



## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

### STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE, AND TRUANCY

5113

Procedure No.

July 1, 2007

Date

- I. **PURPOSE:** To establish procedures for the reporting and confirming of absence and to indicate steps to be taken in preventing truancy.
- II. **POLICY:** All students are expected to attend school regularly in accordance with state laws and regulations. (Board Policy 5113)
- III. **DEFINITIONS:**

#### Attendance

Students shall be considered in attendance at school when participating in school-sponsored activities during the school day, and when that participation is approved by the local superintendent of schools or the school principal or any persons duly authorized by the superintendent or principal. Students shall be considered in attendance in an alternative program setting when participating in activities during the day sponsored by the alternative program, and when that participation is approved by the director of a licensed child care center, registered family day care home, or head start 5-year old program.

This means that when a student is involved in an approved school-sponsored activity during the day, he or she is to be counted *PRESENT*, not given an “excused absence.” This also implies that no penalties, such as denial of opportunity to make up work and/or a lower grade, would be permitted under this provision.

#### Lawful Absence

Absence from school, including absence for any portion of the day, of students who are presently enrolled in public schools shall be considered lawful only under the following conditions:

- A. Death in the immediate family. Immediate family means a parent or guardian, brother, sister, grandparent, or anyone who has lived regularly in the household of the student.
- B. Illness of the child. The principal shall require a physician’s certificate from the parent or guardian of a child reported continuously absent for illness. A continuous absence is an absence of three or more continuous days.
- C. Court summons.



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- D. Hazardous weather conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions that would endanger health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
- E. Work approved or sponsored by the school, the Prince George's County school system, or the State of Department of Education, accepted by the Superintendent of Schools or the school principal, any persons duly authorized by the superintendent or principal, as reasons for excusing the student.
- F. Observance of a religious holiday.
- G. State emergency.
- H. Suspension.
- I. Lack of authorized transportation. This shall not include students denied authorized transportation for disciplinary reasons.
- J. Other emergency or set of circumstances which, in the judgment of the superintendent or designee, constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence from school.

#### Unlawful Absence

Unlawful absence and/or truancy is defined as the act of a student being absent from school for a day or any portion of a day or from an individual class or any portion of a class for any reason other than those defined as a lawful excuse for absence from school. This definition applies to students over 16 years of age as well as students under 16 years of age.

#### Truancy

An instance of truancy is an occasion upon which a student is found to have engaged in conduct amounting to an unlawful absence for any number of days or for a portion of a day.

A continued truancy is an unlawful absence extending without interruption after the student and parent(s) or guardian(s) have been notified of the truancy in accordance with these procedures.

A truant is a student who is absent without lawful cause from the attendance for a school day or portion of it.



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A habitual truant is a student who is unlawfully absent from school for a number of days or portion of days in excess of 10 percent of the school days within any marking period, semester, or year.

#### IV. **PROCEDURES:**

A. Reporting Absences – Recognizing the responsibility of administrators and teachers for developing and maintaining a system of recording and reporting student absences (lawful and unlawful), the following procedures are to be considered as minimum for each school (elementary, middle, and high):

1. Teachers will maintain a daily attendance record of each student's attendance, tardiness, or absence from school or class.
2. A student's tardiness or absence from school will be reported to the school office and pupil personnel worker daily.
3. Teachers will record a student's absence from an individual class and report it to the school office and pupil personnel worker as it occurs.
4. Upon returning to school from an absence, a student is required to bring a written note from his or her parent or guardian stating the reason for absence.
5. Each course grade received by a secondary school student will include a report of his or her absence(s) for that course.

#### B. Confirming Absence

1. Parents or guardians must notify the school when their child is absent. If the school has not received notification from the parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel (instructional or supporting, or a school volunteer) will immediately contact the parent or guardian by telephone, e-mail, fax, or automated communication system. If a school uses an automated system to notify parents of student truancies and absences, that system shall be the system currently approved by PGCPs for such purpose.
2. If the school is unable to contact the parent or guardian by telephone immediately after three days of absence or after one instance of suspected truancy, a certified letter, home visit, or other



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approved method should be used to contact the parent(s) or guardian(s). This action should be included in the student's file. (Attachment 1)

#### C. Procedures for Students on Suspension or Under Court Supervision

##### 1. Suspended Students

Students on suspension, including in-school suspension, must be offered make-up work assignments for days of suspension unless other educational alternatives are provided. Completed assignments will be averaged with other daily grades.

##### 2. Detained and Incarcerated Students

A student who is charged with either a juvenile or adult offense and is detained awaiting adjudication (temporarily held at a secured facility with an educational program) is withdrawn from PGCPs with a code of T-22.

