

DCWPCS Attendance Policy

DC Wildflower PCS is committed to providing our students, families, and staff an intimate liberatory educational experience. We exist to empower children to actively participate in their own education and support their path of success.

We recognize that children will best thrive and reach their potential when they fully participate and engage in their education, and their school attendance is a key component. As an educational community we believe in rigorous and responsive data practices and student centered instruction, both of which rely on a purposeful trajectory of learning experiences that is jeopardized by interruptions in attendance. Research has shown that missing more than 10% of school, starting in pre-school, makes it less likely that even strong early childhood and elementary programs will develop foundational skills for academic success. As Montessorians, we also believe that regular attendance supports the social-emotional health and relationships of our students, as well as their progress towards functional independence.

At DCWPCS our goal is for all of our learners to attend 95% or more of the time for the entire school year. This is equivalent to missing one day or less per month.

We know that factors influencing attendance can be associated with racial and social discrimination and hierarchy, the very factors Wildflower is founded to eliminate. **The intention of our policy is to improve attendance for all learners by working with families to identify and remove barriers or challenges that impact students' attendance.**

School Hours and Attendance

Hours for each DCWPCS school are shared in the student handbook, as well as charter and school websites. All learners are considered tardy if they arrive 15 minutes after the morning work period begins (please see below for more information on tardies).

Per the Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE), students must be present at least 60% of the instructional day to be considered "present" on that day. If your child arrives after 11 am, they are welcomed into their classroom, but they will still be counted as absent for the day.

If a learner is going to be absent, arrive late, or leave early, the family should notify the school in advance by phone or email (please copy our Operations Partner at ashley.montgomery@dcwildflowerpcs.org). A pattern of excessive absences, tardies, or truancies will result in various levels of intervention, described in the following section.

Documenting Attendance

The school will maintain a daily record of each learner's attendance. Families are expected to record accurate times for arrival and dismissal.

Families must provide a written explanation after each absence, which should include all days within that instance. The explanation may be written and hand-delivered or emailed to the school (please copy ashley.montgomery@dcwildflowerpcs.org).

If the school is notified by text, families will need to submit a formal note. The explanation should include the following:

- Name of the learner
- Date(s) absent
- Reason for the absence
- Contact information for the parent/guardian submitting the note, and
- The parent or guardian's signature

Absence notes must be submitted within five (5) school days of an absence. If it is NOT submitted within five (5) days, it will be considered unexcused, even if the reason would have been excused. If they are not submitted to the contact(s) listed above, they will not be considered.

If your child is absent for more than five (5) consecutive days, you must submit a note from a doctor or other acceptable documentation explaining the absence. *Parents are not expected to have a note from a health care provider for an illness of fewer than five days, but should still submit a written explanation.*

Unexcused absences will be changed to excused absences only if there is a reasonable explanation for why the documentation was not submitted within the 5 days.

Excused Absences

The following are examples of excused absences and tardies.

- An illness or injury that prevents the learner from attending school.
 - If the illness or injury results in absence of five or more consecutive days, a note from a health care provider documenting the health problem or hospitalization should be attached to the parents' note.
 - Siblings of sick learners must still attend school and will be marked unexcused if they are absent, unless the parent/guardian can provide valid reasoning the sibling did not attend.
- A death in the immediate family (parent, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin) or other significant personal or family emergency/crisis. If the learner will be absent for more than 5 days, it must be communicated to the Teacher Leaders in writing as soon as possible.

- Medical or psychological tests during the school day
 - The parent must show evidence (such as a note from the health center) that the tests could not be scheduled after school.
- Failure of the District of Columbia to provide transportation in cases where the District of Columbia has a legal responsibility for the transportation of the learner, including OSSE provided bussing and DC School Connect.
- Religious observance or cultural holidays: To accommodate learners' cultural and religious observances on days when schools are in session, these absences can be marked excused if approved by the school.
 - Please submit a valid note signed by a parent or guardian and approved by the Executive Director.
- Court appearance or judicial proceeding: learners should present evidence of the requirement of the court appearance.

If a learner will be absent for an extended period due to an extraordinary circumstance, the family should contact their Teacher Leaders. In consultation with the Executive Director, the Teacher Leaders will determine if the absence will be excused. The Teacher Leader will notify the family of the decision. In the instance where there is an excused absence for multiple days, the school will suggest ways to minimize the impact of learning loss on the time away from school.

The policy for Home and Hospital Instruction will be applied on a case by case basis as outlined by OSSE.

Unexcused Absences

The following are examples of unexcused absences.

- Family vacations
- Family or work obligations (car trouble, extended family member's illness, work schedule change) are not typically considered excused absences
- Chose to not bring a child to school for none of the reasons previously listed.

We ask families to communicate even about unexcused absences so that we know the whereabouts of our learners, and to ensure that the school is in compliance with local laws, policies, and procedures of the Office of the State Superintendent Education (OSSE).

Under District of Columbia law, students between 5 and 13 years old who have 10 or more unexcused absences within a school year— considered “chronic absenteeism” – must be referred to Child and Family Services (CSFA).

Tardies

Chronic tardiness (10 or more times per quarter) is disruptive to both the students and their classmates. Regular tardiness will prompt a conversation with Teacher Leaders.

Response/Support for Unexcused Absence Accumulation:

Unexcused Absence	DCWPCS Response
Each Unexcused Absence	The school will contact parents / guardians the day of the first absence.
3 Days of Unexcused Absences (cumulative)	The school will make a wellness check phone call to check in on the learner/family.
5 Days of Unexcused Absence (cumulative)	A 5-Day Absence Letter will be sent to the parent/guardian inviting them to meet in person with the Student Support Partner and teaching team to create an Attendance Support Plan.
10 Days of Unexcused Absence (cumulative)	<p>A 10-Day Absence Letter will be sent to the parent/guardian.</p> <p>An Attendance Support Plan will be created and documented as part of the Child Study Process. Specific data points connecting attendance to student's learning goals will be outlined and reviewed with the family and team.</p> <p>A Home visit will be conducted by a member of the Student Support Team.</p> <p>For K - 5th: If all attendance interventions have been executed and documented, the school is required to refer the student to CFSA for educational neglect. Notification will happen within two business days of the 10th unexcused absence. OSSE is then required to provide the learner's parent with a truancy prevention resource guide that covers certain topics</p>
20 Days of consecutive unexcused absences	Learners may be unenrolled from DCWPCS if they reach 20 consecutive unexcused absences.

	NOTE: An option for a “Leave of Absence” will be considered in extenuating circumstances to ensure all available measures are taken to support the student and family in our community.
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Discussion of Excessive Excused Absences:

If excused absences accumulate to more than 10 days of absence across the school year, Teacher Leaders will communicate the impact of those absences with families in upcoming conferences and the team will determine what next steps are needed. If the team becomes aware excused absences are a result of an ongoing health challenge or diagnosis, the team will request documentation and recommended support for the student’s doctor to ensure proper accommodations are being met. The appropriate Child Find process will be followed based upon the health information shared with the school team.

Alignment to Child Study:

Attendance Percentage	Type of Tier	Child Study Supports ¹
90% and Above	On Track (Tier 1)	Ongoing Daily Communication with Teaching Team
80-89%	At Risk (Tier 2)	Support Involvement-Attendance Plan Meetings every 6 weeks
Below 80%	Significant Concern (Tier 3)	Intensive Support Involvement-Attendance Plan Meetings/Monitoring every 3 weeks Additional supports to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Home Visits ● Social Work support ● On-time incentives

¹ All support is provided in addition to communication policies and documentation outlined above.