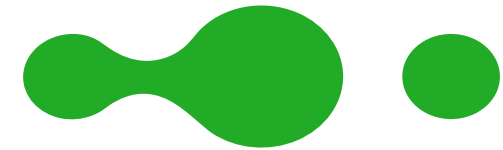


Citywide Attendance Policies

Module 2

Module 2 Objectives



Participants will:

- Understand when attendance is compulsory for students.
- Understand how attendance is tracked in D.C.
- Understand key citywide attendance policies.

Citywide vs. School Attendance Policies

The following content explains citywide or state-level policies for attendance monitoring and intervention that apply to all D.C. public schools.

Please keep in mind that the 65+ local education agencies (including DCPS and public charters) and 200+ schools in D.C. have autonomy to set additional policies, regulations, and responses to chronic absenteeism and truancy.

To learn more about local education agency (LEA) or school-level policies, please reach out to your school directly.

When Is Attendance Compulsory for Students?

School attendance is required by law for all students in D.C. who reach five years of age on or before September 30 of the current school year. Students must attend school daily until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their eighteenth birthday (DC Code § 38-202 (a)).



How Do We Track Attendance in D.C.?

1 Attendance taken daily

Each day, schools take attendance for every student enrolled in school.

2 Submitted to OSSE

Daily attendance data from schools are submitted to the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE) nightly by every LEA's student information system (SIS).

3 Indicates students present

The data submitted indicate whether each student in a school was present that day.

4 SIS systems vary

LEA student information systems are configured differently—some send full attendance (present and absent), some only absences.

5 80/20 rule

If a student misses more than 20% of the school day, the data reflects that they were absent for the day.

6 Period-level attendance

Schools track period-level attendance as well, and attendance in specific courses impacts graduation eligibility regardless of whether the student was deemed absent or present for the day.

Protecting Student Attendance Data: Schools

D.C. adheres to the protections laid out by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, which includes student attendance records.

Schools need to know:

FERPA gives parents, legal guardians, and students age eighteen and older certain rights with respect to their education records, such as the right to review their data and seek amendment. It also protects that data from being shared in ways that might violate students' and parents' privacy. Schools and local education agencies need to follow the provisions and protections of FERPA closely, and should reach out to OSSE for guidance as needed.

Protecting Student Attendance Data: School Partners

D.C. adheres to the protections laid out by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

FERPA (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, which includes student attendance records.

School partners need to know:

Partners to schools who might seek or receive access to attendance data, such as afterschool programs, health care providers, or case managers, are also impacted by FERPA. Partners must work closely with the educational institution they are receiving the data from (whether a school, LEA, or OSSE) to ensure that any data sharing follows federal law. Student-level attendance data should not be shared without clarity on whether appropriate protections are in place and that the data sharing is allowed under FERPA. In some cases specific consent by a parent or guardian might be required.