A student who has been either incarcerated (charged and convicted as an adult) or committed (charged and found involved as a juvenile), and placed in a state institution with an educational program, is withdrawn from PGCPs with a code of T-22. A student ordered to an institution without an educational program is withdrawn with a code of W-38.

#### D. Preventing Truancy

Each school shall include in the school improvement plan both the strategies it shall use to prevent truancy and methods it will use to monitor the effectiveness of these strategies. Such plans will include, at a minimum, all steps outlined in this procedure.

Additionally, by the fifth business day of each month, pupil personnel workers shall report to the supervisors of pupil personnel the names of students who have been truant the previous month, the strategies utilized to prevent further truanies, and the results of such interventions.

##### 1. Proactive Approaches Prior to Truancy

The most effective approach to increase attendance and prevent truancy is proactive, with school, family, and community working



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together to foster exemplary attendance for all students. The following steps shall be taken to promote regular attendance for all students.

a. Identify At-Risk Students Early

Students often exhibit behaviors which, without intervention, can lead to truancy. To prevent unlawful absences, it is crucial to initiate positive and supportive interventions as soon as a student begins to exhibit such indicators. Some student warning symptoms, among others, may include:

- (1) Changes in behavior or behavior difficulties;
- (2) Changes in friendships or having no friends;
- (3) Poor or decreased academic performance;
- (4) Bullying or being bullied;
- (5) Listlessness or lack of focus;
- (6) Agitation or withdrawal;
- (7) Behaviors inappropriate for the age of the child.

Additionally, a history of sibling truancy may also negatively impact student attendance.

b. Refer at-risk students to administrators, professional school counselor, the pupil personnel worker, or other school professional or school team for appropriate assessment and intervention.

The parent is to be notified of the concerns. Additional interventions may include individual or group counseling, and, if warranted, encouragement for the parent to consult outside medical or psychological resources. (PGCPS may not mandate that the student participate in outside services as a condition of attendance.)

2. Incoming Students: Articulation and Orientation

The following steps are to occur during articulation between elementary and middle school and middle and high school.

a. Principals and/or their designees will transmit attendance information to receiving schools for all students and



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- highlight students for whom the sending schools have attendance concerns.
- b. Information Technology will create for each school an interactive report that will allow online access with the names and lawful, unlawful, and total absences for the prior year for each student transitioning from elementary to middle and middle to high schools.
  - c. During the orientation process each year, school personnel are to discuss attendance issues with all incoming and returning students and their parents. For students, this may be done as part of the initial orientation assemblies or in special attendance assemblies, during classroom activities, and/or in other programs or communications. Parents are to be informed at back to school nights, PTA/PTSA/PTO meetings, school conferences, and other activities. The importance of regular school attendance is to be reiterated throughout the school year in PA and TV announcements, classroom visits, school newsletters, and other appropriate formats.
  - d. School personnel will discuss attendance issues with individual incoming students who have been identified as having substandard or unsatisfactory attendance and their parent(s)/guardian(s).

During regular registration for transfer students, professional school counselors and other appropriate personnel will discuss the importance of regular attendance.

For transfer students, professional school counselors will specifically note attendance as they review records of incoming students. The professional school counselor, pupil personnel worker, parent liaison, or other appropriate staff member will contact parents of students whose attendance has been unsatisfactory and hold conferences to develop an individual attendance plan for these students with the students and their parents.

3. Attendance Committee
  - a. Each school will develop an Attendance Committee with membership to include:
    - (1) Principal or designee



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- (2) Pupil personnel worker (chair)
  - (3) Parent liaison
  - (4) Professional school counselors
  - (5) Attendance secretary
  - (6) School nurse/nursing assistant
  - (7) Instructional staff member(s)
  - (8) Other staff as appropriate
- b. By the end of the first month of school, the Attendance Committee will hold meeting(s) with all students who have been identified as having missed 10% or more of the school days during the prior year and their parents/guardians. Schools are encouraged to provide traditional and nontraditional meeting times (morning, evening, weekend) to make meetings available to all parents. In the meetings, committee members may:
- (1) Discuss the importance of regular school attendance;
  - (2) Provide strategies for improving attendance;
  - (3) Meet individually with each family to develop specific strategies, based upon the student's individual needs, to ensure regular school attendance for the student; and
  - (4) Develop an attendance plan (Attachment 3), signed by student, parent(s)/guardian(s), and school personnel, outlining specific steps for promoting regular attendance, and provide copies for the family, pupil personnel worker, and the student's cumulative folder.
- c. The pupil personnel worker will monitor the attendance of these students.

#### 4. Ongoing

Information Technology will create an online interactive attendance report, updated daily, that includes current attendance information for each student in the school. This report shall be available to principals, pupil personnel workers, and other personnel designated by the principal to monitor student attendance and alert staff to students with incipient attendance concerns.

