



ATTENDANCE FAQs

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Duke Ellington School of the Arts is in partnership with the District of Columbia Public Schools system and therefore abides by several of their regulations, requirements and guidelines when it comes to student achievement. The Office of Enrollment wants to ensure that all students are successful in their mission to pursue pre-professional arts training and academic scholarship. With that in mind, we are asking that you re-read and review the frequently asked questions and information shared by our Attendance Counselor, Ms. Adia Howard-Stroud. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact her directly. If you need further assistance, please contact our Director of Enrollment, Ms. Savannah R. Overton.

Thank you,

Office of Enrollment

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(1) At DCPS, we want every student to feel loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. To get there, every class and every day counts. Strong attendance is critical for success in academics and in life. At every DCPS school, attendance is taken for every student, every day. It is important that:

- Students arrive on time to school and to class.
- Students bring materials to class.
- If absent, students and families bring a note explaining the absence to the school and ask for make-up assignments.

Reach out to your child's teacher or school staff for help if there are challenges that are preventing your child from coming to school (e.g., safety, or lack of transportation).

(2) My child missed school. Which types of absences are considered “excused” and how do I notify the school?

Any absence, including an absence from any portion of the school day, without a valid excuse is marked as an unexcused absence. The following absences may be classified as an excused absence:

- Illness of the student (a doctor’s note is required for a student absent five or more days in a term);
- Illness of a child for parenting students (a doctor’s note for the student’s child is required when the student is absent five or more days in a term);
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Death in the student’s immediate family;
- Exclusion by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding, or court-ordered activity, as a party to the action or under subpoena;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Religious event celebration outside of a religious holiday (up to five cumulative days);
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent who is in the military, immediately before, during, or after deployment;
- College visits for students in 9th- 12th grades (up to three cumulative days);
- School visits for students in K through 8th grades (one day);
- Absences of expectant or parenting students for a time period specified by their doctor and any accommodations mandated by law;
- Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day; and
- An emergency or other circumstance approved by DCPS.

Definitions

- **Truancy:** Measures the percent of students aged 5-17 who are considered truant. To be “truant” means that a student has 10 or more unexcused absences from school – with or without – parental knowledge, consent, or otherwise securing prior approval from the start of the school year.
- **In-school Attendance:** Measures the average percent of students who are attending school.
- **Chronic Absence Rate:** Measures the percent of students who miss 10 percent or more days in a school year from the start of the school year.

- **Attendance Entry Rate:** Measures the percent of classes for which a school has entered attendance.

(3) REMINDER: The 80/20 Rule and Teacher Attendance-Taking

"80/20" absences are absences in which students miss more than 20 percent of the day, and count as legal absences in DC, which means they count towards school In Seat Attendance (ISA), truancy rates, and the need for staff to complete Student Support Team (SST)interventions. At schools with four or fewer periods (most high schools), a student needs just one period absence to receive an 80/20 absence for that day. At schools with five or more periods (most middle schools), student needs two period absences to receive an 80/20 absence for that day.

Consequently, it is critical that teachers ensure that they change attendance records for late students from absent to tardy so as to avoid students improperly receiving 80/20 absences for the day. Per DCPS policy, there is no point in a class period that a tardy will convert to an absence. If a student attends a portion of the class, they will be considered present and tardy. Administrators and attendance teams should share this information with teachers so they understand how critical their updating of attendance records is to both student interventions and school data.

Please speak with your DCPS Attendance Specialist if you have questions, concerns, or would like to arrange a training for your teachers regarding attendance entry.

Late Arrival for Secondary Students

- Students will be marked tardy if they arrive in class 5 minutes or more after the official start of the period.
- Students who enter class late should be given clear guidance regarding how to get caught up with the class lesson.
- Students will be allowed to enter their scheduled course regardless of what time they arrive. Teachers should make every effort to make late arriving students feel welcomed.
- There is no point in a class period that a tardy will convert to an absence. If a student attends a portion of the class, he or she will be considered present and tardy.
- Students must always have access to make-up work.
- Multiple instances of a student being tardy may not be accumulated to count as an absence.
- Responses to student tardiness should be appropriate and logical. A student should never be suspended due to being tardy.

