

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

“Chronic absence” means absences that total 10% or more of school days of the most recent academic school year, including absences with and without valid cause, as defined in Section 26-2a of the Illinois School Code, and out-of-school suspensions for an enrolled student.

“Student” means any enrolled student who is subject to compulsory attendance under Section 26-1 of the Illinois School Code but does not mean a student for whom a documented homebound or hospital record is on file during the student's absence from school.

The progress and success of each student depends to a great degree upon regular attendance at school, for the entire school day. Good attendance is an important life skill that students should become familiar with and practice at an early age. Strict enforcement of attendance is one way of teaching and reinforcing these concepts. Regular attendance is necessary to ensure maximum educational benefits. A student who is not present in school is not learning. Because excessive absences from class result in a lack of participation and interaction by the student with the teacher and class, Jackson Charter School adheres to the following attendance policy.

Please note: By state law, students must be in academic classes 300 minutes a day (not including any passing time) to receive a full day of attendance credit and 150 minutes to receive a half day attendance credit in grades 2 through 12. Students PK through 1 must be in academic class 240 minutes to receive a full day attendance credit and 120 minutes to receive a half day attendance credit.

1. Reporting of absences:

If a student will be absent from school, the parent/guardian must telephone call the school office at 815-316-0093 by 8:30 AM **on the day of the absence**. Absences reported through electronic means will not be accepted. The parent/guardian must call each day the student is absent unless previous arrangements have been made. If the parent/guardian has not called in prior to two hours of the school day passing, our automated system will call the parent/guardian to inform him/her of the student's absence. If no contact is made with the parent/guardian on the day the student is absent, administration will classify the absence as unexcused.

2. The determination as to whether an absence is excused or unexcused will be made by school administration according to Illinois law and school policy.

The Five-Day Excused Absence Policy:

Per Illinois law, students are allowed to take up to five (5) days off for mental or behavioral health, without a doctor's note. These days will be used prior to the accumulation of any other unexcused absences. After the second mental health day is used, a school staff member may reach out to offer support and connect the student with available resources.

Students who accumulate more than five (5) days of absences per year must provide proof of the nature of the absence, for example, a note from the doctor, for the absence to be considered excused. Failure to do so will result in the absence to be considered unexcused. If a student is ill for two (2) or more consecutive days, prior to that student returning to school for instruction, parents/guardians should obtain a doctor's note certifying the student is well enough to return to school.

Per 105 ILCS 5/26-2a, valid reasons for excused absences are illness, including the mental or behavioral health of the student, attendance at a verified medical or therapeutic appointment, appointment with a victim services provider, observance of a religious holiday, death in the immediate family, attendance at a civic event, or family emergency and shall include such other situations beyond the control of the student, as determined by the board of education in each district, or such other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student.

Students absent for fifteen (15) consecutive days or more for any reason may be dropped from our enrollment roster. Parents and guardians will be issued at least three (3) warning notifications before a student is dropped from the enrollment roster.

Release for appointments:

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to make appointments during times that do not conflict with school and instructional time. Students will only be released to parents/guardians if the parent/guardian has called the school prior to the student being picked up and provided the name of the person to pick up the student. Whoever is picking up the student should provide the school with a photo ID.

In order to be excused for an appointment, the following procedure must be followed:

Prior to the appointment the parent/guardian should call the school and give the following information:

- Name and grade of student
- Time of appointment
- Type of appointment
- Time to be released from school
- Approximate time of return to school

On the day of the appointment, students will be called to the office for pickup once the parent/guardian has arrived at the school, where they must be signed out. When the student returns, they must sign back in through the office, with a written note from the doctor verifying the appointment. All appointments not verified by written proof from the doctor will be considered unexcused.

Illness at school:

If a student becomes ill while at school, if prudent, the student will first be sent to the school nurse for an evaluation. If after evaluation it is determined the student needs to be sent home for the day, the school nurse will contact the student's parent/guardian to pick up the student. Students may not use classroom phones, cell phones, or other electronic communications equipment for the purposes of contacting home when ill.

