



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Guidance: Collecting Attendance for the 2021-22 School Year

Updated Sept. 3, 2021

Background

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is issuing this guidance document to outline expectations for attendance collection for the 2021-22 school year.

Scope

In the 2020-21 school year, most students attended school through distance learning, and attendance collection procedures were modified to support the effective and unexpected transition to distance learning for all schools. OSSE also waived requirements for a 6-hour instructional day for both in-person and distance instruction. Those modifications **will not** be effective for the 2021-22 school year. Attendance collection and reporting requirements will return to the pre-pandemic method but will accommodate both in-person and distance instruction.

School Year 2020-21 Attendance Collection Policy

Broadly, DC Code §38-201, *et. seq.* makes education for any child between the age of 5 and 18 compulsory, requires schools to take, collect, and report daily attendance, and requires referrals to other District agencies when a number of unexcused absences are reached.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided and vaccines have become available, schools are able to resume in-person operations in accordance with public health guidance. For the 2021-22 school year, in-person instruction is the default method of attendance for all students in the District of Columbia, and distance instruction will only be provided if the student meets one of the following conditions:

- (i) To comply with District of Columbia laws, regulations, executive actions, or public health guidance requiring distance instruction;
- (ii) Due to a temporary closure of the school to protect the health or safety of all enrolled students; or
- (iii) If approved by the Public Charter School Board before Aug. 23, 2021, to provide a distance program consistent with its authorizing powers.

Schools will be expected to offer full-day, in-person instruction of at least 6 hours per day consistent with 5A DCMR §2100.3.¹ Instruction delivered through distance learning must also meet this requirement.

¹ 5A DCMR 2100.3 requires that educational institutions to have a school year comprised of at least 180 regular instructional days of at least 6 hours in length for students. The 6 hours may include time allotted for lunch periods, recess and class breaks. However, the 6-hour minimum instructional day requirement is not applicable to an evening school program, pre-kindergarten program, or a kindergarten program. The

OSSE will collect attendance consistent with established regulations codified in 5A DCMR §2101. Attendance will be collected as follows:

- Schools will report daily attendance using the following types: in person and distance learning.²
- If the student attends school through distance learning, they will need to be further coded as either having a medical certification form or due to quarantine/operations.
 - Present Full – Distance Learning Situational
 - Present Full – Distance Learning Medical Certification
 - Present Full – Distance Learning Routine
- For both attendance taking place in person or through distance learning, consistent with existing regulations, a student will be marked present³, partial, or absent.

OSSE will collect the type of daily attendance recorded using a nightly student information system (SIS) feed, using the attendance codes which are summarized in the table below and available in detail in [School Year 21-22 LEA Data Collection Template](#).

Schools must monitor a student's attendance in distance learning throughout the entire instructional day regardless of whether the student attends school synchronously or asynchronously.

Students with a medical certification form or that are attending an online school should be given a regular, consistent schedule for their instructional day that is 6 hours in length. For grades 6-12, instruction should be synchronous. For students in grades K-5, students should be given daily synchronous instruction for the opportunity to engage with an instructor that is appropriate for their age.

Students who are accessing distance learning that did not have a medical certification form but require distance learning due to isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19, can be provided with instruction synchronously and/or asynchronously. The LEA/school should provide this instruction in a manner that ensures continuous education for the excluded student but also allows the school to continue efficient in-person instruction for students that have not been excluded.

For instruction offered synchronously, the instructor should verify the student's presence in real time.

This can be done by acknowledging the student's identity on the learning platform visually, voice communication, or written communication. Instructors should use their good judgment to authenticate the student's identity and monitor their continued engagement in the distance course session. LEAs should address poor engagement in a distance course session consistent with their own policies and expectations.

Superintendent has the authority to approve a waiver from this requirement. Refer to ["Guidance Related to Instructional Day"](#) dated June 7, 2021.

² In-person means the student accesses instruction within the physical school building. Distance means that the student accesses instruction outside of the physical school building.

³ 5A DCMR §2199 defines "present" as "a single school day on which the student is physically in attendance at scheduled periods of actual instruction at the educational institution in which she or he was enrolled and registered for at least eighty percent (80%) of the full instructional day, or in attendance at a school-approved activity that constitutes part of the approved school program for that student."

For instruction offered asynchronously, the instructor should confirm the student’s presence and active engagement for the established period in asynchronous instruction. This can be done through a communication transmitted from the student indicating presence and active engagement in the instructional setting consistent with an LEA’s policies. Instructors should use their good judgement to authenticate the veracity of the communication. LEAs should address poor engagement in a distance course session consistent with their own policies and expectations.

Absences must be entered as either excused or unexcused consistent with definitions defined in existing regulations. ⁴

Unexcused, full day absence, whether in-person or distance, will result in the truancy reporting required by local laws. ⁵

⁴ 5A DCMR §2102

⁵ DC Code §38-208