

JONES COUNTY ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

The Jones County Board of Education recognizes that regular attendance is critical to student achievement. Students are required to meet all requirements governing compulsory school attendance. In order to receive maximum benefit from the instructional activities, students are expected to be in school each day unless excused for legitimate reasons. Good attendance habits positively impact the learning process and carry over into the world of work. While teachers and administrators are charged with the responsibility of providing worthwhile daily activities for students, the students and their parents must assume responsibility for being punctual and regular in attendance. It is the position of the Jones County Board of Education that every day at school is important and that no student should be absent except for extraordinary reasons. Therefore, a student shall not be absent from school or from any class or other required school hours except for illness or other providential cause, unless with written permission of the teacher, principal, or duly authorized school official. No student shall encourage or counsel other students to violate this policy.

ABSENCES

The Jones County Board of Education defines truancy as “any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five (5) days of unexcused absences.”

EXCUSED ABSENCES

An excused absence is an absence for which a student may make up any schoolwork missed during the absence. However, any excused absence will be treated as an unexcused absence when a student does not satisfactorily make up the schoolwork missed or does not provide an excuse from the parent or guardian within the time limits required by the school. Once the student returns to school no written excuses/written documentation will be accepted after two (2) days. Jones County Schools will accept five (5) parent notes per semester as documentation for an excused absence.

Students returning to school from excused absences must make up all work within five school days for each one day absent. Make-up labs, quizzes, and tests (9-12) must be completed before or after school as coordinated with the teacher. The principal on an individual basis shall determine time allotted for make-up work for students with extended absences. Local Boards of Educations are not required to provide make-up work for unexcused absences.

Absences due to out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

All students (K-8) will be counted present if they are in attendance more than one half of the instructional day. Students in grades 9-12 will be counted present only in the classes which they attend. Students must have a minimum of 40 minutes seat time to be counted present within a given class time.

All students in grades 9-12 must be enrolled in six course segments per day. Any student returning for a fifth year and needing four courses or less to graduate may take only the courses needed.

Attendance requirements are applicable to all students with the exception of disabled students whose IEP's or IAP's specify differently. Guidelines, rules and regulations governing Special Education and/or 504 shall be followed:

ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL MAY BE EXCUSED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS

1. The student’s personal illness and attendance at school will endanger his/her health or the health of others.
2. The student’s immediate family has a serious illness or death, which would reasonably necessitate an absence from school.
3. A court order or an order by a governmental agency, including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the Armed Forces mandating an absence from school.
4. A special or recognized religious holiday observed by the faith of the student that occurs on a school day.
5. Conditions render attendance impossible or hazardous to the student’s health or safety.
6. A period not to exceed one day is allowed for registering to vote or voting in a public election.
7. Students serving as a page in the Georgia General Assembly shall be counted present for the day(s) served.
8. A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five school days per school year, for the day or days missed from school to visit with his/her parent or legal guardian prior to such parent’s or legal guardian’s deployment or during such parent’s or legal guardian’s leave. Nothing in the Code section shall be construed to require a local school system to revise any policies relating to maximum number of excused and unexcused absences for any purposes.
9. Final course grades of students shall not be penalized because of absences if the following conditions are met:
 - a) Absences are justified and validated for excusable reasons.
 - b) Makeup work for excused absences was completed satisfactorily.

THE SCHOOL MAY REQUEST THAT THE PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) PROVIDE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS TO VALIDATE THE ABSENCES AS EXCUSED

1. School nurse release
2. Doctor’s excuse
3. Subpoena/Court Order
4. Government documentation that the student served as a page at the Capitol
5. Government document for pre-induction physical examination for service in the Armed Forces

***** **This list is not all-inclusive** *****

The Jones County Board of Education will adhere to the following steps:

