

Chronic Absenteeism

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, school districts within our state are required to identify students who are chronically absent to the State Department of Education as part of the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. According to the United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR), an absent student is one who misses 50% of the instructional day¹ for any reason regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. Using this definition of absent, OCR requires states to report the number of students in each school and district who are absent at least 10% of the time during which they are enrolled. More specifically, students who are enrolled in the same school for an entire academic year and miss 18 or more days (10% of the school year) will be considered chronically absent. The total number of chronically absent students will be included in both school and district report cards and reported to OCR.

Because chronic absenteeism is associated with poor academic performance, increased dropout rates and decreased graduation rates, districts and schools are encouraged to make parents aware of this change and stress the importance on-time daily attendance plays in student achievement. Once a student is identified as chronically absent, parents will be notified and asked to sign an acknowledgment form with information on how to work towards minimizing school absences.

In order to facilitate the flow of information, the SC State Department of Education has standardized attendance coding and minute by minute tracking in PowerSchool for all schools throughout the state. Previously districts were able to develop their own attendance codes and policies related to their use. Due to the standardization, parents may notice some changes when reviewing attendance either through the Parent Portal or reviewing attendance records provided by staff members, including the use of new attendance codes. One significant change is the coding of early dismissals at the elementary level. In the past, when a student was signed out early, this was not indicated in PowerSchool attendance records with separate coding. Now parents may see an absence coding of **SC - EDSM= Early Dismissal** or **SC - DSML= Dismissal**, based on the time the student was signed out and/or the reason for the time away from school.

¹ 50% of the school day is 203 minutes at the elementary level, 215 minutes at the middle school level and 195 minutes at the high school level.

Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy

Chronic absenteeism is not the same as truancy. Although there is some overlap, the definition and types of absences considered are not completely the same.

	Chronic Absenteeism	Truancy
Definition	Any student in K-12 who misses 50% or more of the instructional day for any reason for 10% (or more) of the enrollment period.	A student between the ages of 6-17 who has accumulated 3 consecutive or a total of 5 or more unexcused/unlawful absences during the academic year. Continued unexcused absences after the truancy intervention process begins may result in referral to family court and/or the involvement of the Department of Social Services.
Types of absences included	<p>All types of absences contribute to chronic absenteeism, including days when a student is not present for 50% of the school day.</p> <p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Excused absences - Unexcused absences - Suspensions - Tardy arrivals and early dismissals 	Only full day unexcused absences contribute to a truancy designation for the academic year.

If you have questions about your child's specific attendance record or potential future absences, please contact his/her school attendance secretary. For questions about school district attendance policies or the implementation of directives from the State Department of Education regarding Chronic Absenteeism, please contact Meghan Gray at the School District Office at 803.548.2527 or via email at graym@fortmillschools.org.