

Attendance Policies

Every Day Counts!

Regular student attendance at school is vital for learning and making progress toward graduation. Students who do not attend school regularly are more likely to fall behind in their classes and become disengaged from school. On the other hand, students who attend school regularly are more likely to graduate on time, earn better grades, and have better post-secondary opportunities compared to their peers who frequently miss school.

Regular school attendance is also an important life skill that will prepare students for post-secondary life. Therefore, all students should strive to be in school **every single day** of the school year. All parents should set the expectation that their child will attend school every single day of the school year. When students miss school, parents should seek to understand why, communicate the reason for the absence to the school, and help their child get back to school as quickly as possible.

If there is an issue that affects a student's attendance in school, the student and parent should contact the Attendance Coordinator or another school administrator to discuss the issue. The school will work with students and families to resolve attendance obstacles.

Tardy Arrival Procedures

1. School begins at 9:30 AM each day. Students should arrive at school between 8:45 AM - 9:25 AM so that they can be in class by the beginning of the school day. Students who arrive prior to 9:25 AM will be asked to wait in the Commons before proceeding to their first period class.
2. Any student who is not in the classroom at the official start time of the class (which is signaled by a bell) is considered tardy.
3. Students who arrive at school after 10:00 AM must report to the main office to obtain a tardy pass. A phone call will be made upon the student's arrival to alert parents about the student's tardiness.
4. Students who are repeatedly tardy to school and/or class will be issued consequences (e.g. student/parent conference, loss of privileges, attendance contract, etc.).

Early Dismissal Procedures

The following steps should be followed when a student needs to be dismissed early:

1. Parents should provide the school with advance notice by emailing attendance@ideapcs.org. Please use “Early Dismissal” as the subject of the email. The email should include the student’s name, the parent’s name, and the phone number where the parent can be reached.
2. The attendance office will verify by phone all early departure requests.
3. If parents do not send an early dismissal email, the parent/guardian must either come into the main office to sign the student out of school or meet virtually with the attendance coordinator to confirm the request.
4. Students must report to the main office to check out before leaving the school.
5. No student will be dismissed without verification.
6. Early dismissals will end at 3:00 PM

Please note that only legal guardians, parents, or emergency contacts may sign a student out of school.

Absence Procedures

Although IDEA encourages students to attend school every single day of the school year, we know that absences will occur. The next several sections outline procedures related to absence from school. First, though, it is important to distinguish between two types of absences: excused and unexcused. Each type is explained in more detail below.

What is Considered an Excused Absence?

An excused absence is one that is approved by the school for one of the following reasons:

- Illness of the student (a doctor’s note is required for more than three consecutive school days)
- Death in the student’s immediate family (documentation required, such as a funeral program)

- Observance of a religious holiday
- Out-of-school suspension or in-school alternative learning
- Other absences approved in advance by the IDEA administration upon the written request of a parent or guardian.

What is Considered an Unexcused Absence?

An absence is unexcused when a student fails to attend school and does not have a valid excuse. Parent approval for any of these absences does not excuse the absence. Examples of unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- Family vacation
- Oversleeping
- Childcare for siblings or other children
- Skipping school
- Student employment or related absences.

Please note that all absences, whether excused or unexcused, count towards chronic absenteeism.

What is Chronic Absenteeism?

Chronic absenteeism is when a student misses 10 percent or more of school days. There are 180 total school days in a school year. If a student misses 18 days or more of school (by the end of the year), they are considered chronically absent. However, a student could be chronically absent long before the

end of the school year. For example, if a student misses two days within the first ten days of school, they would be considered chronically absent.

Actions to Expect from IDEA After an Absence

- Any time your child is absent from school, the parent/guardian will receive an automated call alerting them of the absence.
- After three (3) absences, the attendance team will send a letter to the parent with the absences listed as well as the consequences for additional absences.
- After five (5) absences, the attendance team will request a meeting with the student and the parent to discuss the attendance challenges and develop a plan for improvement.

- After seven (7) absences, the attendance team will submit a referral to the MTSS team to provide additional intervention and support.
- After ten (10) non-consecutive absences, the attendance team will issue an MPD letter.
- After ten (10) consecutive unexcused absences, the student and family will be referred to Child Protective Services (CPS).
- After fifteen (15) unexcused absences, as mandated by DC law, the student will be referred to Truancy Court.
- After twenty (20) consecutive unexcused absences, the student will be removed from the IDEA enrollment roster. *Students who are unenrolled due to truancy will not be eligible to return to IDEA.*

Required Documentation Following Absence

- Within five (5) school days after an absence, students must submit a note to the attendance coordinator or main office which includes the date(s) of absence, the reason for the absence, and any required documentation.
- An original doctor's note must be provided for medical appointments scheduled during the school day.
- An original doctor's note must be provided for absences due to illness totaling three or more consecutive school days.

MTSS Process to Address Attendance Concerns

A referral to the MTSS Team will be made after 5 unexcused absences (within 2 school days of student reaching 5 unexcused absences). The MTSS Team will meet within 5 school days of referral and regularly thereafter to:

- Review and address the student's attendance and determine the underlying cause(s) for the student's unexcused absences;
- Employ reasonable and diligent efforts to communicate and to collaborate with the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s);
- Communicate and collaborate with the student's existing Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, as applicable;
- Provide timely response to the student's truant behavior;
- Make recommendations for academic, diagnostic, or social work services, as applicable;
- Use school and/or community resources to abate the student's truancy, including referral to a community-based organization when available; and

- Develop and implement an action plan in consultation with the student and student's parent(s) or guardian(s).

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