1. At the beginning of each school year, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive a letter from the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled that lists the consequences and penalties for excessive unexcused absences. The parent(s)/guardian(s) must sign a statement indicating receipt of the letter. The acknowledgment letter shall be maintained on file at the school. Also, students who are ten (10) or older (by September 1st) must sign a statement indicating acknowledgement of the consequences and penalties for excessive unexcused absences. The acknowledgment letter shall be maintained on file at the school.
2. When a student accumulates three (3) unexcused absences, the teacher will contact the parent(s) and/or guardian(s). The teacher will document the contact.
3. When a student accumulates five (5) unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the consequences and penalties of such absences, and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. The parent(s)/guardian(s) has to sign a statement indicating the receipt of the notification of the consequences and penalties of such absences. The school will keep a copy of the signed notification letter as documentation that parent(s)/guardian(s) are aware of the consequences and penalties. If the parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot be notified (after

two (2) reasonable attempts), the school will send a written notice via certified mail with a return receipt requested. The school will maintain documentation that the school attempted to notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) and that the notification letter was sent by certified mail.

4. When a student accumulates seven (7) unexcused absences, the school will refer the student to the Attendance Support Team. The referral must include all supporting documentation (i.e., acknowledgment letter, signed statement of consequences and penalties, doctor excused, health and emergency card, and/or etc.). The school administrator or designee will coordinate the Attendance Support Team Meeting (AST).

TARDY/CHECKOUT POLICY

A child is tardy to school when he/she arrives to school and is unable to report to homeroom before homeroom starts. **Excessive tardiness to homeroom will result in ISS placement.** Excessive tardiness during the school day will be addressed using the school wide behavior plan on page 15.

Students who are tardy to and/or check out of school early must bring a signed note from a parent on the day he or she returns to school giving the reason for the tardy and/or early checkout. All absences, tardies, and early checkouts will be evaluated by State guidelines to determine if the absence, tardy, or early checkout is excused or unexcused.

Definitions:

Tardy to School: Any student arriving at school following the ringing bell, chime, or other audible signal established by the Principal and intended to indicate the start of the school day. Any student who is on school property but is not in his or her assigned classroom or other authorized area following the bell, chime, or other audible signal will be considered tardy to school.

Tardy to Class: A student is "tardy to class" when he/she arrives to class following the ringing bell, chime, or other audible signal indicating the beginning of instructional time.

Excused Tardy: A tardy resulting from events beyond a student's control; such as an accident, road closed due to an accident, area power outage, late bus, or other excuses determined by the Principal or designee as acceptable. Documentation is required to excuse a tardy.

Unexcused Tardy: Incidents including over-sleeping, heavy traffic, errands, delays at a train crossing, or similar excuses determined by the Principal or designee as unacceptable are unexcused. Documentation will not obligate the Principal or designee to excuse an unexcused tardy.

Early Checkout: Leaving school prior to the end of instructional time and/or the end of the official school day.

- Excused: Early checkouts for emergency, illness, or other reasons that the Principal deems necessary or reasonable. Documentation is required to excuse an early dismissal. Records will be kept at each school to document the number of days a student misses due to early checkouts. Excessive incidents of excused early checkout may result in referral to the SST if the Principal deems necessary.
- Unexcused: Early checkouts for reasons other than those approved by the Principal. Excessive incidents of unexcused early checkout may result in disciplinary action or referral to the SST as the Principal deems necessary.

Official School Start/End Time: The time designated by the principal and advertised to students and parents as the official start or end of the school day. Correct time will be the time as determined accurate by the school principal, indicated on a designated school clock, and displayed in a prominent public location.

Attendance Support Team (AST): An interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic process to address learning, behavior, and/or attendance problems of K-12 students in a school.

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAMS

Each school will establish an Attendance Support Team (AST) chaired by the school administrator or designee. The team will be responsible for monitoring and implementing policies to reduce truancy at the applicable school. The team will assess each truancy case and develop strategies and interventions to correct the student's truancy.

