

Attendance and Truancy Policy: School Year 2021-22

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

DCPS seeks to become an anti-racist school district that is trauma-responsive and aligned to a whole-child approach that supports educators in meeting each child’s individual and holistic needs. This means creating an environment where we eliminate opportunity gaps, interrupt institutional bias, and remove barriers to academic and social success, particularly for students of color. DCPS actively strives to provide access, inclusion, and affirmation and offer the most support where the most significant disparities have persisted.

Attendance is one of the key metrics that schools review as part of our whole child, anti-racist approach. Attendance patterns provide key insight into experiences that may be impacting other domains of development for the child. This policy conveys general requirements on attendance, the protocols school officials will implement if a student is absent or truant, and requirements related to the enforcement of DC Health immunization mandates.

Specific requirements related to the DCPS virtual learning option for students who have a documented medical condition and need to continue virtual learning or who are engaged in temporary remote learning (e.g., while quarantining) are addressed in Appendices A and B and may be updated by DCPS as health conditions change. This policy applies to both in-person and virtual students unless specifically stated otherwise.

II. AUTHORITY AND APPLICABLE LAW¹

Source	Citation
District of Columbia Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - D.C. Official Code § 38-202 – Establishment of school attendance requirements - D.C. Official Code § 38-203 – Enforcement; penalties - D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04 – Limitations on exclusion as a disciplinary action - D.C. Official Code § 38-501, <i>et seq.</i> – Immunization of school students
District of Columbia Municipal Regulations	<p>DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5-A DCMR § 2100 – General Provisions - 5-A DCMR § 2101 – Attendance Records and Reporting, as amended by OSSE Notice of Final Rulemaking, 68 DCR 2076 (Feb. 19, 2021) - 5-A DCMR § 2102 – Absences - 5-A DCMR § 2103 – Absentee Intervention and School-Based Student Support Teams - 5-A DCMR § 2199 – Definitions <p>DC Public Schools (DCPS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5-B DCMR § 2103 - Truancy <p>Original Title 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5-E DCMR § 2101 – Absences - 5-E DCMR § 5300 - Public School Immunization Procedures and Requirements

¹ Nothing in this policy shall supersede federal, state, or local law.

III. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Absence means a full or partial school day on which the student is not in attendance during scheduled periods of instruction and is not in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program.² DCPS differentiates between excused and unexcused absences, as explained further in this policy below.

Absenteeism means a pattern of not attending school, including the total number of school days within one school year on which a student is marked with an excused or unexcused absence.³

Attendance Action Plan means a written document that is designed to meet the individual and specialized needs of a student and contains the relevant details of the student's attendance record, the school-based or third-party-provided interventions toward addressing the underlying causes of truancy as determined by the school-based student support team and expected attendance goals.⁴

Attendance Counselor/Designee means the person(s) designated by the principal to be responsible for improving student attendance, ensuring students are regularly present in school, and coordinating and monitoring the attendance interventions designed to increase student attendance and address truancy.

Attendance Monitor (also known as the attendance point-of-contact (POC)) means the person(s) designated by the principal of an educational institution to be responsible for collecting, maintaining, and reporting attendance records that are required pursuant to District of Columbia compulsory education and school attendance laws, regulations, and OSSE policies for each student enrolled in the educational institution.⁵

Chronically Truant means the condition in which a school-aged child has ten (10) or more days of unexcused absences within a single school year.⁶

Full School Day means the entirety of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day.⁷

In-Seat Attendance means the percent of enrolled days that a student is present.

MTSS means a multi-tiered system of supports which provides a guiding framework for educators, school, and district leaders to remove barriers to learning at the systems level, use evidence-based practices to support the whole child along a tiered continuum, and make decisions for targeted and intensive interventions based on data.

² See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

³ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

⁴ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

⁵ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

⁶ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

⁷ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

MTSS Leadership Team means the group of staff members, that may include the principal, assistant principal, counselor, social worker, psychologist, school nurse, teachers, special education staff, attendance counselor or attendance designee that leads the MTSS in a school.

