

# Prince Edward County Public Schools Attendance Policy

2011 ~ 2012



**BELIEVE that EVERY DAY COUNTS  
and WATCH OUR CHILDREN  
SOAR to NEW HEIGHTS!**

***Vision Statement:***

*To become a high performing school division that prepares a diverse population with 21st century skills to become life-long learners who are responsible and productive citizens in a global society.*

# PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Student Attendance Policy

Attendance on a daily basis is a mandatory requirement for all students. The Code of Virginia, Section 22.1- 254, requires that all children who have reached their fifth birthday on or before September 30 and who have not yet reached their eighteenth birthday must attend school. This requirement does not apply to any child who has obtained a high school diploma, its equivalent, or a certificate of completion or who is exempted pursuant to the provisions of the law.

When a student accumulates more than six (6) unexcused absences in an academic year, the Director of Student Support Services will enforce the provisions of the Code of the State of Virginia, Section 22.1-258, by either or both of the following:

- (1) filing a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision; or
- (2) instituting proceedings against the parent for contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

### **I. ABSENCES:**

Students are expected to be in school every day. Parents/guardians are expected to contact their child's school on the day of the child's absence to inform the school of that absence.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the dates of such appointment are known. For any reason, a written note providing the dates of and reasons for the child's absence is required from the parent/guardian within five(5) days of the child's return to school. The purpose of this note is to determine whether or not the student's absence is excused or unexcused. This note will be maintained until the end of the school year for documentation purposes.

#### **A. Excused Absences**

In support of the mandatory attendance law, *Prince Edward County Public Schools* defines excused absences as the following conditions which represent acceptable reasons for a student's absence from school:

- ***Illness*** - When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness, a note written by the parent or a physician documenting the illness will provide evidence of the illness for the school.
- ***Chronic/Extended Illness*** - For students who are absent because of chronic illness, a disability, or because of a need for homebound services, the parent must complete a ***Chronic/Extended Illness Notification Form*** with the principal at the beginning of the enrollment of the student in school or upon the onset of the student's condition that affects regular attendance. Documentation from a physician will be required.

If the parent does not complete the form or does not provide documentation from a physician of a chronic or extended illness, the principal will review the child's attendance for needed services and/or applicable sanctions of the attendance law (Code of Virginia 22.1-258).

- ***Prearranged Appointments*** - For appointments with the court, social services or other state agencies and appointments with health care providers, official documentation must be presented to the school.
  
- ***Family Death or Emergency*** - For absences because of a death in the family or an emergency beyond the family's control, the parent must notify the school and provide documentation for the absence. ("family" is defined as immediate family of mother, father, siblings, and grandparents)
  
- ***Religious Observances*** - Absences as a result of observances of religious holidays should be prearranged by the parent with school personnel. If the parent/guardian is unable to prearrange the absence, a request for exemption must be received no later than the second day after the student's return to school from the absence occasioned by the religious observance.
  
- ***Exceptional Circumstances*** - The principal may approve prearranged absences for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interests of the student and his/her family (example: college visitation). Prior to the student's absence, the parent or guardian must complete the ***Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form***. The parent/guardian will document on this request form the rationale for the absence, dates of absence, and siblings within the school division for whom the exception will also be requested. The principal must provide the response to the ***Requests for Exceptional Circumstance*** in writing to the parent/guardian. In documented extenuating circumstances, the principal may approve an absence after the fact as exempt from the sanctions of the attendance policy.

For those circumstances which cause the student to be absent and prior request for approval is not possible, the parent/guardian must complete the ***Request for Exceptional Circumstances*** within two (2) days of the student's return to school.

No more than **two (2)** days may be approved by the principal for exceptional circumstances during a school year. For requests of **more than two (2)** days, the request must be endorsed by the principal and approved by the ***Director of Support Services***.

## **B. Unexcused Absences**

In compliance with the Code of Virginia 22.1-258, the school division has established procedures that school division personnel are required to follow when a student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent/guardian is aware of and supports the student's absence. (*example: running late, missed the bus, overslept, etc.*)

- **Suspensions** - For absences because of a suspension, the parent will be notified of the suspension and the date when the student will be expected to return to school. The student must return on the indicated date.
  
- The law mandates that, whenever any student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by school personnel that the student's parent/guardian is aware of and supports the student's absence (unexcused absence), an effort to notify the parent by telephone to obtain an explanation for the student's absences shall be made.

