

Dublin City and Laurens County Schools

Attendance Protocol

As mandated by OCGA 20-2-690.2, a county-wide Attendance Protocol Committee is established and charged with ensuring the coordination and cooperation among officials, agencies, and programs involved in compulsory education issues, to reduce the number of unexcused absences from school, and to increase the percentage of students present to take tests that are required to be administered under the laws of the state.

The protocol developed shall apply to the Dublin City and Laurens County School Systems. Private school organizations shall make their intentions known to the Superior Court Judge of whether to participate in the protocol or submit a separate protocol that meets the requirements of the State of Georgia. It is important for credibility within the community that all local schools operate under the same, consistent student attendance expectations and protocols. All mandated reporters shall assure that students suspected of being truant are reported to designated school officials, law enforcement, or DFACS. With these expectations, the following protocol is adopted.

I. Definitions:

A. Compulsory Education:

Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within this state having control or charge of any child or children between their sixth (6th) and sixteenth (16th) birthdays shall enroll and send such child or children to a public school, a private school, or a home study program (OCGA 20-2-690.10). Children that have attained 20 days enrollment in Kindergarten also fall under compulsory attendance according to O.C.G.A. 20-2-150.

B. Truant:

Per the Georgia State Board of Education Attendance Rules, "Truant" is defined as "any child subject to compulsory education (ages 6 through 16, and 5 year olds who have attended twenty (20) days in school) who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences".

C. Monitoring:

Each school system shall assure compliance with compulsory education and attendance policies in assigned schools. Individual schools will monitor attendance and follow the protocol for reporting.

II. Identifying Truant Students:

A. Excused Absences

Excused absences shall include:

1. Personal illness,
2. A serious illness or death/funeral in the student's immediate family (Immediate family is defined as parents/guardians, grandparents, siblings, and other persons living within the child's residence),
3. A court order or an order by a governmental agency,
4. Celebration of state recognized religious holidays,
5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety,
6. One (1) day to register to vote,
7. PAGE for Georgia General Assembly (counted as present in school),
8. Up to five (5) school days for a student whose parent or guardian is in military service in the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard, if such parent/guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment, to visit with his/her parent/guardian prior to deployment or while on leave.

Three (3) Days to Submit Excuse for Absence

Upon returning to school, the student will have three (3) days to present the necessary written documentation to have the absences count as excused. Failure to present this documentation will result in an unexcused absence. Phone calls and emails will not be accepted in place of a written notice.

Excuse must include:

1. The date(s) of the absence,
2. Student name,
3. Reason for absence and
4. Parent or guardian signature

Seven (7) Days of Parent Notes for Illness

A parent's note will be accepted to excuse personal illness for seven (7) days during the school year. After a parent's note has been used for seven (7) days at any time during the school year, a doctor's excuse is required for ALL future absences due to illness.

B. Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences shall include all absences that do not meet the criteria as outlined for excused absences. Also refer to Section II C Tardies and Early Dismissals. School days missed as a result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

C. Tardies/Early Dismissals

As mandated by OCGA 20-2-690.2, the Attendance Protocol Committee must recommend policies regarding tardies and early dismissals. In order to promote continuity between the school systems, the following policy is recommended:

1. Five (5) unexcused tardies/early dismissals will count as one (1) unexcused absence,
2. The conditions for excusing a tardy or early dismissal will be the same as an absence,
3. Tardies and early dismissals must be tracked separately and the data will be used to identify truant students. Information concerning students, who meet these thresholds, will be monitored by the school.

D. Student Withdrawals

1. Local school systems are authorized to withdraw a student who:

Has missed more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences,

Is not subject to compulsory attendance; and

Is not receiving instructional services from the local school system through homebound instruction or instructional services required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

2. Local school systems shall notify the parent or guardian of the intention to withdraw a student younger than 18 years of age who is not subject to compulsory attendance.

III. Notification of Parents/Guardians

Within thirty (30) days of enrollment in school, the parent or guardian will be notified in writing of the attendance policies and consequences. The parent/guardian must sign and return this notification, which will be placed in the student's record. Students in grades 4–12 are also required to sign the notification of attendance policies.