Excused Absences

The following absences may be classified as an excused absence:

- Illness of the student (a doctor's note is required for a student absent five or more days in a term)¹⁶;

- Illness of a child for parenting students (a doctor’s note is required for a student absent five or more days in a term);
- Medical or dental appointments for the student;
- Death in the student’s immediate family;
- Exclusion by direction of the authorities of the District of Columbia, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons;
- Necessity for a student to attend a judicial proceeding, or court-ordered activity, as a party

If a student or parent anticipates an absence not covered by the excused absences listed above, they may submit a request for an excused absence due to a special circumstance to the school principal. The principal shall consult with his or her Instructional Superintendent before determining whether to grant the excused absence request. Any absence that does not meet the criteria of an excused absence or fails to satisfy the documentation requirement of an excused absence within the allowable timeframe will be classified as an unexcused absence.

If a student is absent for a total of up to four (4) cumulative days in each grading period, a parent’s written excuse is sufficient for explaining the absence. Such absence will be excused if it falls under one of the excused absence reasons noted above.

If a student is absent for five (5) or more cumulative days per term, further documentation is required beyond communication by the parent for the absence to be excused. Written explanation of the student’s absence must be submitted by a doctor or staff of a relevant agency, on official doctor’s office/agency letterhead and signed by a relevant official.

Note: • Medical or dental absences must be submitted on official doctor/dentist office stationery or form; and • Student’s required presence at judicial proceedings must be documented by a document from the court stating the need for the student’s presence on all the relevant dates. • Funeral programs may be accepted as appropriate documentation.

(4) What is the potential impact of unexcused absences on my child’s course passing if they are in grades 6 - 12?

All secondary students will receive marks of A through F to indicate the degree of achievement by a course’s standards. Course attendance is critical to learning the material. If a student has more than 30 unexcused absences in a course, they will receive an F for the course. If a student accumulates 10 unexcused absences, the school will send a warning letter to the student’s family. If the student accumulates 15 unexcused absences, another letter will be sent home. If your student is struggling with daily or course attendance, please reach out to your teacher or school staff for additional information on supports. *(Ms. Howard-Stroud)*

If a student is absent for five or more cumulative days per term for any reason, additional documentation is required beyond a note from the parent/guardian for the absence to be excused.
 Parent Name (Please Print) _____ Parent
 Signature _____ Parent Phone Number:

Today's Date*:

*Please be aware that DC Law states that excuse notes written by parents/guardians must be turned into school staff within five (5) days following a student's return from an absence for the absence to be excused

Attendance, Grading, and Promotion

Student grading and promotion can be impacted by an accrual of unexcused absences as follows:

- Secondary students with ten (10) unexcused absences in any class shall receive an initial written notice that they are at risk of receiving a grade of "FA" (failure due to absences) in that subject upon accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences, unless an exception applies
- Secondary students with fifteen (15) unexcused absences in any class shall receive an additional written warning that they are at risk of receiving a grade of "FA" (failure due to absences) in that subject upon accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences
- Secondary students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences in a course within a full school year shall receive a failing final grade in that course with a resulting loss of course credit
- Students accumulating more than thirty (30) unexcused absences within a school year shall only be promoted if a written justification is submitted by the principal to the Chancellor, or the student attends summer school and is reevaluated for promotion

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A written note must be provided to the school by the student's parent within five (5) school days after the student's return to school for an absence to be excused. Upon receipt of appropriate documentation within five (5) school days, school staff must update absences as excused.

