

Dear Parents,

The Cobb County School District, as well as all other school districts in Georgia, is required to establish a district-wide attendance protocol that details the steps schools and staff will take to report, investigate, and prosecute student absenteeism. On August 10, 2011, the Board of Education adopted revisions to Administrative Rule JE (Student Absenteeism) that include important changes to the protocol. The administrative rule identifies new timelines and thresholds for contact with students, parents, and/or guardians. It is designed to address unexcused absences and promote regular school attendance – a vital part of a student’s academic and future work success.

Creating an early pattern of regular attendance establishes attitudes and habits that will carry over into adult work habits. Inconsistent attendance results in falling behind in class work making it difficult to catch up. It is unfair to the rest of the class when teachers have to backtrack for students who have missed class lessons. **Your child’s success in school depends on having a solid educational background, one that can only be gained through regular school attendance.**

Please see the chart below for a quick look at the revised attendance protocol.

<b>Absence threshold</b>	<b>Old Policy</b>	<b>Absence threshold</b>	<b>New Policy</b>
5 Total Absences	Teacher makes a phone call	3 <b>UNEXCUSED</b>	Teacher will make phone call
10 total absences	School sends letter (unless student has known medical condition)	5 <b>UNEXCUSED</b> absences	School will use automated calling system to call parents and send letter
15 total absences	Student is referred to school social worker to address attendance	7 <b>UNEXCUSED</b> absences	School Social Worker referral (intervention on case as needed)
		7 <b>UNEXCUSED</b> absences <b>14-17</b> <b>years old</b>	Letter and phone call to parent that 3 additional unexcused absences will result in denial/suspension of driving privileges

**\*\*Excessive Absences (excused or unexcused):** At the discretion of local school administration, students may be referred to the School Social Worker at any time it is deemed appropriate for excessive excused/unexcused absences. Previous years’ attendance records may be taken into consideration when making a referral.

The principal may ask for additional medical or other documentation to verify that absences are excused, particularly when more than three (3) absences have been accumulated during the semester.

The primary goal of the changes in the attendance policy is to address unexcused absences for students ages six to 15. Absences stemming from out-of-school

suspensions, while concerning, shall not warrant a School Social Work referral unless deemed necessary by school administration.

### **Attendance Tips for Parents**

#### **When should I allow my student to miss school?**

As a general rule of thumb, children should only be absent in cases of illness or emergency. Absences due to shopping trips, special vacations, etc. should be avoided, because they tend to minimize the value of school and education.

**School staff members are eager to help you connect with your child's school experience. You can help your child want to attend school regularly by working with teachers, counselors, and school administrators. Here are a few ideas:**

- Read your child's school newsletter.
- Schedule regular meetings with your child's teachers.
- Join the PTA, PTSA, or PTO at your child's school.
- Help your child schedule work and family obligations.
- When possible, support your child's extracurricular activities.

**Student attendance improves when parents help their children prepare for school.**

- Talk with your child about his or her assignments.
- Establish a specific time and place for homework to be completed.
- Check homework for accuracy.
- Help your child create a special folder for finished assignments.

**Support your child's education. School offers exceptional learning opportunities every day. Help your child be at school all day, every day!**

- Let children know that good attendance is important.
  - Show them that you are interested in their school activities and want them to do well in school.
- Communicate with school staff.
  - Let them know in advance if your child is going to be absent or if you have concerns about your child's attendance or school performance.
- Observe the school schedule.
  - Plan family vacations during school recesses and schedule children's doctor appointments after school hours whenever possible.
- Establish a routine.
  - Make sure children have homework done, classroom materials together, and clothes laid out the night before school. Make sure they get enough sleep so that they are well-rested in the morning.

**Praise your child when he or she exhibits good attendance and promptness.**