Parent means a parent, guardian, or other person who resides in the District of Columbia and who has custody or control of a minor.⁸

Present means a school day in which a student is in attendance for at least eighty (80) percent of the periods of actual instruction, including participation in school-sponsored activities that constitute part of the approved school program.⁹

Quarantine means exclusion, by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons.¹⁰

Student Attendance Conference (SAC) means a meeting held with the Attendance Counselor/Designee, parent/guardian, and student (as appropriate) to support the individual student by developing and implementing attendance action plans and intervention strategies that are school- or community-based and are designed to enhance the student's success.¹¹ SACs can be held in-person, over the telephone, or on a video teleconference.

Unexcused Absence means any absence, including an absence from any portion of the instructional day, without a valid excuse.¹²

IV. REQUIREMENTS

A. General Attendance Requirements

All children who reach five (5) years of age on or before September 30th of the current school year are considered school-aged and must attend school on time every day until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their 18th birthday.^{13,14} Once pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) children are enrolled as DCPS students they are expected to follow the same attendance policies as school-aged students, including attending school on time every day.

⁸ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

⁹ See 5-A DCMR § 2199.

¹⁰ See 5-A DCMR §2102.2(b).

¹¹ See 5-A DCMR § 2103.4 and D.C. Official Code § 38-201(3B). The SAC fulfills school-based student support team responsibilities.

¹² See 5-A DCMR § 2102.1.

¹³ See D.C. Official Code § 38-202 requiring regular attendance for students of compulsory age. Regular attendance includes arriving to school on time.

¹⁴ Pursuant to 5-E DCMR § 3002.1(d), a child found by DCPS to be eligible for special education shall remain eligible to receive services through the end of the semester they turn 22.

Minors who graduate from high school are no longer required to attend school.¹⁵ Flexible school hours are permitted for students who reach seventeen (17) years of age, are on-track to graduate on-time, and provide documentation of regular gainful employment.¹⁶

B. School Expectations

All schools must implement a specific protocol for monitoring attendance and absenteeism, including a focus on prevention of unexcused absences and the use of academic and behavioral interventions to address the needs of students. School officials are responsible for taking attendance accurately every day in the student information system (SIS) or through alternative methods established by DCPS as a response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic health emergency.¹⁷ Additional information on recording student attendance for medically-eligible students receiving all-virtual instruction and students who are quarantining is available in Appendices A and B, respectively.

Prior to the start of the school year, all school principals must designate an attendance point-of-contact (POC). At the direction of the Central Services Attendance Team, the attendance POC must ensure timely submission of attendance records, submit corrected attendance records within fifteen (15) business days of submission, and respond in a timely manner to requests for clarification of submitted attendance records.

School principals must also select an attendance designee who is responsible for improving student attendance, ensuring students are regularly present in school, and coordinating and monitoring the attendance interventions required by this policy to increase student attendance and address truancy. If the school has an attendance counselor, they will typically fill this role as the attendance designee (as a result, this role is referred to in this policy as the Attendance Counselor/Designee, or AC/AD), though this is not required. The person identified as the attendance POC may also have these responsibilities as the attendance designee.

C. Excused Absences and Required Documentation

A written note must be provided to the school by the student's parent or guardian prior to an absence or within five (5) school days after the student's return to school in order for an absence to be

¹⁵ D.C. Code Official Code § 38-202(b) ("Any minor who has satisfactorily completed the senior high school course of study prescribed by [DCPS] and has been granted a diploma that certifies his or her graduation from high school, or who holds a diploma or certificate of graduation from another course of study determined by [DCPS] to be at least equivalent to that required by [DCPS] for graduation from the public senior high schools, shall be excused from further attendance at school.")