#### E. Truancy Intervention and Remediation



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The following steps apply to all instances of truancy or continued truancy occurring within one school year and are generally the same for all students. However, there are differences in the ages and levels of maturity of students that must be recognized when attempting to remediate truancy. In chronic attendance cases, steps that can be taken are different for students who are under 16 years of age and those 16 years of age and older. For this reason, the following steps are outlined into two categories.

1. Student Under 16 Years of Age
  - a. First Instance of Truancy – Parent(s) or guardian(s) is notified of the truancy by the school and appropriate services are provided by the professional school counselor or pupil personnel worker and/or disciplinary action is taken.
  - b. Second Instance of Truancy – If a student continues to be absent for suspected unlawful reasons, the principal or designee shall contact the parent directly by telephone, email, home visit, or other appropriate means and also send a letter by United States mail to the parent(s) or guardian(s) to notify him or her of the absence(s) and schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and child.

At the conference with parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel, including the professional school counselor, should discuss the total adjustment of the student, as well as his or her attendance, and attempt to identify the reason(s) for his or her absence in order to take appropriate action to improve the student's adjustment and attendance. Referral to school counseling services and the attendance committee or other school teams (SIT, SST, IEP team, Section 504 team, or other appropriate team) may be appropriate depending upon the needs of the individual student.

If absences are confirmed to be unlawful, the parent(s) or guardian(s) should be advised of the dates and times of all absences, and that this information will be recorded on the student's records. An attendance plan for the student shall be created or, if already in place, modified, to address the reasons for absence. The parent(s) or guardian(s) should be informed that continued unlawful absences could result in court action if the student is under the age of 16.



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- c. Third Instance of Truancy – If the steps above have been followed by the school with no response from the parent(s) or guardian(s), or if the student is still suspected of being unlawfully absent from school, the pupil personnel worker shall review the case and take appropriate actions to resolve the issues impeding regular attendance. At this time, such services and/or actions may include: a pupil personnel worker attendance letter; a home visit; referral to the school instructional team (SIT), IEP team meeting, supplemental services team (SST), Section 504 team, or other school team; referral to the court liaison for a court letter or conference; referral to the interagency council on school attendance or juvenile services; recommendation for counseling or other medical/mental health services through an outside agency; and other services as appropriate.
  - d. Fourth Or Further Instance Of Truancy – If the steps above have not eliminated truancy, additional instances of truancy shall be met with increasing levels of intervention, including referral by the pupil personnel worker for court action.
2. Student 16 Years of Age or Older
    - a. First Instance of Truancy – Parent(s) or guardian(s) is notified of the truancy by the school and appropriate services are provided by the professional school counselor or pupil personnel worker and/or disciplinary action is taken.
    - b. Second Instance of Continued Truancy – If a student continues to be absent for suspected unlawful reasons, the principal or designee shall contact the parent directly by telephone, e-mail, home visit, or other appropriate means and also send a letter by United States mail to the parent(s) or guardian(s) to notify him or her of the absence(s) and to schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and child.

At the conference with parent(s) or guardian(s), school personnel, including the professional school counselor, should discuss the total adjustment of the student, as well as his or her attendance, and attempt to identify the reason(s) for his or her absence in order to take appropriate action to improve the student's adjustment and attendance. Referral to school counseling services and the attendance committee or other school teams (SIT, SST, IEP team, Section 504



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team, or other appropriate team) may be appropriate depending upon the needs of the individual student.

If absences are confirmed to be unlawful, the parent(s) or guardian(s) should be advised of the dates and times of all absences, and that this information will be recorded on the student's records. An attendance plan for the student shall be created or, if already in place, modified, to address the reasons for absence. The parent(s) or guardian(s) should be informed that continued unlawful absences could result in the student's withdrawal from the regular school program.

- c. Third Instance of Continued Truancy – If the steps above have been followed by the school with no response from the parent(s) or guardian(s), or if the student is still suspected of being unlawfully absent from school, the pupil personnel worker shall review the case and take appropriate actions to resolve the issues impeding regular attendance.

At this time, services and/or actions may include: a pupil personnel worker attendance letter; a home visit; referral to the school instructional team (SIT), IEP team meeting, supplemental services team (SST), Section 504 team, or other school team; referral to juvenile services; recommendation for counseling or other medical/mental health services through an outside agency; and other services as appropriate.

- d. Withdrawal from School for Truancy – A student 16 years of age or older may be withdrawn from school after unsuccessful attempts have been made to improve the student's attendance. If a student is to be withdrawn from school for truancy, the parent(s) or guardian(s) is notified by the principal, in writing, with one copy of the letter given to the professional school counselor and one to the pupil personnel worker.

