

## SECTION IV STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Florida Compulsory School Law ([F.S. 1003.21](#)) states all children who are either six years of age (or who will be six years old by February 1 of any school year), but who have not attained the age of 16 must attend school regularly during the entire school term. Students between 16 and 18 are also within compulsory attendance age, unless a formal Declaration of Intent to Terminate School Enrollment has been completed and signed by the parent and an exit interview is conducted at the school.

- a. You are expected to be on time and in school for the entire student day, each school day.
- b. On the day of your absence, a parent or guardian should call the school to explain the absence. The absence will be excused if it meets the criteria outlined below. The parent or guardian must contact the school within 48 hours of the absence or appropriate documentation is required within 5 days. If this contact is not made, the absence will be recorded as unexcused.
- c. If you are continually sick and repeatedly absent from school, you must be under the supervision of a physician in order to be excused from attendance. Excessive absences will lead to a parent conference, referral to the District's Child Study Team, referral for social work services, referral to Truancy Court, and the involvement of the State Attorney. Parents who fail or refuse to cooperate with the school in the matter of regular school attendance for their child may be prosecuted for truancy by the State Attorney's Office.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

**Q: *What is an excused absence?***

**A:** An absence can be excused for the following reasons:

- a. You are ill or injured.
- b. Major illness in your immediate family (this means parents, brothers, sisters, Grandparents, or others living in the home or who are close relatives).
- c. Death in your immediate family
- d. Religious instruction in your faith - requires note from your parent before the absence.
- e. Subpoena or forced absence by any law enforcement agency. A copy of the subpoena or summons must be given to the principal or designee. This includes detention at a juvenile center in which you continue your education.
- f. A major disaster as decided by the administration.
- g. Any absences, including those for field trips, participation in another academic class or program, or other parental requests as judged appropriate by the principal, provided the request is submitted to the principal forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the absence. A principal may waive the requirement for advance notice if extenuating circumstances exist.
- h. A documented appointment with a doctor, dentist, or other medical or legal professional.
- i. An occurrence of head lice, with a maximum of two excused days.



**Q: *How many excused absences can I have?***

A: You are allowed nine excused absences. Your parent may excuse nine absences per year. When you have reached your limit, official documentation is then required for every additional absence.

**Q: *What if I have used all of my excused absences and a family emergency occurs?***

A: You must provide appropriate documentation to the school principal or designee for approval. These will be recorded as excused absences.

**Q: *How can I make up work when I am absent?***

A: After an excused absence, you must arrange with your teacher for any make-up work. You have the same number of days you were absent to make up your work. This rule does not apply to some long-term assignments. (A long-term assignment is when a student has 10 or more days to complete the work.) These long-term assignments will be due on the specified date unless excused in writing by the teacher or principal. It is your responsibility to make these arrangements and to submit the make-up work within the deadlines set by the teacher(s). You do not have the right to make up work if your absence was unexcused.

**Q. *I am going to be absent for semester exams. May I take my exams early?***

A: Semester exams may not be given early. You may take your semester exams upon your return to school.

**Q: *What is an unexcused absence?***

A: Anything that does not meet the criteria of an excused absence is considered unexcused. (Please refer to Excused Absences Section.)

**Q: *How many unexcused absences can I have?***

A. In Manatee County, state law requires the regular attendance of children between the ages of 6 and 18 and makes parents and legal guardians legally responsible for seeing that their children attend school. Family vacations during scheduled school time are considered unexcused absences. If you have accumulated a total of 5 unexcused absences in one month or 10 unexcused/unexplained absences in a 90-day period, your child's school will send a letter to the address listed on school records, in an attempt to ensure parent(s)/guardian(s) are aware of any developing attendance issues. Fifteen unexcused absences in a 90-day period may result in a referral for truancy court action. The District Truancy Department will send a 3-Day Demand Notice by U.S. Mail to the address listed on school records in the event of excessive consecutive unexcused/unexplained absences.

**Q: *What happens if I am late for school?***

A: If you arrive at school late for any reason, you must report to the office and receive a tardy admit slip. The tardy will be deemed as excused or unexcused. You are expected to be in school at the start of the school day, every day.