¹⁶ See D.C. Official Code § 38-202(b) ("Any minor who has reached the age of 17 years may be allowed flexible school hours by the head of the educational institution in which the minor is enrolled provided he or she is actually, lawfully, gainfully, and regularly employed, but in no case shall he or she be excused entirely from regular attendance or excused to the extent that his or her timely graduation would be jeopardized or prevented.") For additional information on half-day schedules for employed students, see 5-B DCMR § 2103.2 and 5-E DCMR § 2101.2.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Appendix A covering virtual instruction for medically-eligible students.

excused.¹⁸ Written notes may be submitted via email, text messages, and other written electronic communications. Upon receipt of appropriate notification and additional documentation where necessary within the five-school day period, schools must update absences as excused within 48 hours. All written notes must be dated, include the reason for the absence, and specify the dates the student was or will be out of school.

Absences for any of the reasons listed in Section C.1 below are excused absences. Absences of five (5) or more consecutive days for any reason require additional documentation as outlined in Section C.2 in order to be excused.

1. Excused Absences

The following absences may be classified as an excused absence¹⁹ upon submission of a parent/guardian note and, if required, supported by the documentation required in Section C.2:

- Illness of the student (a doctor's note is required for a student absent five or more consecutive days);²⁰
- Illness of a child for parenting students (a doctor's note is required for a student absent five or more consecutive days);
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Death in the student's immediate family;
- Exclusion by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding or court-ordered activity, as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent who is in the military, immediately before, during, or after deployment;
- An emergency or other circumstance approved by DCPS.

In addition to the reasons required by regulation, DCPS has classified the following additional circumstances as excused absences:

- College visits for students in 9th through 12th grades (up to three cumulative days in a school year);
- School visits for students in K through 8th grades (e.g., a 5th grader visiting a middle school before enrolling) (up to one day);
- Absences of expectant or parenting students for a time period specified by their doctor and any accommodations mandated by law;

¹⁸ See 5-E DCMR § 2101.4 ("A written statement from the student's parent or guardian verifying the reason for the absence shall be provided upon the student's return to school."); 5-A DCMR § 2102.4 ("An educational institution shall require a written statement from the student's parent or guardian verifying the reason for an absence and shall require that the written statement be provided in advance, if practicable, and, if not practicable, upon the student's return to school.").

¹⁹ See 5-A DCMR § 2102.2.

²⁰ Students whose illness requires hospitalization or who are home-bound for more than three weeks may be eligible for the Home and Hospital Instruction Program (HHIP). For more information, see relevant DCPS policy at <https://dcps.dc.gov/service/home-and-hospital-instruction>.

- Take Our Children to Work Day; and
- Religious events or celebrations outside of a religious holiday (up to five cumulative days in a school year).

The following absences may also be excused without written documentation from the parent, as verified by the school:²¹

- Lawful out-of-school suspension or exclusion by school authorities;
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes; and
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student.

If a student or parent anticipates an absence not covered by the excused absences listed above, they may submit a request for an excused absence due to a special circumstance to the school principal. The principal shall consult with his or her instructional superintendent before determining whether to grant the excused absence request. Any absence that does not meet the criteria of an excused absence or fails to satisfy the documentation requirement of an excused absence within the allowable timeframe will be classified as an unexcused absence.

2. Required Documentation

A parent or guardian's written note is sufficient to document any absence of up to **four (4) consecutive days**.²² Any such absence will be excused if it falls under one of the excused absence reasons noted above.

If a student is absent for **five (5) or more consecutive days**, further documentation is required beyond communication by the parent for the absence to be excused as follows:

- Medical or dental absences: Written explanation of the student's absence must be submitted by a doctor or staff of a relevant agency on official doctor/dentist office letterhead and signed by a relevant official;
- Judicial proceedings: A student's required presence at judicial proceedings must be established by a document from the court stating the need for the student's presence on all the relevant dates; and
- Death in the student's immediate family: Funeral programs may be accepted as appropriate documentation.