## **II. PROCEDURES for UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:**

- **Whenever a student fails to report to school for a total of three (3) unexcused days**, a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian by the school explaining the consequences when a parent/guardian and student are in violation of *Code of Virginia 22.1-258*.
  
- **Whenever a student fails to report to school for a total of five (5) unexcused days in the school year**, as defined above (unexcused absence), a Parent Conference will be held at the school with the principal, teacher, school counselor, and student to discuss the accrued absences. The meeting will be held to discuss the attendance of the student and to develop an “**Attendance Contract**” with the student and parent, outlining goals for improved attendance.
  
- **At the 6<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence, the Attendance Support Team** will convene to develop a plan of action to ensure improved student attendance. The plan shall include documentation of the reasons for the student's nonattendance. A referral will be made to the Director of Student Support Services, who will enforce the provisions of the law by either or both of the following:
  - Filing a complaint alleging the student is a child in need of supervision (CHINS Petition) or instituting proceeding against the parent/guardian for Truancy charges.
  - Providing interventions and /or options for a student who fails to make academic progress as a result of attendance problems.

### III. PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCES and TARDIES:

➤ **Make-Up Work:**

When students are absent, including absences for suspension or expulsion recommendations, an opportunity to make up work will be provided. Make-up work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction. Work (including tests) missed due to an absence may be made up and credit given for such work. Upon the student's return to school, he/she must make up the work within *five (5) school days*. Additional time may be granted by the principal due to the extenuating circumstances.

➤ **Perfect Attendance:**

For purpose of determining perfect attendance, the student must be in attendance for a period of *two hours* to be counted as present for the school day. *Pre-arranged absences for religious observance will not count against perfect attendance.*

➤ **Excessive and Unexcused Tardies to School or to Class:**

Tardiness to school or to class is unacceptable. Students are expected to attend all assigned classes every day. Absence from class includes late arrival, early dismissal, or missing any class. Justifiable reasons for nonattendance should be submitted to the school for each absence, late arrival, or class absence. Unexcused tardies and/or skipping are considered a violation of compulsory attendance.

Students are expected to arrive at school on time and remain in class the entire day. Late arrivals and early dismissals are not acceptable and will be addressed as a discipline issue in the Code of Student Conduct Handbook.

### IV. Reports of Children Enrolled and Not Enrolled:

*Code of Virginia, 22.1-260*, requires that within **ten (10)** days after the opening of the school, each public school principal will report to the division superintendent:

The name, age and grade of each pupil enrolled in the school, and the name and address of the pupil's parent or guardian: and to the best of the principal's information, the name of each child subject to the provisions of this article who is not enrolled in school, with the name and address of the child's parent or guardian. Within one calendar month of the opening of school, the principal of each school will send to the parents or guardian of each student enrolled in the school a copy of the compulsory school attendance requirements of the law and the enforcement procedures and the policies established by the School Board.

The school division will typically comply with the above requirements by delivering a copy of the student **Code of Conduct Handbook** to students and their parents at the beginning of the school year. Attendance law, policies and procedures will be reflected in that handbook.

**V. Reports of Children with Five (5) or More Unexcused Absences:**

At the end of each school year, each school principal will report to the division superintendent the number of pupils by grade level for whom a conference was scheduled as required by *Code of Virginia 22.1-258*. The division superintendent will complete a report and submit it to the Virginia Department of Education.

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# SCHOOL ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES



## **INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR PUPIL ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:**

In order to enroll a child in a public school system in Virginia, state law requires a parent or guardian of a child to provide certain information to the child's school division. The required information is listed below:

### **I. Birth Certificate**

- An official certified copy of the child's birth record must be provided. (A photocopy of the child's birth certificate will not meet this requirement.)
- At the time of enrollment, the child must be five years of age or reach his/her fifth birthday on or before September 30th of the school year.
- Information on obtaining a certified copy of a birth certification is available at the Virginia Department of Health website.
- If a certified copy of the child's birth record cannot be obtained, the person enrolling the child must submit a sworn statement setting forth the child's age and explaining the inability to present a certified copy of the birth record.

### **II. Street Address**

- Documentation of the street address or route number of the child's residence must be provided. If no street address or route number exists for the child's residence, a post office box number must be provided.
- If a child has no regular, fixed residence but resides within the school division in a temporary shelter, institution, or place not ordinarily used as a residence, the school division may determine that a street address, route number, or post office box number, cannot be provided. The school division may accept an alternative form of address that it considers appropriate.

