

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

It is the position of the Citrus County School Board that students must attend school on a regular and timely basis to maximize educational opportunities offered in Citrus County Schools. Regular and timely student attendance can be successfully achieved through a strong partnership between the home and school representatives.

This policy is applicable for all Pre-K-12 students in Citrus County. The superintendent may approve exceptions to this policy for special programs, such as alternative education, magnet programs, and adult education programs for the purpose of enhancing the goals of these programs.

### **I. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

Florida Statute 1003.21 requires that all students between the ages of six (6) and eighteen (18) attend school regularly. The parents or guardians are responsible for their child(ren)'s attendance and to follow compulsory attendance laws. Students are obligated to attend one hundred eighty (180) days of school each year. Regular attendance is a critical component for student success. Students between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years of age who plan to terminate their school enrollment must complete a formal declaration signed by the student and the student's parent or guardian prior to the termination going into effect.

#### **A. Parent Responsibilities**

1. Florida Statutes 1003.21 and 1003.24 clearly define the responsibility of parents for the attendance of their child(ren) at school. The school district expects parents to fulfill their responsibilities to ensure student attendance in school.
2. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) to be aware of all absences and the penalties associated with excessive absences and unexcused absences and tardies. Schools will provide information to parents about attendance requirements, will make reasonable attempts to notify parents of student absences, and will work with parents to resolve attendance concerns. The principal/designee will contact the parent or guardian to determine the basis for unexcused absences or absences when the reason is unknown.
3. If a student has unexcused absences sufficient enough to jeopardize academic progress and it is determined that the student's parent or legal guardian is at fault for these absences, the appropriate school personnel will adhere to Florida Statutes 1003.24, 1003.26 (Enforcement of School Attendance), and 1003.27 (Court Procedures and Penalties).

## **B. Non-enrollment of Compulsory Attendance Age Students**

Written notice shall be given in person or by return-receipt mail to the parent(s) or guardian(s) or other person exercising *in loco parentis*, when no valid reason is found for a child's non-enrollment. If the notice and requirement are ignored, the designated school representative shall report the case to the superintendent and refer the case to the Student Services Department for compliance with the Florida Compulsory Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).

## **C. Notification of Loco Parentis**

In cases in which a student is not residing with his/her parent(s)/guardian(s), the parent of the student must designate in writing the adult person(s) with whom the pupil resides who stands in *loco parentis* so that the pupil may be admitted to or continue in school. This statement must be notarized and presented to the principal/designee for acceptance.

## **II. STUDENT ABSENCES**

### **A. Excused Absences**

1. Excused absences, tardies, and permission to leave school early will be allowed only for the following:
  - Illness of the student
  - Major illness in the family of the student
  - Medical appointments of the student
  - Death in the family of the student
  - Duration of a religious holiday of the specific faith of a student
  - Subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency to fulfill civic duties, (A copy of the subpoena or court summons must be presented to the principal or designee.)
  - Major disaster that would justify absence in the judgment of the administration
  - Head lice, a maximum of two (2) days for each occurrence
  - Planned absences approved in advance by the principal/designee

2. It is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide a written statement indicating the reason for the absence within two (2) days of the student's return to school. If the written statement is not provided by the parent, the absence(s) will be unexcused. The written statement must include the following information for each absence:

- Date the excuse is written
- Date(s) of the absence(s)
- Full name of the student
- Reason for the absence
- Day time telephone number of parent or guardian
- Signature of the parent or guardian

Final determination of whether an absence, tardy, or early dismissal is excused or unexcused is the responsibility of the local school principal/designee. Any planned absences, other than medical appointments, must be approved in advance by the principal/designee.

### **III. TARDIES & UNEXCUSED DISMISSALS**

- A. A tardy is defined as an arrival to class or school after the designated starting time or the tardy signal has sounded. Reasons for excused tardies are the same as for excused absences. Three (3) unexcused tardies within a nine-week grading period are equivalent to one (1) unexcused absence.
- B. Students may leave early for those reasons accepted for excused absences. To leave school early without an acceptable reason is an unexcused absence/early dismissal. Three (3) unexcused early dismissals within a nine-week grading period are equivalent to one (1) unexcused absence.
- C. Parents are encouraged to maintain student attendance for the entire school day with minimal interruptions or unnecessary requests to leave school early. For high school, students must attend class 50% or more to avoid absences.
- D. When tardies or early dismissals become excessive, the problem may be addressed through a required parent conference with the school principal/designee, and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken. The disciplinary actions may include, but not be limited to:
  - Detention
  - In-School Suspension
  - Saturday School