CONSEQUENCES AND PENALTIES OF UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Parent(s)/guardian(s):

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) must attend an Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting at the school if summoned for such a meeting. Members of the Attendance Support Team can include the principal and/or designee, the teacher, the school counselor, the school social worker, and/or the school resource officer, the parent(s)/guardian(s), and the student (age 10 and older). An attendance contract will be developed in an effort to avoid a referral to the court system.
2. In cases where the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student(s) (age 10 and older) refuse to develop and/or violate an attendance contract, the case will be referred to the Interagency Committee and/or court system
3. Deprivation charges may also be filed with the Juvenile Court System.
4. Judges may invoke the following consequences:
 - a. \$25.00-\$100.00 fine for each offense
 - b. Imprisonment up to thirty (30) days for each offense
 - c. Community Service
 - d. Court referral and/or referral to a community intervention program
 - e. Any combination of the above

Students:

1. Students who are age (10) or older must attend an Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting if referred to such a meeting.
2. In cases where the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student(s) (age 10 and older) refuse to develop an attendance contract or violate the attendance contract, the cases will be referred to the Interagency Committee and/or Juvenile Court. Deprivation charges may also be filed with the Juvenile Court.
3. Students who are age fourteen (14) and older may be denied their driver's permit or license. At seven (7) unexcused absences, the school system will notify the student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) that if the student accumulates three (3) additional unexcused absences that the Department of Motor Vehicles will be notified.

Juvenile Judges may invoke the following consequences:

1. Up to twenty-four (24) months of probation
2. Must maintain passing grades in all subject areas
3. Must have no future discipline problems at school
4. Denial or suspension of driver's license
5. Community service
6. Court intervention service

When a student (age 16 and older) accumulates ten (10) or more consecutive unexcused absences, the school system has the authority to withdraw the student for non-attendance. The school will send written notification that the student has been withdrawn for non-attendance. A copy of the letter shall be maintained in the student's permanent record. The school system will send written notification to the parent(s)/guardian(s) to advise that the student has been withdrawn because of non-attendance.

STUDENTS UNDER ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM CONTRACT (AST)

At the beginning of the school year, parents of those students having a prior Attendance Support Team Contract will receive a letter from the principal informing them that the student is on probation with the school system and therefore will be monitored closely for attendance violations.

TEENAGE AND ADULT DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY ACT (TAADRA)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How many unexcused absences may a student have before he or she is reported as non-compliant?

A *Certificate of Non-Compliance* should be submitted when a student has ten or more unexcused absences in the current academic year or ten or more unexcused absences in the previous academic year.

2. Can tardiness and partial-day absences be equated to an unexcused absence?

State Board Rule 160-5-1-.02 defines a school day as “the period between the time students are required to be present and their dismissal.” This time period is specified by local boards of education. Although there is no statewide definition of “unexcused absence,” State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10 delineates absences which all schools must consider excused. It also provides that school days missed as a result of an out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused.

3. If a student is enrolled in a public school and doesn't show up on the first day of the new school year, when do you start counting unexcused absences?

Without any evidence to the contrary, if the student was enrolled the previous year, it is assumed that the student is still enrolled. Therefore, a school should start counting after the first unexcused absence.

4. May I submit noncompliance data for 14 year olds?

Yes. Schools may submit non-compliance data on 14-year-olds.

5. What about out-of-state students who wish to obtain a Certificate of Attendance?

It shall be the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to provide for the transmission of attendance and discipline records in order to be eligible for a *Certificate of Attendance*. An official record of attendance must be received before a *Certificate of Attendance* can be prepared.

6. Is there a statute of limitations for submitting non-compliance data?

No. Non-compliance data can be submitted at any time when the information will impact the student's eligibility to possess a driver's license or instruction permit. However, the non-compliance date listed should be date that the infraction occurred, not the date when the data was transmitted.