**Q: *What is an excused tardy?***

A: An excused tardy is when you are late for school due to sickness, injury, death in your family, medical or dental appointments with a note from the physician, school sponsored activities, court date, or other reason approved by the school principal. For elementary students, parents must accompany the student to the office when they are tardy.

**Q: *What is an unexcused tardy?***

A: An unexcused tardy is when you are late to school due to, but not limited to, oversleeping, missing the school bus, shopping trips, pleasure trips, or excessive tardiness due to illness without a physician's verification that the medical condition justifies your tardiness. If an elementary student arrives late and comes into the office unaccompanied by an adult, he or she will receive an unexcused tardy.

**Q: *May I leave school early in the school day?***

A: You are expected to be in school for the full day. However, if you must leave school early, you must go to the office and receive permission for early release. Parents of elementary and middle school students must report to the office to pick up their child. High school students aged 16 or older may sign themselves out early with parent permission, following the school sign-out procedures. You cannot leave your school campus for lunch or other unexcused personal reasons at any point during the school day.

**Q: *What are excused reasons for leaving school early?***

A: Excused reasons for early dismissal follow the same guidelines as excused absences. They include: illness or injury, major illness or death in your immediate family, subpoena or forced absence by a law enforcement agency, a major disaster, a documented appointment with a doctor or dentist, discovery of head lice, participation in another academic class or program, or other parental requests as judged appropriate by the principal.

**Q: *What happens if I leave school early for unexcused reasons?***

A: Numerous early dismissals are unacceptable and unfair to the other students whose instruction is interrupted each time a student leaves early. Individual schools may develop school-based consequences for unexcused early dismissal students.

**Q: *How does my school attendance affect my privilege to drive?***

A: You will lose your driver's license, or privilege of applying for any driver's license, if you are not enrolled in or do not attend school regularly.

**NOTE:** Students who are withdrawn as dropouts or who have accumulated 15 unexcused absences in 90 calendar days will lose the privilege to apply for or hold a Florida Driver's License. Students who have lost the privilege must subsequently accumulate 30 consecutive SCHOOL days with no unexcused absences in order to receive a Reinstatement of Driving Privilege form. If you need further information regarding this issue, please contact the District Truancy Office at 751-6550, extension 43091.



**Q. Does my attendance affect my participation in athletics or extracurricular activities?**

A. If you are not present for more than half of the school day on the day of an event, due to any undocumented absence, you may not participate in the athletic or extracurricular event. If you are suspended from school, you may not participate in any school-related function.

## SECTION V / STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The School District of Manatee County recognizes that a safe, orderly, and supportive learning environment is the result of caring relationships and quality instruction. It is the responsibility of the district to help foster such environments by implementing clear, appropriate, fair, and consistent expectations and consequences for all schools and classroom teachers to construct and carry out their behavior support plans. For these plans to be optimally effective, schools and classrooms must in turn, have the latitude to work within established guidelines to create positive behavioral intervention systems which support the unique needs of their students, families, and communities. Our philosophy of discipline in the School District of Manatee County is rooted in the development of positive relationships with our students and families. We believe that students should have a chance to learn from their mistakes and the opportunity to restore any damaged relationships with peers and adults. Our discipline practices encompass preventative and early intervention measures that seek to strengthen relationships and build positive communities, so that misbehavior is less likely to occur or continue.

### **MISCONDUCT THAT REQUIRES SPECIFIC CONSEQUENCES**

Acts that require specific consequences include the following:

- Possession or Use of Illegal Drugs or Alcoholic Beverages
- Possession or Use of Tobacco Products
- Bullying or Harassment
- Dating Violence and Abuse
- Threats Against Schools
- Chemical or Biological Attacks or Threats
- Possession of Guns, Weapons, or Dangerous Objects
- Gang Activity
- Violent Acts Resulting in Serious Injury
- Making False Accusations or Reports

### **Drugs and Alcoholic Beverages**

Use of a drug authorized by a medical prescription from a registered physician for a specific student shall not be considered a violation of this rule. However, all procedures found in the School District of Manatee County's medication policy must be followed.