#### IV. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

- A. After 10 days of excused or unexcused absences, a written statement of illness from a licensed health care practitioner will be required for subsequent absences due to illness. Absences previously documented by a licensed health care practitioner, a court official, a church official and out-of-school suspensions are excluded from the 10-day absence count. (NOTE: For purposes of this policy, a licensed health care practitioner is defined as follows: medical doctors and persons who are licensed to practice medicine in psychiatry, osteopathy, podiatry, optometry, dentistry, or chiropractic medicine. An Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP) or a Physician's Assistant (PA) practicing under the protocol of a supervising physician is also allowed to sign.) If no medical documentation is provided, further absences are considered unexcused. Failure to comply with these requirements, followed by continued absences of the student, may result in disciplinary action as defined in the Code of Student Conduct (i.e., detention, in-school suspension, Saturday school, etc.) and considered appropriate by the school principal. A parent conference with the school's attendance assistant may also be required to discuss compliance with the Florida Compulsory Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).
- B. If a student has had at least five (5) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reason is unknown, within a calendar month or ten (10) unexcused absences, or absences for which the reason is unknown, within a 90 calendar day period, the student's primary teacher shall report to the school principal/designee that the student may be exhibiting a pattern of non-attendance. The principal shall, unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the school's child study team to determine if early patterns of truancy are developing. If the child study team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify potential remedies.
- C. After fifteen (15) unexcused absences accumulate within any ninety (90) calendar days, the Student Services Center will determine the appropriate steps for the enforcement of the Florida Compulsory Attendance Statute. (Florida Statute 1003.21).

## V. HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR COURSE CREDIT

### A. Possible Failure Due to Excessive Absences

1. When a high school student accumulates 5 or more excused (see B, 1-8 below) or unexcused absences in a class in any one quarter, the student may receive a final grade of “F” and receive no credit for the course. In addition, this student may be withdrawn from class by the principal for the remainder of the quarter. A student may request an administrative review or appeal to an attendance committee for a waiver of this rule. **It is the responsibility of the students and parents to be aware of all excused and unexcused absences and to verify, in writing, all absences in the event of an appeal with documentation.**
2. If a student has 5 or more excused or unexcused absences and is granted a waiver by the administration or the Attendance Appeal Committee, the student will receive the calculated quarter grade average for the class(es), provided the student passes the final comprehensive exam.
3. If a student has 5 or more excused or unexcused absences and does not apply for or is denied a waiver by the administration and/or the Attendance Appeal Committee, the student will receive an “F” (failure because of excessive absences) for the quarter grade.

### B. Exceptions to the Failure Due to Excessive Absences

The following excused absences from school shall **NOT** be counted as absences for calculating excessive absences. Written documentation **MUST** be provided when involving:

1. Absences for illnesses of other health-related reasons that are documented by a statement from a licensed health care practitioner, (for definition, see “NOTE” on page 8).
2. Absences due to death in the family or absences for religious holidays.
3. Absences due to holidays must be documented by a parent/guardian’s note three (3) days in advance.
4. Absences for approved college visitation days. A maximum of four (4) documented college visitation days will be allowed for students beginning the second quarter of the junior year through the end of the senior year. Armed Forces Academies and vocational school visits will also fall under this provision. These absences must be applied for three (3) days in advance. The principal may allow additional days when necessary.
5. Absences due to subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency. Verification must be provided by a copy of the subpoena or court summons.
6. Homebound education placements due to an extended illness are not considered absences.
7. School-sponsored activities are not considered absences. (i.e., field trips, school sponsored assemblies, extra-curricular activities.)
8. Absences resulting from out of school suspensions. Absences resulting from out of school suspensions are unexcused absences. A high school student with 5 unexcused absences in a class must pass a final comprehensive exam to receive credit for the course.

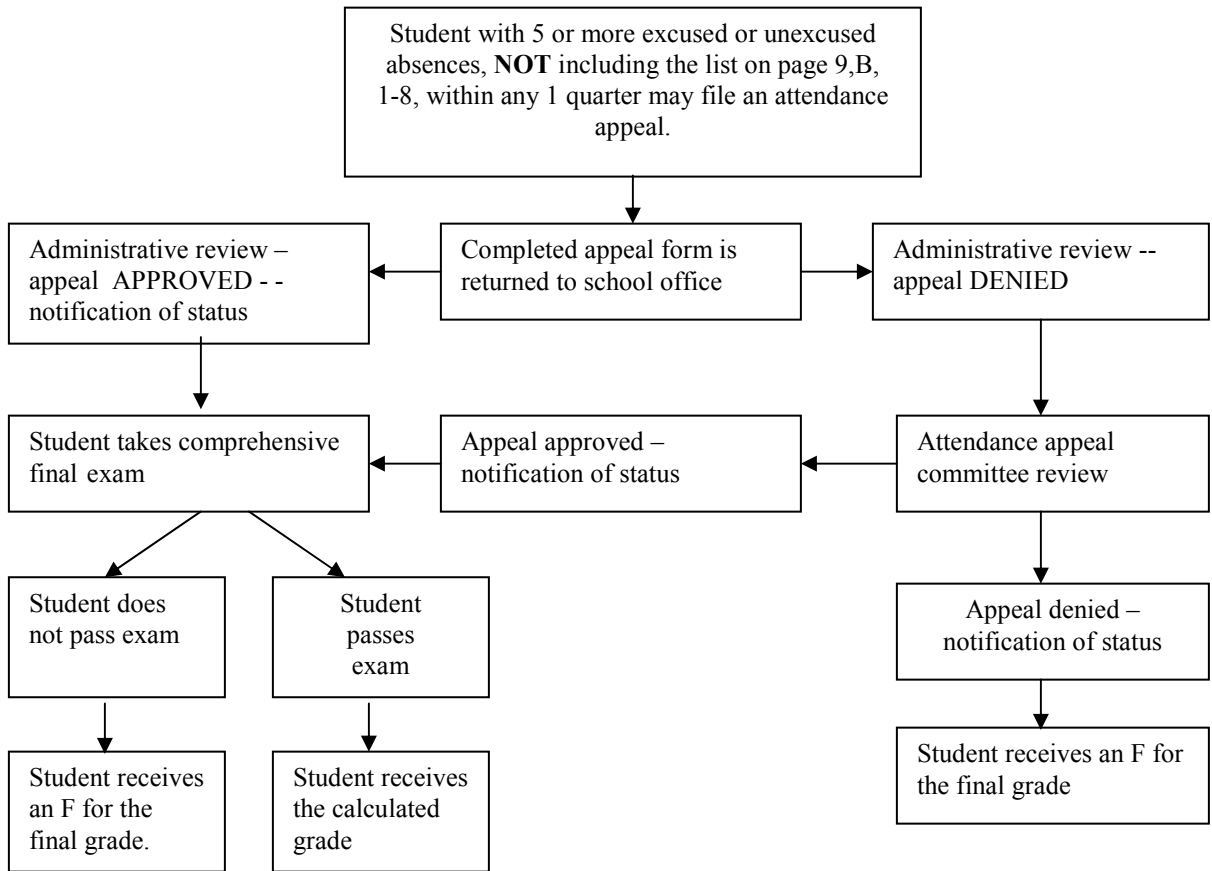
### **C. Grading and the Attendance Policy**

