



BEDFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

310 South Bridge Street
Bedford, Virginia 24523
540-586-1045

October 9, 2017

Parental/Family Notification of New Attendance Procedures

Dear Parents and Families,

During the past few weeks, Bedford County Public Schools (BCPS) has received new information from the Student Data Specialist at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in Richmond regarding new procedures for coding student attendance. As a result, it is necessary for BCPS to update current attendance record keeping procedures.

As parents and educators, we know that regular school attendance is crucial to student achievement. Understanding that regular school attendance is necessary, under *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), chronic absenteeism is being used as an indicator for accreditation beginning in the 2018-2019 school year. Even though chronic absenteeism will not be used as an indicator for accreditation during the 2017-2018 school year, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is requiring all divisions to implement the regulations contained within Chapter 730 - *Regulations Governing the Collection and Reporting of Truancy Related Data and Student Attendance Policies* (VAC20-730-30), which sets forth specific procedures each division must take to address unexcused student absences. Under the new regulations, an **unexcused** absence is defined as:

“...an absence where (i) the student misses his scheduled instructional school day in its entirety and (ii) no indication has been received by school personnel within **three days** of the absence that the student’s parent is aware and supports the absence, or (iii) the parent

provides a reason for the absence that is unacceptable to the school administration.”

Note. The acceptable conditions for an excused absence for all BCPS students are listed on page six of the BCPS *Code of Student Conduct*.”

Moving forward, if a student accumulates **five (5) unexcused absences**, the school administration is required to develop an Attendance Plan with the parent/family through a face-to-face conference, by telephone, or through the use of other communication devices. If a student accumulates **six (6) unexcused absences**, the school administration is required to schedule and hold an Attendance Conference within 15 days of the sixth unexcused absence. This conference is required to be a face-to-face meeting, or an interaction that is conducted through a communication device. If a student accumulates **seven (7) unexcused absences**, the school administration is required to contact the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court intake to file a complaint alleging the student is a Child in Need of Supervision (CHINS), or to institute proceedings against the parent pursuant to the *Code of Virginia* §22.1-279.3.

Our administrators and teachers stand ready to support any parent/family with issues related to student absences because we understand that students who regularly attend school are far more likely to be successful students both now and in the future. Even missing as few as two school days per month significantly impacts achievement for students at all levels: elementary, middle school, and high school. Working together, we will ensure that our students achieve at the highest possible level. Should you have any questions regarding these new regulations, please contact Dr. Susan C. Mele, Ed.D. at 540-586-1045, ext. 10250.