The student's parent/guardian may write their own note or fill in the DCPS template excuse note form, which is provided at the end of this document. The explanation must include:

- The student's name
- Parent/guardian's name
- Parent/guardian's contact information
- Date of the excuse note
- Date(s) of the absence
- Reason for student's absence If a student is absent:

- For a total of up to four (4) cumulative days in each term, a parent's written excuse is sufficient for explaining the absence. Such absence will be excused if it falls under one of the excused absence reasons noted above;
- For five (5) or more cumulative days per term, further documentation is required to excuse the absence. Written explanation of the student's absence, or the student's child's absence, must be submitted by a doctor or staff of a relevant agency, on official doctor's office/agency letterhead and signed by a relevant official. Note: o Medical or dental absences must be submitted on official doctor/dentist office stationery or form; and o Student's required presence at judicial proceedings must be documented by a document from the court stating the need for the student's presence on all the relevant dates.

Funeral programs may be accepted as appropriate documentation to excuse absences due to a death in the student's immediate family.

(6) What happens if my child has multiple unexcused absences?

School-aged students (see definition below) who have multiple unexcused absences within a school year will receive the following notifications from DCPS, the school and/or the student's teacher.

- 1 Day of Unexcused Absence: Parents will be contacted when a student has one day of unexcused absence.
- 3 Days of Unexcused Absences: Parents will receive an Unexcused Absence Letter.
- 5 Days of Unexcused Absences: Parents will receive an Unexcused Absence Letter. In addition, if the five unexcused absences have occurred within one term, the student will be referred to school staff who support attendance interventions, the Attendance Student Support Team.
- 7 Days of Unexcused Absences: Parents will receive a Metropolitan Police Department Warning Letter.
- 10 Unexcused Absences (Student is considered chronically truant): for students aged 5-13, DCPS will contact Child Family Services (CFSA).
 - For students aged 14 and over, DCPS will refer the student for follow-up Attendance Student Support Team interventions. o See Grading and Promotion section for warning policies related to coursework and attendance.
- 15 Unexcused Absences: For students aged 14-17, DCPS will refer the student to Court Social Services Division. o See Grading and Promotion section for warning policies related to coursework and attendance.
- 20 Consecutive Unexcused Absences: The student is eligible for withdrawal (see next question regarding eligibility for withdrawal).
- More than 30 Unexcused Absences: Secondary students may receive a failing grade. (See Grading and Promotion section for related information regarding course failure due to absence for secondary students.)

*Note: All children who reach five (5) years of age on or before September 30th of the current school year are considered school-aged and must attend school on time every day until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their 18th birthday.

(7) What will occur if my child misses more than 20 days consecutively?

If a student registered in school is absent 20 days in a row without an excuse, they may be withdrawn due to nonattendance. This applies to all students in Pre-K through 12th grade regardless of whether they are in-boundary or out of-boundary. Students can always return to their neighborhood school to re-enroll but are subject to the waitlist if they are attempting to re-enroll in an out-of-boundary school.

(8) If my child is late to class in grades 6-12, when are they considered tardy?

Arriving to class on time is important. A secondary student (grades 6-12) will be marked as tardy if they arrive in class five (5) or more minutes after the official start of the period. Students will be allowed to enter their scheduled course regardless of what time they arrive. Teachers should make every effort to make late arriving students feel welcomed. There is no point in a class period that a tardy will convert to an absence. If a student attends a portion of the class, they will be considered present and tardy. Multiple instances of a student being tardy may not be accumulated to count as an absence. Responses to student tardiness should be appropriate and logical. A student should never receive an out of school suspension due to being tardy.

For example: If your student comes to class late (after teacher has taken attendance after the first 5-10 minutes) parent/guardians are immediately notified via Robocall (from DCPS Central Office) stating "your child is absent for the day." However, it does mean that the child may be absent but tardy. Students and teachers must work together to update their attendance record by the end of the class, so that a tardy is properly put in place in lieu of an absence. Parents/guardians, it is good practice to encourage your students to speak with their teachers about their attendance record for the day if they are late. This conversation should happen at the end of class.

Attendance Data Modification Requests

As a means of preserving the integrity of data and ensuring that all attendance laws and policies are followed, attendance data will be intermittently locked throughout the year.

Please note that submitting a data modification request will not necessarily result in the approval of the request. You will receive an e-mail within one week noting whether the request has been approved.