- a. Quarantine documentation requirements and exceptions for 5 or more days of consecutive absence

Students required to quarantine at the direction of DCPS (e.g., because a teacher tested positive for COVID-19) do not need to provide documentation.

²¹ See 5-A DCMR § 2102.2.

²² DCPS divides its academic calendar into four terms, also known as grading periods or advisory periods, each consisting of a nearly equal number of school days. There are two terms in a semester.

For students who are required to quarantine but not at the direction of DCPS (e.g., because a family member tested positive for COVID-19 and they were contacted by a contact tracer), the parent/guardian must provide written documentation of the quarantine. The written note must include the date of COVID-19 exposure; the length of time the student has been directed to quarantine by a medical professional or contact tracer; and, if known, identifying information for the medical professional or contact tracer.

For families who have not been directed to quarantine by a contact tracer or medical professional and who have determined on their own that a student should quarantine (e.g., because the student was potentially exposed to COVID-19 or has traveled outside the District of Columbia-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) area), the parent/guardian must consult with a medical professional to confirm the recommended length of quarantine or provide a COVID-19 test result administered 3-5 days after the potential exposure.

D. Immunization and Attendance Requirements

To attend school in the District of Columbia, including public, private, parochial, and independent schools, students must be immunized in compliance with DC Health's requirements.^{23,24} DCPS does not establish vaccination requirements, but must verify that all students comply with these requirements. DC law permits medical or religious exemptions from student immunization requirements under limited circumstances.²⁵

If a student's medical record does not demonstrate compliance, or documented medical or religious exemptions, the school must immediately notify the parent/guardian or adult student in writing of the missing immunization(s). If the student does not come into compliance within a 20-school day period, the school must remove the student from school until the parent/guardian provides the necessary documentation.

E. Absences Due to School-Sponsored Activities

1. Athletics

Students participating in DCPS-sponsored athletic events during regular school class hours are considered present. Students must adhere to all attendance requirements as dictated by state regulations and DCPS policy. In order to participate in any athletic tryout, practice, game, or match, a student must be present in school on the day of that event, unless the student has an excused absence.²⁶ Medically eligible students participating in virtual instruction will not be eligible for in-person activities and athletics. Similarly, students absent due to quarantine will not be eligible for in-person activities and athletics.

²³ Please visit the DC Health [website](http://bit.ly/DCHealthReqs) for a detailed schedule of required immunizations at <http://bit.ly/DCHealthReqs>. As of August 2021, DC Health and DCPS are *not* requiring a COVID-19 vaccination for eligible students, although this may be subject to change following the publication of this policy.

²⁴ See D.C. Official Code § 38-503; 5-E DCMR § 5300.1, *et seq.* For more information, please visit the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) [No Shots, No School! District of Columbia Immunization Policy for In-Person Attendance](http://bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool) website at <http://bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool>.

²⁵ For more information, please visit <http://bit.ly/NoShotsNoSchool>.

²⁶ 5-F DCMR § 104.8.

2. Other Activities

Students participating in DCPS-sponsored events, field trips, or study abroad travel during the regular school day are considered present.

3. Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan Service Delivery

Students who miss class to receive related services documented on their IEPs or 504 plans are considered present.

4. Suspensions

Students shall be marked present while serving in-school suspensions. Student absences due to out-of-school suspensions shall be classified as excused.