7. What are the criteria for determining a non-compliant student?

A non-compliant student is one who:

- Has dropped out of school without graduating and has remained out of school for ten consecutive school days;
- Has ten or more school days of unexcused absences in the current academic year or ten or more school days of unexcused absences in the previous academic year;
- Has been found in violation by a hearing officer, panel, or tribunal of one of the following offenses, has received a change in placement for committing one of the following offenses, or has waived his or her right to a hearing and pleaded guilty to one of the following offenses:
 - Threatening, striking, or causing bodily harm to a teacher or other school personnel;
 - Possession or sale of drugs or alcohol on school property or at a school sponsored event;
 - Possession or use of a weapon on school property or at a school sponsored event (The term weapon is defined by Georgia Code Section 16-11-127.1 but shall not include any part of an archeological or cultural exhibit brought to school in connection with a school project.);
 - Any sexual offense prohibited under Georgia law (Chapter 6 of Title 16);

- Causing substantial physical or visible bodily harm to or seriously disfiguring another person, including another student.

8. If a student withdraws from school and enters a G.E.D. preparation course, how does the student get a Certificate of Attendance?

The Department of Technical and Adult Education is responsible for compliance and non-compliance data for students who drop out of public, private, or home school to pursue a general educational development (GED) program.

9. Should a school submit a Certificate of Non-Compliance for a student who drops out of school to enroll in a G.E.D. preparation course?

Yes. Schools should submit a *Certificate of Non-Compliance* for any student who drops out of school without graduating and has remained out of school for ten consecutive school days. Students who are enrolled in a G.E.D. preparation course may have their license reinstated by submitting a “*Petition for Hardship Exemption*” to the Department of Driver Services (DDS) along with proof of enrollment.

10. Who is responsible for issuing the Certificate of Attendance for students in the K-12 school system?

The local system/school should designate someone to handle this responsibility.

11. Who is responsible for submitting non-compliance data?

Local TAADRA coordinators are responsible for collecting non-compliance data from public schools, private schools, and home schools and submitting the data to the state using the electronic web application.

12. What happens after non-compliance data has been submitted?

After receiving non-compliance data, the Department of Driver Services will notify the student by certified mail, return receipt requested, that a *Certificate of Non-Compliance* has been received and that his or her permit/license is suspended.

13. What are the responsibilities of the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) in regards to the TAADRA law?

The GDOE shall provide technical assistance and answer questions regarding implementation of the law. The GDOE will also transmit non-compliance data to DDS. GDOE serves only as a transmission agent. We do not retain non-compliance data.

14. When can a student’s driver’s license or learner’s permit be reinstated after non-compliance data has been submitted?

A student can reapply for his or her instruction permit or driver’s license after a period of one year or when the student becomes 18 years old, whichever comes first.

15. Where can I find a copy of the TAADRA law?

The TAADRA law (Georgia Code Section 40-5-22) can be found at the following website:
http://www.legis.state.ga.us/cgi-bin/gl_codes_detail.pl?code=40-5-22

16. Should public schools submit a Certificate of Non-Compliance if a home school official fails to submit monthly attendance reports to the local superintendent as required by law?

Yes. Home school officials are required by law to submit monthly attendance reports to the local school superintendent (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690). Although students who are age 16 and older are no

longer under compulsory attendance laws, monthly attendance reports must be submitted to the local school superintendent if the student wishes to obtain a driver's license or instructional permit. Public schools shall issue a *Certificate of Non-Compliance* if a home school official fails to submit monthly attendance reports as required by law. Home school officials may also submit a paper *Certificate of Non-Compliance* by completing the form and submitting it to the local school superintendent.

17. Who completes non-compliance data for private schools?

An administrator at the private school should complete a paper *Certificate of Non-Compliance* and submit it to the TAADRA coordinator in the public school system in which the child resides.

18. Who can I contact if I have questions about TAADRA?

For technical questions pertaining to electronic submission of non-compliance data, contact Information Technology Customer Support by email at dticket@doe.k12.ga.us, or by telephone at 1-800-869-1011. For questions pertaining to appeals, hardship exemptions or reinstatements, contact the Department of Driver Services by telephone at (404) 657-9300. For questions pertaining to implementation of the TAADRA law, please contact Ask DOE at (404) 656