

## Attendance Policy – COVID Addendum

According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) preexisting attendance policy, **a student must be at school, at a school related activity, or receiving academic instruction for at least half the school day to be counted as present**<sup>1</sup>. Students who are not physically present at school but who are receiving academic instruction from the district for at least half the school day should be counted as present. Examples of academic instruction include tutoring, online learning, or distance learning.

While this policy is not changing for the 2020-21 school year, this document provides guidance for taking and reporting attendance in hybrid and remote learning models. The terms of this agreement shall remain in effect until the close of the 2020-21 school year unless the state of emergency declared by Governor Baker on March 10, 2020 is ended prior to that time.

### Daily Attendance

When taking attendance, schools should confirm that students participated in at least half of each day's scheduled structured learning time activities, defined as "time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the 'core subjects' and 'other subjects.' In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments."

Students enrolled in hybrid learning are expected to attend in-person learning on the scheduled in-person learning days. Students not physically reporting to in-person school on those days will be marked as absent unless an adaptation due to quarantine, "RED" designation by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health COVID 19 Weekly Public Health Report, or other valid COVID related reason is communicated in advance to and approved by the school administration. Any approved adaptation request shall specify the revision to the learning schedule and projected duration of that revision. Students not adhering to the agreed upon adaptations will be marked absent

Below are some examples to consider these are applicable for students who are learning remotely full-time, as well as for students who are learning remotely as part of a hybrid model.

<sup>1</sup> This attendance policy is separate and distinct from Structured Learning Time requirements, which require a minimum number of academic instructional hours each day. For the 2020-21 school year, this includes 5 hours each day for elementary students and 5.5 hours each day for secondary students.

## Remote Synchronous

During live, synchronous instruction attendance for at-home students will be taken during each class, with a student required to be marked “remote present” in at least 50% of his/her scheduled classes to be considered “remote present” for the entire school day. Teachers may determine that at-home participation was not sufficient to justify credit for attendance if the student does not attend the full class period though they may have been “present” when attendance was taken at the start of the class, provided that the lack of participation was not due to a technological or other issue (i.e. dropped wi-fi) that was out of the student’s control. Classroom teachers are responsible only for taking attendance at the start of class and making any adjustments they deem necessary to reflect participation as described above. The educator should reach out to their administrator or designated school-based attendance support system for assistance in reaching out to students who are experiencing high rates of absenteeism

## Remote Asynchronous

If a student’s remote schedule has a large proportion of asynchronous structured learning time such as directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning or an approved adaptation to the student learning plan, student completion of instructional activities will confirm that he or she participated in at least half of the scheduled structured learning time. This could include completion of lessons or activities assigned through Google Classroom or other assigned platforms ( i.e. IReady, Lexia, RAZ kids, ST Math), submission of assignments, completion of activity logs, written reflections of work accomplished during the day, parent/caregiver attestations of work accomplished, etc. Students who cannot be reached, who convey they are unable to participate that day, or who attempt completion of less than half of the day’s scheduled structured learning time activities should be marked as absent.

School administration may review a student’s attendance record and make adjustments and/or accommodations based on the above guidance and a student’s individual or family

circumstances. If adjustments/accommodations are required the student's teachers will be notified.

### **SIMS reporting change for 2020-2021**

This school year, in-person attendance and remote attendance will be collected separately in SIMS.

The existing Days in Attendance data element (DOE017) will be specific to in-person attendance. To collect data on remote attendance, two new fields have been added to the SIMS data collection: DOE054 (Days of Attendance Remote) and DOE055 (Days Absent Remote).

Districts will need to record daily student attendance and absences in the local SIS as either in- person or remote, to ensure that these distinct categories are transmitted to DESE in SIMS reporting in the appropriate data elements. If any portion of the school day is in-person, then the day of attendance should be categorized as in-person.