

## Reopen Strong – Virtual Attendance Guidance

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### **Overview**

This document outlines key information related to student attendance procedures during virtual instruction days. It is important to note that virtual instruction days will be **compulsory**, and daily attendance will be **required**. During virtual learning periods, the curriculum will be accessed via Canvas, DCPS' online learning management system, which allows for a more user-friendly, efficient and organized approach to virtual learning.

### **How will student attendance be recorded?**

Students (or parents on behalf of younger students) are expected to sign into Canvas daily, and daily attendance will be recorded through this action. Students will be expected to log into Canvas each school day at least once between 6 am and 11:59 pm. **Students who do not log in to Canvas will be recorded as absent for the day.** Absences will be imported into Aspen automatically overnight. There are no additional steps required for school staff to ensure that absences from Canvas import into Aspen each night.

### **How will student engagement be measured?**

Schools will be expected to utilize additional measures beyond daily attendance as indicators of student engagement in learning. These include participation in live classes, access and utilization of other learning platforms, submission of assignments, and results of student and family outreach efforts.

### **Will students be considered absent for the day if they do not participate in synchronous instruction?**

No. While it is important that students are engaging with their teacher during live instruction, attendance will not be taken at the course level. Students' daily attendance expectation is that they log into Canvas at least once a day. If this requirement is met, students will not be considered absent.

### **What if students are experiencing technology issues at home and cannot log into Canvas?**

If students do not have access to technology or are having internet connectivity issues, the student or their parent/guardian will be expected to call a designated attendance POC at each school to report the issues, and what the student will be working on that day. The school POC will log the student's connection in Aspen on their behalf for the day. Additional guidance and training on this process will be provided to designated attendance POCs by the DCPS Attendance Team.

### **What absences are considered excused, and how should excuse note documentation be submitted to the school?**

Except for the addition of required immunization related attendance codes, DCPS legal excuse reasons remain the same as the 19-20 School Year (SY) and can be found in the DCPS Attendance and Truancy Policy (an updated version for the 20-21 SY will be made available prior to the start of school). During the period of virtual learning, excuse notes may be submitted electronically to the students' attendance POC. If a family is unable to submit documentation electronically due to challenges with technology, the family should contact the school attendance POC and maintain a copy of the documentation for record reconciliation when health conditions allow.

**Will students still fail a course if they accrue more than 30 course absences?**

Poor course attendance can certainly result in a student not adequately progressing and could lead to course failure; as such, teachers are expected to monitor student engagement regularly. However, because course level attendance will not be taken, course failure will not be associated to attendance for the 20-21 SY.

Student grades will be:

- A measure of skills and knowledge from content taught and learned,
- Based on standards-based evidence of student learning demonstrated in foundational course assignments and assessments,
- Accessible and available for revision and improvement throughout the term and provided frequently and accurately.

Student grades can include:

- **Student Engagement** through listening, speaking, writing, engaging, and/or leading during class discussions or group activities.
- **Practice and Application** that practices and applies discrete skills acquired from individual lessons throughout a unit.
- **Assessments** which are formal evaluations of individual student progress and mastery. Assessments range from traditional tests and quizzes to performance-based tasks that demonstrate student skill and knowledge of an entire unit.

DCPS believes that it is our responsibility to meet the needs of all students through tiered supports. Some students will require intensive interventions so they can meet standards to promote. Because students may not have in-person access to critical supports and interventions during at-home learning we do not think it is generally in their best interest to keep them from progressing to the next grade through *mandatory* retention. **For the 20-21 SY, no student should be retained unless the family and school agree that it is in the student’s best interest.** In addition, students who have already been retained once should not be retained for another year even if the family and school agree that such a retention would be in the student’s best interest.

**What are the required attendance interventions related to absences for SY20-21?**

Attendance intervention requirements have been slightly adjusted as follows:

1 day of unexcused absence	Contact parent on the same day and each time a student has the equivalent of one day of unexcused absence, with daily follow-ups as necessary.
3 days of absences (excused or unexcused)	Phone call home after three absences to complete a <b>wellness check</b> . <b>The wellness check shall include two components:</b> 1) Discussion of the student’s attendance, including the identification of any barriers related to logging in to record attendance, and 2) Discussion of any other challenges and potential resources needed to support student success ensure appropriate linkages to additional resources are made.



5 days of unexcused cumulative absences	Send 5-Day Unexcused Absence Letter to parent and refer student to Student Support Team (SST) for an attendance intervention conference to be held within five days of the referral. (Applicable to five unexcused absences within one term.) The SST will develop an action plan in partnership with the student and the student’s parent.
7 days of unexcused cumulative absences	Send Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) warning letter to parent.
10 days of unexcused cumulative absences	Student is considered chronically truant. Contact the District Child Family Services Agency (CFSA) for students aged 5-13. Refer student for follow-up attendance SST interventions for students aged 14 and older. The SST assigned to the student will notify school leader of action plan within two days of the referral.
15 days of unexcused cumulative absences	Submit referral within two days to Court Social Services Division (CSS) for students aged 14 through 17.
20 days of unexcused consecutive absences	Conduct wellness Check (see above for requirements) through telephone calls, texts, emails and contact emergency and other know contacts and consult with attendance specialist prior to making a withdrawal determination.

**Will parents still receive robo-calls based on their child’s absences? What about letters?**

Parents will still receive calls, but this year the calls informing parents of their child’s absence will not be made until the next day (in the 19-20 SY and prior, these calls went out every evening based on a student’s absence that day). Letters (5, 7, 10, and 15 day) will continue to be prepared and delivered, but they will only be based on daily level absences. DCPS central office is eliminating the requirement for schools to send a 3- day letter this year as we adapt to new routines. Instead, we are emphasizing early direct outreach and engagement. Additional guidance concerning expected practices related to engagement will be provided separately.

In addition, in preparation for transition to a hybrid model and in light of the public health emergency, the language in letters this year will be revised to encourage students to stay home if they are scheduled to attend in-person instruction and are not feeling well.

Because course level attendance will not be taken, we will remove all language related to course grades, retention and attendance consequences from attendance letters. It will be important to secure email

addresses for our families so that notifications can be sent via email. Additional guidance will be provided on mailing physical copies of the letters.

**Will the attendance locking procedure remain in place for the 20-21 SY?**

For the 20-21 SY, the cadence of data locks (dates after which revisions can no longer be made for a specific period) in Aspen will move from monthly to quarterly. This change is intended to account for new schedules and routines in effect due to the public health emergency. Schools are still encouraged to make attendance revisions as soon as possible.