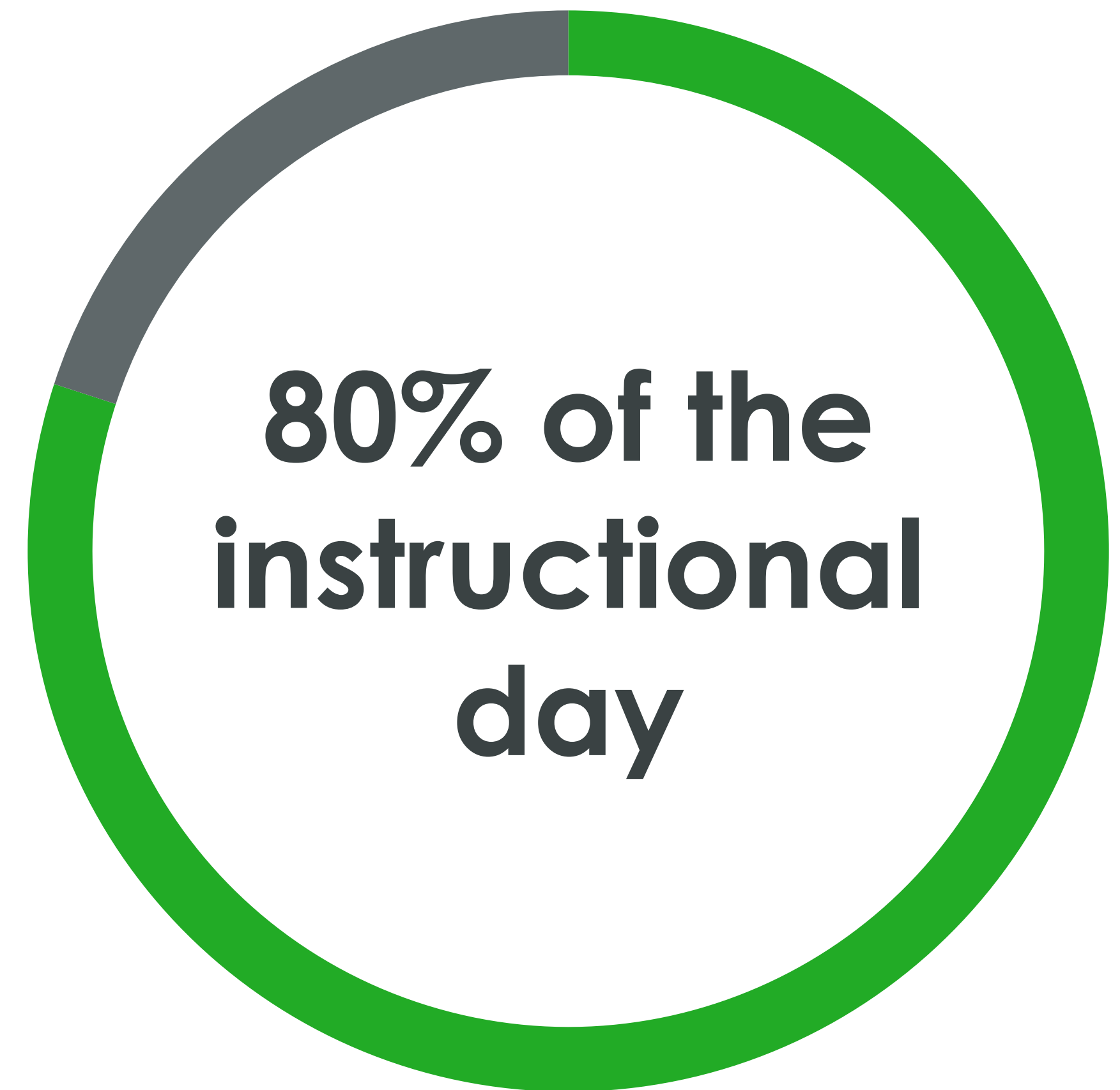
Overview of Key Citywide Policies

1. The 80/20 rule
2. Excuse status
3. Absence and school discipline policy
4. Grading and graduation policies
5. Notification and intervention policies

1. The 80/20 Rule

Under the 80/20 rule, for a student to be considered present they must be physically in attendance at scheduled periods of instruction at the educational institution in which they are enrolled for **at least 80 percent of the full instructional day**, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student.

Students who are not present for 80 percent or more of the day are considered absent (D.C.M.R. 5, § 2199.1).



2. Excuse Status (1 of 2)

A student who is absent can either have their absence deemed excused or unexcused. All public schools in D.C. must excuse the following reason for an absence (D.C.M.R. 5, § A2102.2):

- Illness or other bona fide (legitimate) medical illness experienced by the student.
- Exclusion, by direction of D.C. authorities, due to quarantine, contagious disease, infection, infestation, or other condition requiring separation from other students for medical or health reasons.
- Death in the student's family.
- Necessity for a student to attend judiciary or administrative proceedings as a party to the action or under subpoena.
- Observance of a religious holiday.
- Lawful suspension or exclusion from school by school authorities.
- Temporary closing of facilities or suspension of classes due to severe weather, official activities, holidays, malfunctioning equipment, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other condition(s) or emergency requiring a school closing or suspension of classes.
- Failure of D.C. to provide transportation in cases where there is a legal responsibility for the transportation of the student.
- Medical or dental appointments for the student.
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent or a legal guardian who is in the military, immediately before, during, or after deployment.

Additionally, LEAs may use their discretion to excuse other reasons for absence as well.

2. Excuse Status (2 of 2)

An unexcused absence is...

Any absence that does not fall into one of the excused categories listed on the previous slide, or any absence where the parent of guardian does not **provide a valid excuse within five school days** (DC Code § 38–203 (2)).

Examples of unexcused absences are:

- Babysitting
- Student work that has not been previously approved by the school as part of a flexible school schedule
- Errands
- Cutting classes
- Oversleeping
- Vacationing outside of scheduled school breaks

3. Absence and School Discipline Policy

Children may **NOT** be suspended or expelled for unexcused absences or late arrivals to school (DC Code § 38–203(f)).

4. Grading and Graduation Policy

Applicable to grades PK–4

Promotion of students in prekindergarten through eighth grade to the next level shall include consideration of the following criteria ([D.C.M.R. 5, § 2201.6](#)):

- (a) Proficient or advanced marks in the core subjects of:
 - (1) Reading/language arts; and
 - (2) Mathematics; and
 - (3) Science; and
 - (4) Social studies.
- (b) Achievement of the goals of the intervention learning plan where applicable.
- (c) Meet the requirements of the system's attendance policy.