Missed Assignments:

Students absent from school for the above excused reasons shall be allowed to complete all coursework missed during the absence that can reasonably be provided and, upon satisfactory completion in the allotted time frame, shall be given full credit. All makeup coursework must be completed within the restraints stated by the student's homeroom teacher, or they will be recorded as a missing assignment, and given a grade of zero.

Unexcused absences:

All absences not previously classified or absences that would otherwise be considered excused which lack the appropriate documentation, are considered unexcused absences. Students who accumulate five unexcused absences can be referred to the truancy intervention programs of the Regional Office of Education. The following are examples of unexcused absences. This is not an all-inclusive list.

- Lack of transportation to school
- Missing the school bus
- Oversleeping
- Participation in non-school sponsored events
- Personal business
- Private vehicle breakdown or failure to start
- Truancy

Procedure for Identifying the Cause of Unexcused Absences:

When a pattern of unexcused absenteeism is identified, the school shall initiate a diagnostic review to determine the underlying causes of the student's attendance difficulties. The review shall include:

- Interviews with the student;
- Interviews with the students' parents or guardians;
- Interviews with any school officials who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem.
- Any other manner of investigation the school deems necessary.

Trips/Vacations:

Research indicates that it is not educationally sound to remove your child from school for a trip or vacation. If this occurs, your child misses out on valuable interaction and contact with the teacher and other students. Student attendance days compose only 183 out of 365 days in a calendar year - please utilize the remaining non-attendance days for planning family trips/vacations.

Tardiness:

Tardiness is disruptive to the educational process and is inconsiderate to both teachers and other students; therefore, it is imperative that students are punctual. The school day starts at 7:50 a.m. Absent extenuating circumstances as determined by the School Executive Director; **a student is considered tardy when he/she arrives to class after the bell has rung at 8:00 a.m.** Please know that three (3) tardies equals one absence. These absences will count as unexcused. Any unexcused absences will count towards Truancy.

TRUANCY POLICY

A “truant” is defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause, as defined under this Section, from such attendance for more than 1% but less than 5% of the past 180 school days. A charter school shall define a truant as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.

“Chronic or habitual truant” shall be defined as a child who is subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for 5% or more of the previous 180 regular attendance days.

“Truant minor” is defined as a chronic truant to whom supportive services, including prevention, diagnostic, intervention and remedial services, alternative programs and other school and community resources have been provided and have failed to result in the cessation of chronic truancy, or have been offered and refused.

The Illinois School Code requires all students ages 6 to 17 to attend school. The General Assembly has found that early years are critical periods in children’s learning and development. Children should be present every day and being absent too many days can make it difficult for a student to stay on-track academically and maintain the momentum to graduate from high school in order to be college or career ready. The Community and Family Engagement Specialist acts as the truancy officer for our school, tracking student attendance information and assisting families with issues related to truancy so they can avoid court. In an attempt to curb unexcused absences, encourage the habit of daily attendance, and promote success, the Community and Family Engagement Specialist will collect and review chronic absence data to attempt to determine the underlying causes for student absenteeism. This can include interviews with students, parents/guardians, and other school officials. When required or appropriate under Illinois law, the School may make a referral to the appropriate truancy intervention program or other authorized entity.

The following constitutes Jackson’s Truancy Policy:

1. Excused Absences:

- a. A valid basis for an excused absence includes the following:
 - i. Illness/injury (including mental or behavioral health) of the student or extended serious/critical illness/death of an immediate family member;
 - ii. Unavoidable accident or emergency;
 - iii. Anticipated absence with administration approval prior to the absence;
 - iv. Religious holidays;

- v. Medical or therapeutic appointments with written proof from a medical provider;
- vi. Funeral for family members;
- vii. Court appearance with written proof from court;
- viii. Other absences beyond the control of the student as determined by the RCSO Board and administration; and
- ix. Other circumstances which cause reasonable concern to the parent/guardian for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of student.