1. The attendance policy shall impact only the final grade of the quarter.
2. The teacher shall not give any student an “F” for a mid-term grade based on the student having 5 or more absences from his/her class.

### **D. Appeal Process**

1. Administrative Review: A high school student who has 5 or more excused or unexcused absences in a quarter may present documentation to the designated administrator for waiver of the failure because of excessive absences.
2. An administrative review of a student’s appeal will occur using the following procedures:
  - a. An appeal request for an Administrative Review waiver must be submitted prior to the first scheduled final exam.
  - b. The request must consist of a written explanation of absences and the reasons for requesting the waiver. Appropriate documentation for the reasons for all absences must be attached to the request. Absences for extended illnesses or hospitalization must be documented with a statement of illness by a licensed health care practitioner. Chronic illness requires an annual verification by a licensed health care practitioner. The principal/designee will review the documentation, render a decision, and notify the student’s parent/guardian and teachers.
3. Denied waivers will automatically be reviewed by the Attendance Appeal Committee
  - a. The Attendance Appeal Committee may consist of school-based administrators, district-based administrators, counselors, or teachers.
  - b. The responsibility for initiating the appeal process will rest with the student/parent or guardian.
4. Any denied appeals beyond the Attendance Appeal Committee will be in accordance with the Grievance and Complaint Procedure, School Board Policy.

## Appeal Process Flow Chart



## VI. PROVISIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR MAKE-UP WORK

### A. Excused Absences

1. Students with excused absences are given the privilege of making up work for credit. Students are allowed the same number of days for make-up work as the number of days absent, not to exceed six (6) school days. The principal/designee may grant extensions to the make-up time limit for extenuating circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to obtain and complete all make-up work within the time specified.
2. All scheduled tests and assignments that were due on the first day of a student's absence will be taken or turned in on the day the student returns to school.
3. Planned absences, other than medical appointments, must have the prior approval of the principal/designee. At least three (3) school days prior to the absence, students are to make pre-arrangements for their test(s) and school work to be completed. Tests are to be taken and work will be due the day the student returns to school.

## **B. Unexcused Absences**

Each school will develop administrative practices and procedures regarding make-up work for students with unexcused absences. Input and involvement from the faculty, staff, and school enhancement council should be included in the development of these practices and procedures. To maintain academic progress, students should be encouraged to make up work, even if credit will not be awarded. Parents and students will be provided information regarding these practices and procedures.

## **C. Suspensions**

Students suspended out of school may be denied the opportunity to make up work for credit. Determination of this consideration is the responsibility of the local school principal/designee.

## **VII. ENFORCEMENT OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

In cases of excessive absences, tardies, or early dismissals, an attendance assistant or school social worker may visit or make other contact with the parent(s) or guardian(s) at the home or other places to discuss the attendance problem for the purpose of returning the student to regular attendance. Legal action against a student and parent(s) or guardian(s) may be taken for not complying with the Florida Compulsory School Attendance Statute (Florida Statute 1003.21).

## **VIII. DRIVING PRIVILEGES**

Students who fail to comply with attendance requirements will lose their driving privileges. Pursuant to Section 322.091, Florida Statute requires schools to report to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle (DHSMV) the names of minors who attain the age of 14 and above that have accumulated 15 unexcused absences in a period of 90 calendar days. The school principal/designee is the contact for additional information regarding these requirements.

## **IX. ATTENDANCE RECORDING**

Student attendance records are to be maintained in accordance with School Board Policy. Students who are on hospital/homebound instruction are counted as present.