F. School-Based Attendance Interventions Related to Absences

1. Students in Grades K-12

The following school-based attendance interventions apply to all students in grades K-12, including medically-eligible students accessing virtual instruction:

Timeline	School Responsibilities
Each unexcused absence	Robo-call (sent from Blackboard) sent to family at night on each day a student has the equivalent of one day of unexcused absence.
3 cumulative days of unexcused absences	AC/AD sends 3-Day Universal Absence Letter to parent from Aspen. For virtual students only, AC/AD calls the student’s home to complete a wellness check . The wellness check must include a discussion of the student’s attendance, including the identification of technology or other barriers and any other challenges and potential resources needed to support student success.
4 cumulative full-day absences (excused or unexcused)	Teacher calls the student’s home to discuss the student’s attendance.
5 cumulative days of unexcused absences	AC/AD send 5-Day Universal Absence Letter from Aspen to the student’s home notifying the parent/guardian that a Student Attendance Conference (SAC) will be held. ²⁷ AC/AD holds an SAC with the parent and the student, if appropriate, to determine and document root causes of absences and provide related interventions and develop an Attendance Action Plan within 5 days of the referral. The AC/AD documents this meeting in Aspen. If the student has an IEP, the AC/AD must alert the local education agency representative designee (LEARD) and Case Manager. On a weekly basis, AC/AD will provide the MTSS Leadership Team with a list of all students who have reached the 5-day unexcused absence

²⁷ See 5-A DCMR § 2103.4

	<p>threshold, along with a report that summarizes the barriers identified during SAC meetings.</p> <p>Students who have reached the 5-day unexcused absence threshold are reviewed by the MTSS Leadership Team to consider whether more targeted supports are needed. If a Tier II or III referral is needed for any student, this referral will be made in the MTSS system and school-based MTSS intervention POC will reach out to the AC/AD for existing SAC documents.²⁸</p>
7 cumulative days of unexcused absences	AC/AD sends Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Warning Letter to parent using Aspen.
10 cumulative days of unexcused absences	<p>AC/AD sends mails 10-Day Universal Absence Letter to parent from Aspen.</p> <p>MTSS Leadership Team reviews lists of all students (ages 5-17) who have reached the 10-day unexcused absence threshold to consider whether more targeted support is needed. If a Tier II or III referral is needed for any student, this referral will be made in the MTSS system and school-based MTSS intervention POC will reach out to the AC/AD for existing SAC documents.</p> <p><i>Note for students aged 5 – 13 only who have 10 cumulative full-day absences:</i> If all attendance interventions have been executed and documented in Aspen, AC/AD refers student to CFSA for educational neglect.</p>
15 cumulative days of unexcused absences	<p>AC/AD sends 15-day Universal Absence Letter to parent from Aspen.</p> <p><i>Note for students aged 14 – 17 only who have 15 cumulative full-day absences:</i> If all interventions have been executed and documented in Aspen, AC/AD, in conjunction with their Attendance Specialist, will refer student/family to the Court Social Services Division and the Office of the Attorney General.</p>
20 consecutive days of full-day unexcused absences²⁹	<p>AC/AD sends initial withdrawal letter to parent and makes phone call to student’s home to notify parent/guardian that the student is eligible to be withdrawn from school.</p> <p>AC/AD must also send a final withdrawal letter to parent after all outreach has been completed notifying parent of intent to withdraw. Schools <i>must</i> have executed all required interventions before withdrawing a student, and schools must record all documentation in Aspen and have received approval by the principal and Instructional Superintendent. Students receiving special education services through an IEP cannot be withdrawn without the school demonstrating additional reasonable efforts to contact the parent and receiving approval from the DCPS Division of Specialized Instruction.</p>

²⁸ MTSS cannot be used to delay the initial evaluation of a student who may have a suspected disability. DCPS must always initiate the special education referral and initial evaluation process for a student who may be a child with a disability in need of special education and related services.

²⁹ See 38-236.04(c).

2. Students in Pre-K

Pre-K students are subject to the same requirements regarding excused and unexcused absences as K-12th grade students. Attendance-based referrals to CFSA are not required for students below the age of five (5).³⁰ In addition, schools are required to implement school-based attendance interventions as described here and in Appendix A.