2. Procedures for Unexcused Absences:

a. Step 1:

- i. After a student accumulates 3 unexcused absences a letter will be sent home with the student informing the parent/guardian of absences.
 - 1. A notification letter is mailed home to notify parents/guardians of the absences.
 - 2. A copy of the school attendance policy will accompany the notification letter.
 - 3. Parents/Guardians should call school to confirm receipt of the letter.

b. Step 2:

- i. After a student accumulates 4 unexcused absences, a letter will be sent home with the student informing the parents/guardian of the absences, and a mandatory meeting will be set by the Community and Family Engagement Specialist to discuss the truancy policy and interventions that may help the family eliminate or reduce absences.
 - 1. A certified notification letter is mailed home to notify the parents/guardians of the absence.
 - 2. A copy of the school attendance policy will accompany the notification letter.
 - 3. The Community and Family Engagement Specialist will contact the parent/guardian to attend a mandatory meeting to create an intervention plan for attendance. Failure to attend the meeting will result in the matter being forwarded to Step 3.
 - 4. The parent/guardian will receive a call to confirm the meeting time and location.
 - 5. The Intervention Attendance Plan will be written during this meeting.
- ii. The School shall conduct the diagnostic procedures as required by the Illinois School Code, including interviews with the student,

parent/guardian, and school officials who may have information regarding the student's attendance problem.

c. Step 3:

- i. After a student accumulates 5 unexcused absences a letter will be sent home via certified mail informing the parents/guardians of absences and a mandatory meeting will be set by the Community and Family Engagement Specialist to discuss the truancy interventions in place and to modify them as necessary.
 1. A 2nd certified notification letter is mailed home to notify parents/guardians of the absences.
 2. A copy of the school attendance policy will accompany the notification letter.
 3. The Community and Family Engagement Specialist or Truancy Officer will contact the parent/guardian for a mandatory meeting to review and modify the intervention plan for attendance, as appropriate. Failure to attend the meeting will result in the matter being forwarded to Step 4.
 4. The parent/guardian will receive a call to confirm the meeting time and location.
 5. The Intervention Attendance Plan from Step 2 will be revised during this second meeting.
 6. The parent/guardian must attend a mandatory class called "The Correlation of Student Attendance with Student Achievement".

d. Step 4:

- i. After a student accumulates 10 unexcused absences, the School shall review the student's attendance record and interventions to determine whether the student meets the applicable statutory criteria for truancy or chronic truancy and whether the requirements for referral have been satisfied. A letter will be sent home via certified mail informing the parent/guardian of the absences and, when applicable, that the matter may be referred to the appropriate truancy intervention program or authorized entity.
 1. A 3rd certified notification letter is mailed home to notify the parent/guardian of the absences.
 2. A copy of the school attendance policy will accompany the notification letter.
 3. When applicable, the Truancy Officer will forward the matter on for Educational Neglect/Truancy Petition in accordance with applicable law and after required interventions and supportive services have been provided or offered.

3. Additional Support Services:

- a. Where appropriate, the Community and Family Engagement Specialist will also identify support services to be made available to truant/chronically truant students. These can include:
 - i. Student/Family Counseling;
 - ii. Parent conferences;
 - iii. Resources available through the Illinois State Board of Education's Family Engagement Framework;
 - iv. Community services; and
 - v. Other services deemed appropriate for the Student.

Reminder: Parents/guardians shall notify the school of a student's absence in accordance with school procedures. The School may request reasonable documentation where permitted by law and consistent with the circumstances to determine whether an absence constitutes valid cause according to the Policy. Parents/Guardians should still call the main office to inform the school of the reason for the absence. Once the documentation is submitted, the absence may convert over to an excused absence. Please note that three (3) tardies will accumulate and equal 1 unexcused absence. Nothing in this Policy is intended to limit the School's obligations under the applicable mandated-reporting laws.

Policy Review

This attendance and truancy policy shall be reviewed and updated every two (2) years and filed with the Illinois State Board of Education.

Adopted September 10, 2026

Legal Reference: 105 ILCS 5/26-2a, 105 ILCS 5/26-18