

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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 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 explaining the absence (attendance@latinpcs.org for 2nd Street and ajcattendance@latinpcs.org for Cooper).
- ***Note that we do not accept handwritten notes.*** We must receive communication within 3 days of the student's return to campus to excuse the absence/tardy. If the parent/guardian communication with a valid excuse is not received within the three-day period, the absence will be recorded as ***UNEXCUSED***.
- Any student who attempts to falsify an attendance excuse will be subject to disciplinary action.
- ***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 the 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

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 after the start of Advisory will be marked tardy to school. Note that this is an important period for all students!
- At 2nd Street, Upper School Advisory is now a credit-bearing course (0.25 credits for the year, which will count towards the required 3.5 elective credits). Students will receive a pass/fail grade, based on their daily attendance and participation. This information is spelled out in this [advisory syllabus](#).
- Students who arrive at school after the start of Advisory **MUST** check in at the front desk and will be marked tardy.

How many is “too many” absences or tardies?

Chronic absenteeism is the term for a student missing more than 15 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 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 fifteen 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 on the website of 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 us.