The following school-based attendance interventions related to absences apply for Pre-K students in all learning models:

Timeline	School Responsibilities
Each unexcused absence	Robo-call (sent from Blackboard) sent to family at night on each day a student has the equivalent of one day of unexcused absence.
3 cumulative days of unexcused absences	AC/AD sends 3-Day Universal Absence Letter to parent from Aspen. For virtual students only, AC/AD calls the student’s home to complete a wellness check . The wellness check must include a discussion of the student’s attendance, including the identification of technology or other barriers, and any other challenges and potential resources needed to support student success.
4 cumulative full-day absences (excused or unexcused)	Teachers calls the student’s home to discuss the student’s attendance.
5 cumulative days of unexcused absences	AC/AD sends 5-Day Universal Absence Letter from Aspen to the student’s home notifying the parent/guardian that a Student Attendance Conference (SAC) will be held. AC/AD holds a SAC with the parent to determine and document root causes of absences and provide related interventions and develop an Attendance Action Plan. The AC/AD documents this meeting in Aspen. For the schools who receive Early Childhood Education (ECE) Family Service Team support, a referral should be made to the ECE Family Services Team. If the AC/AD and SAC are unable to reach the family through telephone calls, texts, and emails, they should contact emergency contacts and other known contacts. If no contact can be made or the welfare of the student cannot be determined, the team should consult with the ECE Team to determine whether a CFSA referral should be made.
10 cumulative days of unexcused absences	AC/AD sends 10-Day Universal Absence Letter from Aspen to the student’s home. <i>Note for students aged 5 – 13 only who have 10 cumulative full-day absences:</i> If all attendance interventions have been executed and documented in Aspen, AC/AD refers student to CFSA for educational neglect.

³⁰ Because Pre-K students under age 5 are not of compulsory school age, schools are not required to contact CFSA to report the accumulation of full-day unexcused absences.

<p>20 consecutive days of unexcused absences³¹</p>	<p>AC/AD contacts the student’s family to complete a wellness check through telephone calls, texts, and emails. The wellness check includes a discussion of the student’s attendance, including the identification of technology or other barriers, and any other challenges and potential resources needed to support student success.</p> <p>AC/AD contacts emergency contacts and other known contacts and consults with their Central Services Attendance Specialist and the Early Childhood Education Division prior to making a withdrawal determination.</p> <p>A Pre-K student is not required to be unenrolled when they reach 20 consecutive full-school-day absences. However, a school may unenroll a Pre-K student who has reached 20 full-school-day consecutive unexcused absences if the school has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documented all instances of family outreach and offers of support services; • complied with all special education notice requirements; and • received approval from the Central Services Early Childhood Education Division. <p>No Pre-K student may be unenrolled due to late arrival to school.</p>
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G. Prohibited Actions Related to Absenteeism

DC law prohibits specific actions related to student truancy and absenteeism as follows:

- No student, except a student over 18 years of age at a school where more than half of the students are over 18 years of age, may be expelled or subject to an out-of-school suspension or disciplinary unenrollment for an unexcused absence or late arrival to school.³²
- No student may be unenrolled for absenteeism unless the student has accumulated 20 or more *consecutive* full-school-day unexcused absences and the school has taken and documented all required actions and contacted the student’s family.³³
- No student may be transferred from their school for absenteeism, including students who are attending an out of boundary school.³⁴ A student may only be unenrolled if the student has accumulated 20 or more *consecutive* full-school-day unexcused absences.³⁵
- No student may be withdrawn at the beginning of the school year unless they fail to attend at least one (1) day of school in the first three (3) weeks of school without notification for such absence, or transfer to another educational institution. Schools are required to meet the “no show” protocol prior to withdrawing any student. The “no show protocol” is a process through students are withdrawn from school when they are enrolled but fail to register.

³¹ See 38-236.04(c).

