August 7, 2019

Dear Families:

Beginning this school year, Cecil County Public Schools is launching a campaign to reinforce the importance of student attendance in school. Part of that process is the recent revision of the school system’s attendance regulation, which will now align with the State of Maryland’s definition of ‘Chronic Absenteeism.”

The attendance regulation will move from the previously held model of excused/unexcused absences to a model where all absences will be counted toward a yearly limit. Students who have more than 17 days of absences may be precluded from passing classes for the year. Principals will have the discretion to waive an attendance failure under certain circumstances, including chronic illnesses. Family trips will count toward the total allowed absences for the year.

On the back of this letter are frequently asked questions. If you have further questions about student attendance, please contact your child’s school. We will continue to promote the critical concept of consistent, regular, on-time student attendance throughout the school year and will ask parents, families, and the community to partner with us in doing so. We are working to build a culture where students are encouraged to be in school every day because we know that this will contribute to their overall success.

Thank you for your support in our efforts!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Lawson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Revisions to the Student Attendance Regulation (JED-RA)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the most significant changes to the attendance policy?
The attendance regulation will move from the previously held model of excused/unexcused absences to a model where all absences will be counted toward a yearly limit of 17 days.

Can I still take a family vacation during the school year?
Yes. While we encourage families to schedule vacations during times of the year when school is not in session, we know that sometimes that is not always possible. Family trips count toward the 17-day limit.

If absences are no longer recorded as excused or unexcused, do I still need to send in a note when my child misses school?
Yes. In circumstances of student illness, parents are expected to provide documentation following a student absence. In addition, when illnesses are certified through doctor’s notes or parent note or circumstances warrant, the principal may waive attendance failure after verification. Students who have consecutive absences of 10 or more days without notification may be withdrawn from CCPS (COMAR).

What is the reason for these changes?
CCPS is launching a campaign to reinforce the importance of student attendance in school, which aligns the school system with state standards in accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). A focus of ESSA is the reduction of chronic absenteeism, which is defined as missing 10 percent of school days, or just two days a month, within one academic year for any reason. Data shows that 1 out of every 7 students are chronically absent from school. It is our goal to reduce chronic absenteeism and promote the importance of students attending school every day.

What happens if my child exceeds the 17-day limit?
High school students will receive no credit for courses taken during that year. They may have their credits reinstated by attending Twilight School or other programs offered over the summer. Middle school students will not earn promotion to the next grade, but may be promoted by attending Twilight School or other programs available during the summer. Elementary students will not be promoted but may be placed in the next grade. Elementary students who have exceeded the 17-day limit may appeal non-promotion by following the process outlined in the regulation.

Who do I contact if I have more questions?
Your child’s school will be able to answer questions related to the attendance revisions. You can access the full regulation, Student Attendance and Punctuality, (JED-RA) here.