

WASHINGTON LATIN PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2021-22

Attendance Matters!

Consistent attendance in school plays a vital role in every student's academic success and contribution to our community. We want all students at school as much as possible, so they can make the most of the educational opportunities offered in middle and upper school. Benefits for the students include:

- Better academic results (immediately and over the long-term)
- More positive attitude about school
- Higher self-confidence
- Good habits that serve students throughout their education and beyond

We miss our students when they are gone, because we value their contributions to our school. Regular and timely attendance is important for students to succeed academically; it also helps children feel better about school—and themselves.

A high number of absences or tardies can be an indication of underlying problems, which we want to address with students and their families. For these reasons, it is crucial that families and students alike are committed to on-time and regular attendance at school.

POLICIES

- ***Excused and Unexcused*** - Not all absences are the same. Some can be excused with a parent/guardian note/email, and some require a doctor's note. Other reasons for an absence or tardiness are NOT excusable, even with a families note. Please see the description that follows for details on each type.
- ***Consequences*** - The consequences reflect how important this issue is, beginning with actions the Latin administration will take. Serious cases are **required** to be reported to city officials. Please read the details below.

PROCEDURES

The most important procedure is that families **COMMUNICATE** with Latin regarding any absence, whatever the reason, as early as possible.

- It is important that we know where your child is, no matter the reason for an absence.
- Attendance is taken each day during advisory and recorded no later than 10:00 am, so please let us know ASAP if your child will be absent, late or leave early.
- Parents can send an email (attendance@latinpcs.org) or leave a voicemail (x418) explaining the absence. ***Note that we can no longer accept handwritten notes.*** We must receive communication within 3 days of the student's return to campus to excuse the absence/tardy.
- ***Please note that all school absences and tardies are part of the student's permanent academic record.***

What are excused and unexcused absences/tardies?

Excused absences are when students are absent all day, arrive late (see below for details), or leave early with a valid excuse and parent/guardian approval. Examples include:

- Student **illness** (a doctor's note is required upon return if a student is absent for more than five days)
- **Medical appointments/procedures** (a doctor's note is required upon return to school). *We encourage families to schedule appointments so that students miss as little class time as possible.*
- **Serious illness or death** in the student's immediate family
- Necessity for a student to attend a **judicial proceeding** as a plaintiff, defendant, witness or juror
- Observance of a **religious holiday** (please notify us in advance)
- Temporary **school closings** due to weather, unsafe conditions or other emergencies
- **Lawful suspension or exclusion** from school by school authorities
- For **military families**, student visits with the parent or legal guardian who is the military member immediately before, during or after his or her deployment.
- **College visits** (please notify us in advance)

Unexcused absences are when students are absent from, arrive late to or leave early from school without a valid excuse, ***whether or not they have parent/guardian approval.*** Examples include:

- Babysitting or other such family obligations
- Work obligations
- Oversleeping
- Traffic
- Cutting classes

How do families report an absence or tardy as excused?

1. Review whether an absence is considered excusable. If not, please send your child to school!
2. Communicate with us about the absence:
 - a. Email attendance@latinpcs.org or
 - b. Leave a voicemail on the attendance line at 202.223.1111 x418
 - c. Include the student's name and grade, reason for the absence/late arrival or early departure, your name and contact phone number for any questions.
 - d. If necessary, please send a doctor's note (see above) on the doctor's letterhead.
3. To have an absence/tardy excused, we must receive one of these forms of communication by the third day that your child is back at school. For example, for an absence all-day Monday, we must receive a communication from the parent/guardian no later than end-of-day Thursday of the same week.
4. If the parent/guardian communication with a valid excuse is not received within the three-day period, the absence will be recorded as **UNEXCUSED**.
5. Any student who attempts to falsify an attendance excuse will be subject to disciplinary action.

CONSEQUENCES FOR TARDIES AND ABSENCES

Families are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time, and we ask that you take this responsibility seriously. We also expect our students to make attendance and timeliness priorities. The consequences outlined below reflect how seriously we take the issue.

Tardiness to school

- Students who arrive to advisory after 8:10 am will be marked tardy to school.
- Students who arrive at school after 8:20 am (Upper School) or after 8:30 am (Middle School) **MUST** check in at the front desk for a late pass and will be marked tardy.
- Students who arrive at school after 8:45 am without a valid parent excuse communication (in person, email, call, etc. as outlined above), s/he will be directed to the administrator on tardy duty, who will call the parent or guardian for an explanation.

- If the tardy is unexcused, the student will be required to attend Saturday detention equivalent to the cumulative amount of time that s/he was late during the course of the week.

Tardiness to class

Students have five minutes to get from one class to the next. Middle School students who receive 5 class tardies in one week will serve a detention from 3:45-4:45 one day during the following week. Upper School students who are late to any one class without a valid excuse as determined by the teacher 4 times will automatically lose 5% from their quarter grades. Students will also automatically lose another 5% on their quarter grades on the 8th tardy, and so forth.

How many is “too many” absences or tardies?

Chronic absenteeism is the term for a student missing more than 10 days in a school year (both excused and unexcused absences), because this is the point at which we see academic and/or behavioral struggles. Note that when a student misses 20% or more of a school day, it is counted as an absence, so we also watch for students who are chronically tardy.

In cases of chronic absenteeism or tardiness from Latin, the student’s teacher, advisor, or a member of the administration will reach out to the family for a meeting to understand the causes of the absences and establish a plan to improve the student’s on-time attendance. If there are health reasons for the absences, the school nurse will also work with the family and administration to establish an attendance plan. Parents/guardians and students, who have questions about the policy, a special need in terms of scheduling or some help resolving an issue, please reach out to us.

What are the legal requirements for school attendance?

According to DC law, families are considered legally responsible for ensuring their children’s attendance at school. **Truancy** is defined as any absence from school by a school-aged child without a valid excuse. Interventions begin at Latin after the first unexcused absence, but ***we are also legally obligated to report excessive absences to the authorities:***

- For our students up to age 13, the school is required to report to the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) if a student accumulates 10+ unexcused absences within a single school year.
- For our students over age 13, the school is required to report to the Family Court Social Services Division if a student has 10 or more unexcused absences within a single school year.
- The law also outlines particular consequences for both the student and parents, including both support (counseling, for example) and legal action. This information can be found in [the attendance report](#) by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) at osse.dc.gov.

Our hope at Latin is that we can work together with our students and their families to avoid truancy and chronic absenteeism. We are committed to early intervention and working to help overcome barriers and underlying problems in partnership with our families.

If you have questions about our policy, please contact Ms. Carenda Nunn, School Registrar. This information is also posted on our website as a stand-alone document.