³² *Id.* The Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018, D.C. Law 22-157, defines a “disciplinary unenrollment” as the expulsion or involuntary transfer of a student from school. (D.C. Official Code § 38-236.01(3))

³³ *Id.* The Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018, D.C. Law 22-157, defines a “disciplinary unenrollment” as the expulsion or involuntary transfer of a student from school. (D.C. Official Code § 38-236.01(3))

³⁴ *Id.* The Student Fair Access to School Amendment Act of 2018, D.C. Law 22-157, defines a “disciplinary unenrollment” as the expulsion or involuntary transfer of a student from school. (D.C. Official Code § 38-236.01(3))

³⁵ See D.C. Official Code § 38-236.04(c).

H. Attendance, Grading, and Promotion

Student grading and promotion can be impacted by an accrual of unexcused absences as follows:

- Secondary students with ten (10) unexcused absences in any class shall receive an initial written notice that they are at risk of receiving a grade of “FA” (failure due to absences) in that subject upon accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences unless an exception applies.³⁶
- Secondary students with fifteen (15) unexcused absences in any class shall receive an additional written warning that they are at risk of receiving a grade of “FA” (failure due to absences) in that subject upon accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences.³⁷
- Secondary students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences in a course within a full school year shall receive a failing final grade in that course with a resulting loss of course credit.³⁸
- Students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences within a school year shall only be promoted if a written justification is submitted by the principal to the Chancellor,³⁹ or the student attends summer school and is reevaluated for promotion.⁴⁰

I. Late Arrival for Secondary Students

Students will be marked tardy if they arrive in class 5 minutes or more after the official start of the period.

- On in-person instructional days, teachers must review attendance at the conclusion of each class to ensure that late students are marked tardy rather than absent.
- Students who enter class late should be given clear guidance regarding how to get caught up with the class lesson.
- Students will be allowed to enter their scheduled course regardless of what time they arrive.
- There is no point in a class period that a tardy will convert to an absence. If a student attends a portion of the class, he or she will be considered present and tardy.
- Students must always have access to make-up work.
- Multiple instances of a student being tardy may not be accumulated to count as an absence.
- Responses to student tardiness should be appropriate and logical. A student cannot be suspended due to being tardy.

J. Early Dismissal for All Students

DCPS will not recognize early dismissal of students unless that dismissal is related to an excused absence. Parents must notify the school when requesting an early dismissal.

V. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

All DCPS employees are required to comply with the requirements set forth in this policy. In order to support its implementation, principals are expected to make all staff aware of required activities and

³⁶ 5-B DCMR § 2103.4.

³⁷ 5-B DCMR § 2103.5.

³⁸ 5-B DCMR § 2103.6.

³⁹ D.C. Official Code § 38-781.02(c)(2).

⁴⁰ D.C. Official Code § 38-781.05.

timelines on an annual basis. Implementation of this policy will be reinforced through a central oversight process that includes regular data reviews, record sampling, reviews of underlying documentation, and site visits as needed. This framework will ensure that together we build a system of continuous improvement and prevent noncompliance. For key guidance and support with questions, training, or implementation, please visit dcps.dc.gov.

DCPS is committed to serving every student with equity, excellence, transparency, and accountability. For any concerns or violations about this directive, contact the Chief Integrity Officer either by completing the [Online Referral Form](#) or send your concern via email to dcps.cio@dc.gov.

VI. CENTRAL SERVICES RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

A. Attendance and Truancy Questions

For key guidance and support with questions, training, or implementation, please contact the attendance point of contact assigned to your cluster. If you need additional assistance or assistance identifying your cluster point of contact, please contact Andrea Allen, the Director of Attendance and Support Services, at Andrea.Allen@k12.dc.gov.

B. Attendance Data Entry

Attendance POCs are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of school level attendance information in Aspen. School principals are responsible for certifying the accuracy of school level attendance. For assistance with the entry and maintenance of student attendance data, please contact your school's assigned attendance specialist. For key guidance and support with Aspen, please contact the Helpdesk at 202-442-5717.