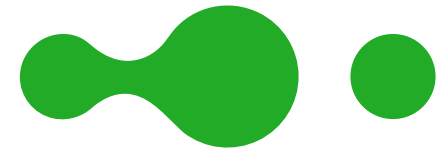
Applicable to grades PK–12

More than **thirty unexcused absences within a school year results in failure of the relevant courses and retention** in the current grade level (without a written explanation submitted by the principal) (DC Code § 38–781.02).

Cumulative failure of courses due to absenteeism impacts the ability of high school students to reach graduation requirements.



Stop and Jot



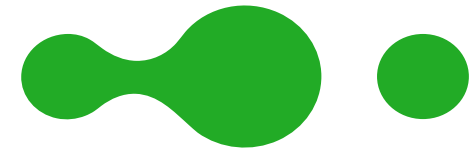
1. How does attendance policy intersect with my work?
2. What is the role of my organization in ensuring that students arrive to classes every day and on time?



5. Notification and Referral Policy (1 of 5)

- For **every absence**, schools must **contact the parent or guardian** the same day to notify them of the absence and request documentation (D.C.M.R. 5, § 2103.2(c)).
- After **five unexcused absences**, students are required to participate in an **attendance conference** and are referred to a **school-based student support team** (D.C.M.R. 5, § 2103.2(c)).
- The School-based Student Support Team for attendance will:
 - Make reasonable and diligent efforts to communicate and collaborate with the student's parent or guardian.
 - Review and address the student's attendance and determine the underlying cause for the unexcused absences.
 - Communicate and collaborate with the student's existing individualized education program (IEP) team (if applicable).
 - Provide timely response to the student's truant behavior (if applicable).
 - Make recommendations for academic, diagnostic, or social work services.
 - Use resources to improve the student's attendance including referral to a community-based organization when available.
 - Develop and implement an action plan in consultation with the student and student's parent or guardian.

Spotlight: Attendance Conferences and Student Support Team Meetings



Linda Long

Attendance Counselor, Paul Public Charter School



5. Notification & Referral Policy (2 of 5)

- **Students** with **seven unexcused absences** will receive a **letter from the Metropolitan Police Department** along with notice from their school.
- **Students** with **ten unexcused absences** will receive a **letter and attendance handbook** from the Office of State Superintendent of Education (DC Code § 38–208 (b)).
- **Students ages 14–17** with **ten unexcused absences** will be referred to the school's Attendance Committee/the Student Support Team for follow-up (D.C.M.R. 5, § 2103.2).

5. Notification & Referral Policy (3 of 5)

- **Parents or guardians of students ages 5–13** who accrue **ten unexcused absences*** must be referred by their school to the **Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA)** for potential educational neglect (DC Code § 38–208 (C)(1)(a)). CFSA receives and investigates reports of abuse and neglect of district young people under the age of eighteen, including reports of educational neglect. CFSA will assign a social worker to review the referral, usually within twenty-four hours the report. The social worker's job is to find out whether the report of abuse or neglect is true or false. A social worker at CFSA will also decide whether CFSA or a community organization should continue supporting the family.

*Includes only full day absences (80/20 rule does not apply).

5. Notification & Referral Policy (4 of 5)

- **Parents or guardians of students ages 5–13** who accrue **fifteen unexcused absences*** must be referred by their schools to the **Office of the Attorney General** (DC Code § 38–208 (C)) for prosecution. Parents may be assigned community service and placed under court supervision/probation, and may be convicted of violating the compulsory school attendance law, facing fines and incarceration.

*Includes only full day absences (80/20 rule does not apply).

5. Notification & Referral Policy (5 of 5)

- **Students ages 14–17** who accrue **fifteen unexcused absences*** must be referred by their school to **the Superior Court of the District of Columbia** and to the **Office of the Attorney General** (DC Code § 38–208 (C)). Students may be referred to the director of court social services for prosecution, diversion, and community based interventions, and may be assigned community service and placed under court supervision/probation. Truancy charges may be filed against the student alleging that the student is a “Person in Need of Supervision.”

*Includes only full day absences (80/20 rule does not apply).

Questions?



Visit the following sites for more on DC policies:

<https://attendance.dc.gov/>

<https://osse.dc.gov/publication/attendance-and-truancy-resources-parents>



Works Cited

“Attendance and Truancy Resources,” *District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education*.

https://osse.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/osse/page_content/attachments/Attendance%20and%20Truancy%20Resources%20%28Parent%20Notice%29.pdf

“Code of the District of Columbia” *Council of the District of Columbia*. <https://code.dccouncil.us/dc/council/code/>

“District of Columbia Municipal Regulations and District of Columbia Register” <https://www.dcregs.dc.gov>

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