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District Attendance Policy

It is the belief of the Empower Community School that regular school attendance positively impacts student achievement; therefore, we believe it is in the best interest of your child to attend school regularly. Furthermore, regular school attendance is mandated by The Compulsory School Attendance Law of the State of Alabama, Title 15, Section 28-12, Code of Alabama, 1975. Under state law, the district requires every student to attend school and school administrators to enforce this law. Furthermore, student attendance is a standard that the Alabama State Department of Education uses to assess a district's accountability.

In accordance with the guidance from the State Superintendent of Education Interpretation issued on August 24, 1989, the school district requires all students to be in attendance for a minimum of 51% of the complete instructional day to fulfill the Full-Day Attendance requirement. One half day is equivalent to 11:59 am. Late arrivals must be present 3.5 hours of the school day to be counted as present. Full-Day Attendance exceptions may be granted for students who are Homebound, IDEA eligible, specialized treatment centers, and/or 504 protected if coordinated through the school as a part of the student's educational program.

When absences occur, a written, excusable explanation must be provided to the school for each absence **within three school days** from the day the student returns to school.

Students shall be considered absent for the following situations:

- Students that are off school grounds, unapproved, or have an unknown location on a day that the student is scheduled to attend school.
- The student is serving an out-of-school suspension including any days missed immediately preceding the discipline.
- Family vacations.
- Any student scheduled to be in class, but not in attendance. •
- A student not attending for unknown reasons, although scheduled to attend.

Excused Absences

A good cause or valid excuse, as used in this section, exists when on account of sickness or other condition attendance was impossible or entirely inadvisable or impracticable or when, by virtue of the extraordinary circumstances, the absence is generally recognized as excusable. In accordance with State policy, Authority: Ala. Code §16-28-13(1975) School Code 1927, §306; Code 1940, T. 52, §303, absences from school will be excused for the following reasons:

- Illness/injury
- Medical or Dental appointments
- Legal Quarantine
- Death of an immediate family member (parents, grandparents, siblings)
- Emergency conditions as determined by the school administrator including inclement weather which would be dangerous to the life and health of the child
- Court or Administrative Proceedings
- Religious Observance
- Pre-approved Educational Opportunity
- Other Administrative Approval-requires prior permission of the school administrator upon request of the parent or guardian

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When a student returns to school, a parent/guardian must provide in writing the cause of the student's absence no later than three (3) school days. A failure to provide an explanation will be evidence of the child being truant each day the child is absent.

Military Compact

Chronic Absenteeism & Truancy

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absence refers to students who are repeatedly absent during the school year for both excused (e.g., suspension, illness, death in the family, etc.) and unexcused absences. Chronic absence data will be used to trigger prevention and early intervention measures so high-risk student populations can receive the supports they need, ideally before they fall behind academically. Reducing chronic absence is a major component of the district's multi-tiered support system model.

Tiers of Intervention

- Tier 1 represents universal strategies to encourage good attendance for all students.
- Tier 2 provides early intervention for students who need more support to avoid chronic absence.
- Tier 3 offers intensive support for students facing the greatest challenges of attending school.

Truancy

Truancy is unexcused absences or skipping school/class for a day or portion thereof. The difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy is that chronic absenteeism identifies, and totals excused and unexcused absences whereas, truancy identifies only unexcused absences. To break down barriers/obstacles impeding positive student attendance that consequently increases the students' academic performance, the school's MTSS team shall analyze and match appropriate interventions/strategies with students that have as few as two absences, regardless of whether it is excused or unexcused through student and student advocacy relationships.

The difference between chronic absenteeism and truancy is that chronic absenteeism identifies, and totals excused and unexcused absences whereas, truancy identifies only unexcused absences.

Pre-Early Warning Interventions

The district encourages the school to develop & implement procedures for implementing school truancy prevention programs to include a systematic, directive, and timely process to reflect support for students and families prior to the juvenile court referral for the truancy process. Appropriate interventions prior to the required early warning procedures are necessary to facilitate students staying on track and, hopefully, avoiding a petition to court.

Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program

Excessive Absenteeism is a barrier to student success and will not be tolerated. ECS will make every effort to identify students with chronic attendance issues, and will work with families to create plans to address those issues.

The Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program (EWTPP) requires that a weekly report be submitted to the Student Services department for all students between the ages of 6 and 17 having unexcused absences. It further recommends that the parent/legal guardian be notified of their child's second unexcused absence.

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Upon the occurrence of a third unexcused absence, the parent/legal guardian and student receives an Early Warning Attendance Letter notifying the parent of their child's third unexcused absence. Upon the occurrence of a fourth unexcused absence, the parent/legal guardian and student are required to attend an EWTPP conference. At the conference, the parent/legal guardian and student are informed of the State's compulsory attendance laws, court procedures, and consequences of further unexcused absences.

EWTPP Protocol: Excused & Unexcused

1. Phone call at two (2) absences
2. Attendance Warning Letter at three (3) absences
3. Attenance Conference with Attendance Counselor/Social Worker at four (4) absences
4. EWTPP Conference at seven (7) absences
5. Referral to Jefferson County Family Court Truancy Intervention Program at ten (10) absences
6. May be unenrolled from ECS at eighteen (18) absences.

Absence Threshold (per year)	ECS Intervention
2 total absences (excused and unexcused)	Phone call to parent/guardian
3 total absences (excused and unexcused)	Written Communication to parent/guardian indicating an excessive number of absences.
4 total absences (excused and unexcused)	Attendance Meeting with Attendance Counselor
7 total absences (excused and unexcused)	Parent/guardian required to meet with the school administratorAttendance Meeting with Administration and Subject to Loss of Credit
10 absences (excused and unexcused)	Parent/guardian referred to Jefferson County Family Court Truancy Intervention Program
18 absences (excused and unexcused)	May be unenrolled from the school and ineligible to return during the current school year. If unenrolled, student will be required to reapply for enrollment through the ECS student enrollment lottery.

Annual Attendance Reports

The attendance officer shall keep an accurate record of all notices served, all cases prosecuted, and all other services performed and shall make an annual report of the same to the LEA's board. *Authority: Ala. Code §16-28-18(1975)* The annual report presented to the local board of education is to include suspensions, number of chronically absent students by school and grade, and the number of truant students by school and grade level.

Parent Communication

The school district emphasizes the importance of foundational supports as the essential elements for creating successful schools that foster regular attendance. Both school administration and faculty/staff are committed to encouraging consistent attendance among students, and they will actively seek assistance from parents/guardians to achieve this goal.

The school shall ensure parents are advised of attendance laws, regulations, and policies by disseminating the Compulsory School Attendance Law Parent Notice, *Attendance document 3005-C Compulsory School Attendance Law,* to

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parents at the start of each school year. Parental receipt of attendance notification should be maintained on file at the school.

The district encourages the school to utilize attendance letters, r*efer to 3005-A Notice of School Attendance*, to inform parent/guardian of the number of their child's unexcused absences and tardiness to school or class. The notice calls attention to state compulsory attendance law and the number of unexcused absences that violate such law.