Appendix A: Virtual Instruction for Medically-Eligible Students

At the start of school year 2021-22, DCPS will offer virtual instruction for a limited number of students who meet medical eligibility requirements.⁴¹ Additional information about virtual instruction, including eligibility requirements, can be found at <https://dcpsreopenstrong.com/sy21-22/virtual/>.

Medically-eligible students accessing virtual instruction will be required to attend daily synchronous (i.e., live) instruction with their assigned teachers according to their course schedules. All relevant sections of this *Attendance and Truancy Policy: School Year 2021-22* will apply.

A. Recording Student Attendance

Student attendance will be recorded in Aspen by the student's teacher based on whether the student is present for the synchronous course. Students will be asked to either turn on their cameras and verbally acknowledge their "presence" during roll call or verbally respond to an attendance request to verify their presence.⁴²

If a student has a technology or internet connectivity issue that prevents them from accessing synchronous instruction for all or part of a school day, the student or their parent/guardian must immediately call their school to report the issue and indicate what the student will be working on that day. The AC/AD will enter the "Confirmed Virtual Presence" code for any classes the student will miss as a result.

B. Absences

Absences for virtual students will be reviewed by the Attendance POC and coded as "excused" or "unexcused" according to section C of this policy. However, if a family is unable to submit documentation electronically due to challenges with technology, the family should contact the school attendance POC to describe the documents and maintain a copy of the documentation to provide to the school in hard copy if requested to do so when health conditions allow.

C. Attendance Interventions

In addition to the standard attendance interventions described above in Section F, the AC/AD will also be required to conduct a wellness check phone call when a student reaches three (3) unexcused absences to identify any technical barriers or other challenges and document the outcome of the phone call in the Aspen communication journal.

⁴¹ DCPS' opportunity academies (e.g., Roosevelt STAY, Luke C. Moore) must offer in-person activities to those students who request it, but students may also elect virtual learning and are not required to use the medical certification process to do so.

⁴² To support equity and privacy issues, students should be provided clear instructions on how to blur their background or use an alternate background.

Appendix B: Temporary Remote Learning (including Quarantine)

With evolving health guidance and changing health conditions, there may be times when individual students, groups of students, entire classes, entire grades, or larger numbers of students may need to quarantine or otherwise need to participate in learning remotely.

If the need to quarantine or participate in learning remotely is determined during a school day, the school will send devices home with students. If the need to quarantine or participate in learning remotely is determined outside of school hours, the school will determine on a student-by-student basis how to arrange for a safe device pick-up or hard copy material pick-up/drop-off.

A. Recording Student Attendance

When recording attendance for students who are in a temporary remote learning posture (including those who are quarantining), the manner in which the school will record attendance will depend on the way that the school is providing instruction to the student and the student’s status:

Learning Opportunity	Student Health Status	School Actions to Record Attendance
Synchronous virtual instruction	Well enough to participate	Elementary: Teacher records daily attendance in Aspen and notifies attendance POC if student participation stops prior to the end of the day. Secondary: Teacher records attendance for each class period in Aspen.
	Well enough to participate, but does not have device or experiences other technical access challenges	Attendance POC records “Confirmed Virtual Presence” code if contacted by parent/guardian about access or connectivity issues.
	Not well enough to participate	Teacher records absences, and attendance POC verifies absence excuse reason.
Access to online course materials through Canvas	Well enough to participate	Attendance POC enters “Quarantine” code (functions as an excused absence from class, but present for the day).
	Well enough to participate, but does not have device or experiences other technical access challenges	Attendance POC enters “Quarantine” code (functions as an excused absence from class, but present for the day).
	Not well enough to participate	If notified by parent/guardian that student is not well enough to participate, attendance POC records the day as an absence and verifies absence excuse reason.
Access to hard copy course materials provided by the school	Well enough to participate	Attendance POC enters “Quarantine” code (functions as an excused absence from class, but present for the day).
	Not well enough to participate	If notified by parent/guardian that student is not well enough to participate, attendance POC records the day as an absence and verifies absence excuse reason.