



DR. MICHAEL J. MARTIRANO  
Superintendent of Schools

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**# 03-4**

St. Mary's County Public Schools  
P.O. Box 641  
23160 Moakley Street  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
301-475-5511

**ATTENDANCE  
(PRESENT AND PUNCTUAL – HABITS FOR SUCCESS)  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. WHY HAS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ADOPTED A REVISED ATTENDANCE REGULATION?**

School systems across the country realize the importance of regular school attendance, and the need for early interventions and student accountability to promote regular school attendance. The No Child Left Behind Act and the Maryland School Performance Program view school attendance as a strong indicator of overall school performance. Successful students attend school faithfully and high performing schools have high attendance rates.

The St. Mary's County Public School system has shown significant improvement in performance for which we are proud. Every effort is being made to continue to improve classroom instruction for all students, to challenge all students with rigorous expectations, and to support students with diverse needs. When students are not in class, they miss important information and instruction. Quality education requires regular and continuous instruction. For our students to experience continued improvement, we need to have all students present and punctual. Regular attendance benefits the student, the class, the school, the school system, and the community.

In partnership with our parents and community, attendance will continue to be closely monitored to promote regular, consistent attendance for every student.

**2. WHAT IS THE REVISED ATTENDANCE REGULATION?**

The revised attendance regulation provides early intervention for students who demonstrate inconsistent attendance in elementary and middle school and encourages regular school and class attendance in high school. Students with poor attendance in elementary and middle school will be referred to the Pupil Services Team to determine if the students should be retained in order to gain the necessary skills. Unlawful (unexcused) absences in high school will directly affect a student's grades and a student's ability to participate in summer school. Unlawful (unexcused) absences may also result in failing grades and /or retention.

**3. WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?**

Students will be expected to attend school regularly. Attending school every day is one of the most powerful tools for school success. Students need parental support to help them develop the habit of consistent school attendance.

**4. HOW WILL STUDENTS BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE?**

Student attendance will be closely monitored. Absences will be listed as either Lawful (excused) or Unlawful (unexcused) depending on the reason for the absence.

**- ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS -**

Because regular attendance is vital to academic success, school staff will contact parents by phone, letter, e-mail, and home visits to assist in encouraging regular, consistent student attendance. Students with 25 unlawful absences in a school year will



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be referred to the Pupil Services Team. Retention will be considered for the following year to ensure that the student has had an appropriate opportunity to learn and master grade level skills.

## - HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS -

If a student is unlawfully absent from school in excess of five (5) days in a marking period, the student will receive a failing grade for ALL subjects in that marking period. This means – on the sixth unlawful absence day (in a marking period), the student will have failing grades.

OR

If a student is unlawfully absent from A CLASS in excess of five (5) days in a marking period, the student will receive a failing grade for that class.

### 5. WHAT IS A LAWFUL (EXCUSED) ABSENCE?

- Death in the immediate family
- Student illness, including a doctor's appointment (a physician's note may be required if the absence is extensive)
- Court summons
- Hazardous weather conditions
- Work (if the student's work is approved or sponsored by the school)
- Observance of a religious holiday
- State of emergency
- Suspension
- Lack of authorized transportation
- Other emergencies or circumstances – in judgment of the principal

### 6. WHAT IS AN UNLAWFUL (UNEXCUSED) ABSENCE?

Absences for any reason other than those listed as lawful. Please remember absences due to a family vacation are unlawful. Exceptional circumstances may be reviewed by the principal or designee.

### 7. HOW DOES A PARENT PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE SCHOOL ABOUT THEIR CHILD'S ABSENCE?

Parents/Guardians of the student must provide a written reason for the absence on the day the student returns to school. If a note is not received by the school within three (3) days, the absence will be coded as unlawful or unexcused. Only absences due to lawful reasons will be coded as LAWFUL (excused). All other absences will be coded as UNLAWFUL (unexcused). The written reason for the absence (parental note) must include:

- Student's name
- Date of absence
- Reason for absence
- Parent's signature

All notes for absences must include a reason for the absence.

### 8. WHEN IS A STUDENT IS CONSIDERED PRESENT FOR A FULL DAY?

A student in attendance for more than one-half (1/2) day is counted present for a full day. Some examples of this would be...



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- The student is 10 minutes late for school. The student will be marked “tardy” (T) and “present” for the day.
- The student leaves school one hour early. The student will be marked “present” (PRE) for the day and “signed out” early (SO).
- The student is present for three and one-half (3 ½) hours of the school day. The student will be marked “present” (PRE) for the day and marked “tardy” (T) or “signed out” (SO) as appropriate.

## 9. WHEN IS A STUDENT CONSIDERED ABSENT FOR A FULL DAY?

A student is absent for a full day when the student does not attend school for any amount of time during the school day.

## 10. WHAT IS A HALF DAY PRESENT OR ABSENT?

A student is ONE-HALF (1/2) DAY PRESENT and ONE-HALF (1/2) DAY ABSENT when a student is present for any part of the school day and absent for more than one half of the school day. The school day is six and three-quarters (6 ¾) hours. Each school has a set midpoint of the school day. Examples of this would be....

- The student is present for three and one-quarter hours (3 ¼) hours of the school day. The student will be marked “PRE” for one-half day.
- The student arrives after the midpoint of the school day. The student will be marked “present” (PRE) for one half day.

## 11. CAN STUDENTS RECOVER FAILING GRADES RECEIVED?

We recognize that students sometimes make mistakes and that a second chance gives the student the opportunity to learn from their experiences. High school students will have ONE (1) opportunity to recover their grades in a school year if they do not exceed five (5) unlawful days of absence in the next marking period. A failing grade in the fourth marking period cannot be recovered. This recovery option can only be used one time in a school year.

## 12. HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY HIGH SCHOOL CHILD HAS BEEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL OR A CLASS?

There are a number of ways that parents will be contacted about unlawful (unexcused) student absences for high school students.

- An automated phone message from your child’s school
- A phone call from a staff member
- An e-mail
- A letter after five (5) and ten (10) days of unlawful (unexcused) absences
- A request for a parent conference
- A visit to your home from the pupil personnel worker and a school administrator

The importance of an education cannot be underestimated. We hope that parents will join with us and make REGULAR ATTENDANCE an expectation and SCHOOL A PRIORITY each and every day. Please know that St. Mary’s County Public Schools recognize that there are LAWFUL (excused) absences, and children occasionally need to miss school. Each student’s situation will be addressed individually to review extenuating circumstances and hardships.



DR. MICHAEL J. MARTIRANO  
*Superintendent of Schools*

*November 30, 2005*

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