IV. Violations of Attendance Policy

A. Learner's/Driver's License (O.C.G.A. 40-5-22)

The school will notify parent/guardian by first class mail of students aged fourteen (14) years and older who have acquired seven (7) unexcused and/or consecutive absences per semester. The school will report the names, addresses and social security numbers of these students who acquire ten (10) unexcused or consecutive absences to the State Board of Education, which in turn will send this information to the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Department of Motor Vehicles will notify student of their ineligibility to apply for license or suspension of a current license. This is now a statewide requirement, known as TAADRA.

B. Work Permits

Work permits will not be authorized for students who have 10 or more unexcused absences. Students with existing work permits, who have acquired 10 or more absences, will be recommended for revocation.

C. Unexcused Absences

1. Three (3) or More Unexcused

By the time a student has acquired an equivalent of **three or more unexcused absences**, the school will notify the parent or guardian in writing or via automated message of the student's absences. This is a courtesy to make parents/guardians aware that we are monitoring their student's attendance. This reminder or similar documented action will serve as the good faith effort required of the school before taking further action. Failure to see or hear this reminder does not prevent further action taken to attempt to improve attendance.

2. Five (5) or More Unexcused

The school will notify the parent/guardian of the attendance policy and consequences at an equivalent of **five (5) unexcused** absences in conjunction with a Truancy Meeting, which the parent/guardian will be requested to attend. The objective of the meeting will be to explore the barriers to attendance, develop a plan to improve attendance, and to remind the parent/guardian of the attendance policy and consequences for further unexcused absences.

At this Truancy Meeting if we find the student has a history of truancy (10 unexcused absences the previous school year), an appropriate community referral to the Laurens County Local Interagency Planning Team may be completed for this student along with the parent/guardian to work toward improvement in the student's attendance at school.

3. Seven (7) Days of Parent Notes for Illness

A parent's note will be accepted to excuse personal illness for seven (7) days during the school year. After a parent's note has been used for seven (7) days at any time during the school year, a doctor's excuse is required for ALL future absences due to illness.

4. Ten or More Unexcused Absences

- a. **Ten or more unexcused** absences will result in a petition for educational neglect or truancy to be filed with the Laurens County Juvenile Court.
- b. In the event of a referral, each additional unexcused absence following notification of the parent/guardian of **10 unexcused days of absence** for a child shall constitute a **separate** violation of the Compulsory Education Law (OCGA 20-2-690.10). The violation will be reported to the court.
- c. Any parent, guardian, or other person with control of a child, who violates the Compulsory Education Law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction (OCGA 20-2-690.10).

In signing this protocol, we, the undersigned, commit our agencies/departments to the procedures outlined above.

1d. Deb Handen Jr.

Chief Judge, Laurens County Superior Court

4/29/15

Date

Samuel A. Hilburn

Judge, Laurens County Juvenile Court

4/29/15

Date

Craig Starnes

District Attorney, Dublin Judicial Court

4/29/15

Date

[Signature]

Superintendent, Laurens County Board of Education

4/22/15

Date

[Signature]

Superintendent, Dublin City Board of Education

4/23/15

Date

[Signature]

Director, Laurens County Dept. of Family & Children Svcs.

4-20-15

Date

[Signature]

Sheriff, Laurens County Sheriff's Department

4-20-15

Date

[Signature]

Chief of Police, Dublin City

4-20-15

Date

[Signature]

Chief of Police, East Dublin

4-30-15

Date

[Signature]

Director, Community Service Board of Middle Ga.

4-22-15

Date

Connie Smith
Director, Laurens Family Connection

4/22/15
Date

Kesha M. Halder
Director, Dublin-Laurens Teen Court

5/7/15
Date

Cami Fowler
Program Manager, Department of Juvenile Justice

4/22/15
Date

Jodie Petman Curtis
Director, Communities In Schools of Laurens Co., Inc.

5-11-15
Date

Sheri Howard
Director, Laurens County CASA

4/22/15
Date