### **III. School Entrance Health Form**

A School Entrance Health Form, MCH 213F, completed by a licensed physician, licensed nurse practitioner, or licensed physician's assistant regarding the child, must be presented at the time of enrollment. The three-part form includes Part I-Health Information Form, Part II Certification of Immunization, and Part III-Comprehensive Physical Examination Report. The report must indicate that the child has received a comprehensive physical examination performed within the twelve months prior to the date the child first enters a public kindergarten or elementary school (K-5). The physical examination report must include "Recommendations to School" and other information as required by school division policy.

The health departments of all the counties and cities must provide the physical examination for medically indigent children without charge, upon request.

The Comprehensive Physical Examination is not required of any child if it violates the family's religious beliefs and the child's parent or guardian states in writing that the child is free from any communicable or contagious disease and there is no visual evidence of sickness.

#### **4. Immunizations**

Documentation (Part II of the School Entrance Health Form MCH 213F) indicating that the child has received the required immunizations must be provided. The required immunizations include:

- **Diphtheria, Tetanus, & Pertussis (DTaP, DTP)** – A minimum of 4 doses. A child must have at least one dose of DTaP or DTP vaccine on or after the fourth birthday.
- **Hepatitis B Vaccine** – A complete series of 3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine is required for all children. However, the FDA has approved a 2-dose schedule ONLY for adolescents 11-15 years of age AND ONLY when the Merck Brand (RECOMBIVAX HB) Adult Formulation Hepatitis B Vaccine is used.
- **Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (HPV)** – Effective October 1, 2008, a complete series of 3 doses of HPV vaccine is required for females. The first dose shall be administered before the child enters the 6th grade. After reviewing educational materials approved by the Board of Health, the parent or guardian, at the parent's or guardian's sole discretion, may elect for the child not to receive the HPV vaccine.
- **Measles, Mumps, & Rubella (MMR) Vaccine** – A minimum of 2 measles, 2 mumps, and 1 rubella. (Most children receive 2 doses of each because the vaccine usually administered is the combination vaccine MMR). First dose must be administered at age 12 months or older. Second dose of vaccine must be administered prior to entering kindergarten but can be administered at any time after the minimum interval between dose 1 and dose 2.
- **Polio Vaccine** – A minimum of 4 doses of polio vaccine. One dose must be administered on or after the fourth birthday.
- **Tetanus, Diphtheria, & Acellular Pertussis (Tdap)** – A booster dose of Tdap vaccine is required for all children entering the 6th grade, if at least five years have passed since the last dose of tetanus-containing vaccine.
- **Varicella (Chickenpox) Vaccine** – All susceptible children born on and after January 1, 1997, shall be required to have one dose of chickenpox vaccine administered at age 12 months or older. Effective March 3, 2010, a second dose must be administered prior to entering kindergarten but can be administered at any time after the minimum interval between dose 1 and dose 2.

Any child whose immunizations are incomplete may be admitted conditionally, if the parent or guardian provides documentation at the time of enrollment, that the child has received at least one dose of the required immunizations and has a written schedule for completing the remaining doses within 90 days.

No certificate of immunization shall be required for the admission to school of any student if (i) the student or his parent submits an affidavit to the admitting official stating that the administration of immunizing agents conflicts with the student's religious tenets or practices; or (ii) the school has written certification from a licensed physician or a local health department that one or more of the required immunizations may be detrimental to the student's health, indicating the specific nature and probable duration of the medical condition or circumstance that contraindicates immunization.

### **5. Social Security Number**

The child's federal social security number must be provided upon enrollment or within 90 days thereafter. However, a child may not be excluded from school if a social security number is not provided. The division superintendent or a person acting on his behalf may waive this requirement if he finds that an individual is not eligible to obtain a social security number in accordance with guidelines established by the Board of Education or if the parent is unwilling to provide such number. School divisions may assign a student who receives a waiver an alphanumeric number as a substitute for the social security number.

### **6. Expulsion Statement**

When a student is registered, the parent must provide a sworn statement about whether the child has been expelled. The statement must indicate whether the child has been expelled from attending a private school or another public school in Virginia or a school in another state for an offense involving weapons, alcohol or drugs, or for willful infliction of injury to another person.

### **7. Enrollment of Homeless Students**

Project HOPE ensures the enrollment, attendance, and the success of homeless children and youth in school through public awareness efforts across the commonwealth and subgrants to local school divisions.