkouts for medical/dental appointments with documentation from the medical or dental facility
 - b) Personal illness, or family emergencies
 - c) Other extenuating circumstances
- 3. Unexcused Early Check-out

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- a) Check-outs for any other reason other than necessary medical/dental appointments, personal illness, or documented family emergencies or other extenuating circumstances
- 4. Full Day Attendance
 - a) All students are expected to be in attendance every day/all day as attendance is an essential component of their academic success. 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.
 - b) For a student to be considered present for the day they must remain in school for at least the number of minutes below
 - (1) Kindergarten-Third Grade: 135 Minutes
 - (2) Fourth-Fifth Grade: 150 Minutes
 - (3) Sixth-Ninth Grade: 165 Minutes
- 5. Consequences of Early Checkouts
 - a) In order to be eligible for Student of the Month, students can have only 1 unexcused early check-out for the month.
 - b) Students with more than 5 unexcused early check-outs will not be eligible for perfect attendance.
 - c) Failing to sign in or out properly could result in disciplinary action.

VI. TRUANCY INTERVENTION PLAN

- A. Three (3) unexcused absences or a total of five (5) absences (excused or unexcused)
 - 1. After three (3) unexcused absences or a total of five (5) absences (excused or unexcused) Southwest Georgia STEM 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.
 - 2. These students shall be referred to the school social worker or attendance designee to develop a plan to address the attendance concerns.
 - 3. This process may include a conference with the student and/or his or her parent, legal guardian, or other person having charge of the student.
 - 4. The student's attendance will be monitored by the attendance designee or Attendance Support Team (AST).
- B. Five (5) unexcused absences or seven (7) total absences (excused or unexcused)

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1. After Five (5) unexcused absences or seven (7) total absences (excused or unexcused), Southwest Georgia STEM 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.
 2. Parents/guardians will be required to attend a scheduled meeting with the social worker, attendance officer, or the truancy officer.
 3. Parents/guardians will be required to enter into an attendance agreement. A home visit may also be necessary at this time.
 4. If no response is received from the parent/guardian or no improvements are noted, Southwest Georgia STEM 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.
- C. Seven (7) unexcused absences or ten (10) total absences (excused or unexcused)
1. After seven (7) unexcused absences or ten (10) total absences (excused or unexcused), Southwest Georgia STEM Charter may turn the case over to the magistrate court.