

Revised July 2023



Attendance and Tardy Policy

TARDIES AND EARLY CHECKOUTS

Upon a scholar's 7th tardy/early checkout, the parent/guardian is notified. Upon a scholar's 10th tardy/early checkout and notification by letter, the parent/guardian is to contact the school designee to discuss the scholar's attendance. Subsequent tardies/early checkouts may include but are not limited to: Referral to the Truancy Intervention Program, Juvenile court CHINS complaint, or DFCS referral. If the parent or guardian has previously attended TIP, a second referral to the program may be forfeited and criminal prosecution may be initiated. Grades 9-12: Scholars checking out during the school day will need to provide a doctor's note in order to return to school.

ABSENCE FROM CLASS/SCHOOL

As permitted under Georgia state law and Georgia State Board of Education policies, a scholar's absence, tardiness, or early checkout may be excused for the following reasons:

Personal illness or when attendance in school would endanger a student's health or the health of others; Serious illness or death of an immediate family member; Mandated absence by order of governmental agencies, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces; Observing religious holidays, necessitating absence from school; Conditions that render attendance impossible or hazardous to one's health or safety; Registering to vote or voting, for a period not to exceed one day; and Reuniting of families between military deployments, not to exceed five days.

NOTE: For school attendance purposes, scholars shall be counted present when they are in attendance at least one-half of the instructional day or serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly.

ABSENCES REQUIRING MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION

In the event that a scholar's personal illness or attendance at school endangers a student's health or the health of others, the school may require the scholar to present appropriate medical documentation upon return to school for the purpose of validating that the absence is an excused absence.

In the event that a scholar has 5 or more absences for health reasons without a physician's excuse, the school requires a physician's excuse in order to consider the absence as an excused absence.

Parents are encouraged to be proactive in communicating with their child's school when there is an unusual attendance pattern expected.

The following procedures will be utilized in addressing an accumulation of unexcused and/or excused scholar absences and/or tardies/early checkouts:

System-approved letters are mailed that include the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1). Instructions are included in each letter. Upon the generation of each letter, the Dean will be notified.

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Absences do not accumulate beyond the current school year.

School days missed as a result of out-of-school suspensions will not count as unexcused absences for the purpose of determining truancy.

NOTE: SCA complies with the Lowndes County Juvenile Court Protocol Agreement for Truancy in Schools. A referral to the Truancy Intervention Program (TIP), juvenile court, state court, magistrate court, and/or the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) may be made in lieu of the outlined procedures. Protocol changes that occur during the school year will be posted on the website.

UNEXCUSED SCHOLAR ABSENCES

Scholars are required to provide written excuses for absences in accordance with Scintilla's policy. The Director of scholarInformation Systems will maintain a record of students' excused and unexcused absences. Written notes explaining the reason for the student's absence are to be retained until the end of the school term.

Teachers will maintain timely and accurate attendance records that reflect absences as excused or unexcused. For an absence to be excused, a dated and signed note from the physician or parent/guardian or an e-mail from a verified parent/guardian account must be sent to the student's homeroom teacher explaining the reason for the absence within three (3) school days of returning to school.

Scintilla will notify the parent, guardian, or another person who has control or charge of the scholar when such scholar has five unexcused absences. The notice will outline the penalty and consequences of such absences and that each subsequent absence will constitute a separate offense.

Prior to commencing judicial proceedings to impose a penalty for violating compulsory school attendance law, the school system shall send a notice by certified mail return receipt requested.

By September 1st or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of the scholar must sign a statement indicating receipt of the written statement of possible consequences and penalties. After two reasonable attempts by the school to secure such signatures, the school shall be considered in compliance with this requirement.

In addition, students age ten or older by September 1st must sign a statement indicating receipt of a written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the local system's policy.

After a scholar has five or more unexcused absences, the school designee or SRO may refer a parent to the Magistrate Court for a warrant and to the Solicitor General for prosecution under the Georgia Compulsory School Attendance statute if it is suspected that the parent or guardian is the cause of the student's absence. At the State Court's discretion, parents may receive a fine of not more than \$100, up to 30 days confinement in jail, community service, or any combination for each offense.

Additional actions may include but are not limited to: Referral to the Truancy Intervention Program, Juvenile court CHINS complaint, or DFCS referral. If the parent or guardian has previously attended TIP, a second referral to the program may be forfeited and criminal prosecution may be initiated.

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EXCUSED/UNEXCUSED COMBINED ABSENCES

Upon a student's 10th absence, whether excused or unexcused, a parent or guardian will be notified. The school district attendance officer or their designee may also make contact with the scholar and the parent or guardian at home. Medical documentation is required for any additional absences.

Upon a student's 15th absence, whether excused or unexcused, a referral may be made to TIP or DFCS unless extenuating medical conditions exist.