Additionally, a notification of student withdrawal form (PS 105) must be completed. Concurrently, the professional school counselor or pupil personnel worker will offer, in writing, as part of the withdrawal letter an exit interview with the student and parent(s) or guardian(s) to discuss again the student's options for continuing his or her education (Attachment 2).



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- e. Appeal for Withdrawal Due to Attendance for Students 16 and Older - If the parent(s) or guardian(s) protests such a withdrawal, the parent may appeal to the regional assistant superintendent. The student shall remain withdrawn from the regular school program during the appeal process. Upon re-enrollment based upon a successful appeal of the withdrawal, the school, parent/guardian, and student shall develop an attendance contract. Failure by the student to adhere to the conditions of the contract shall result in withdrawal.

If an appeal by the parent/guardian is upheld, the student shall be offered all make up work in all classes for the period during which the student had been withdrawn.

- f. Continuing Education After Withdrawal for Truancy – Notwithstanding any of the above, the withdrawal due to truancy shall not preclude the withdrawn student from enrolling in:

- (1) Evening High School
- (2) Summer School

If appropriate, special school or class placement, e.g., Croom Vocational, Tall Oaks Vocational, Career Technology Education, etc.

Neither shall the above preclude the suspended or withdrawn pupil from obtaining assistance with respect to:

- (1) Community-Based Classroom
- (2) G.E.D. Preparation Program
- (3) Possible reentry to the regular day school at a later date.

- g. Withdrawal of Special Education Student – The withdrawal of a special education student, regardless of age, must be in compliance with special education procedures. Such a withdrawal usually mandates a parent's or guardian's signature on the appropriate forms.

#### F. Grades and Absence

1. Unlawful absence



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- a. At all grade levels, students with unlawful absence(s), including so-called “cut days,” shall receive a zero for any day(s) of such absence(s). The zero(s) will be averaged with other daily grades.
  - b. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work for students when their absences are unlawful.
2. Lawful Absences
- a. At all grade levels, students with lawful absences must complete make-up work for missed time, or they shall receive a zero for any day(s) of such absence(s). The zero(s) will be averaged with other daily grades.
  - b. Teachers are required to provide make-up work when requested for a student who is lawfully absent if the student does not qualify for home teaching.
3. Exceptional Attendance
- Schools shall develop and utilize positive rewards for students with exceptional attendance and substantially improved attendance during any one grading period and/or for the school year.

#### G. Police Cooperation with Truants

The Prince George’s County Police have agreed to stop and question children at large in the community who appear to be under 16 years of age and truant during regular school hours.

If such children do not have verification, such as an early departure slip, a release time card, or other authorization showing they are legitimately out of school, the police may document such children, take them to school, and release them to the appropriate school administrator. Students are responsible for securing from the school officials such verification.

When the police take a student to school, the principal and/or the designated school official will admit the student to school, notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the circumstances, and take appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with this Administrative Procedure 5113 and Administrative Procedure 10101, Code of Student Conduct.

Principals should encourage store managers who call regarding loitering of school-aged children to contact the police. A conference that includes the



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police, principal, and store manager to discuss the details of the situation may be appropriate should a particular shopping center or store have significant problems with truants.

This agreement with the Prince George's County Police does not exclude any cooperative agreements schools may have with local community police to pick up truants, providing such agreements have the approval of the Chief Administrator for Student Services.

- V. **DISSEMINATION OF PROCEDURES:** The principal and pupil personnel worker at each school will collaborate to take the necessary steps to ensure that parents, guardians, students, and staff members are aware of the procedures contained herein. Such measures may utilize student handbooks, PTA discussions, faculty meetings, etc. Students should be warned particularly of possible penalties when identified as truant.
- VI. **RELATED PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS:** Administrative Procedure 5121, Examinations and Grading for Elementary and Secondary Schools; Administrative Procedure 5124, School Instructional Team (SIT), Supplemental Services Team (SST), and Student Staff Services Team (SSST); Administrative Procedure 10101, Code of Student Conduct; and Administrative Procedure 10301, Court Proceedings; Maryland Annotated Code, Education Articles, §7-301 and 7-302; Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.08.01.01.07.
- VII. **MAINTENANCE AND UPDATE OF THESE PROCEDURES:** The Division of Student Services will have the responsibility for maintaining, evaluating, and updating these procedures.
- VIII. **CANCELLATIONS AND SUPERSEDES:** This Administrative Procedure cancels and supersedes Administrative Procedure 5113, dated August 31, 1994.
- IX. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** July 1, 2007.

Approved by:  
John E. Deasy  
Superintendent of Schools

Attachments: 1 – Example of Attendance Postcard or Letter  
2 – Suggested Letter of Withdrawal  
3 – Attendance Improvement Contract  
4 – Preventing Truancy Checklist

Distribution: Lists 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13