



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Principals
Instructional Leaders
District Technology Coordinators
Attendance Supervisors

FROM: Sabrina B. Moore, PhD
Director, Office of Student Intervention Services

Dan Ralyea
Director, Office of Research and Data Analysis

DATE: August 4, 2020

RE: Guidance for Confirming and Documenting Attendance

In light of school closures related to COVID-19 and the anticipated reopening of schools for the 2020–21 academic year, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is issuing the following guidance to assist districts in determining and accounting for the attendance status, whether present or absent, of students.

Recognizing that a variety of flexible scheduling options will exist across districts statewide, this guidance is intended to address onsite attendance and attendance in a virtual environment in schools that are, traditionally, brick and mortar facilities. This guidance is not intended to address attendance in authorized charter schools that are currently operating virtually.

Onsite attendance should be determined by whether or not a student is physically present in a classroom on school grounds or school property. Whether the absence is “excused” or “unexcused” should be established by district procedures and policies and be consistent with state law and regulations. NOTE: Absences associated with COVID-19 should be excused, using the SC-FLU code. To distinguish COVID-19 from the flu, districts must use the following descriptor in the comment field: **COVID-19**.

NOTE: The SCDE recommends that districts make appropriate accommodations for students who may be required to quarantine or self-isolate as a result of COVID-19. Such accommodations may include temporarily moving the student to a distance learning environment, which includes virtual, electronic platforms, or offsite environments (including home) utilizing various instructional strategies.

Virtual attendance refers to the delivery of instructional content that does not occur in a physical classroom on school grounds or school property. This includes instruction provided via an online or electronic platform, as well as instruction provided in a physical offsite location separate from school property. Virtual attendance is determined by whether or not a student submits work or participates in assigned activities in accordance with the classroom teacher's written requirements. Students who submit assignments or participate in assigned learning experiences by the deadline established by the classroom teacher should be considered present. Students who fail to submit assignments or participate in assigned learning experience(s) by the deadline established by the classroom teacher should be considered absent. Again, whether the absence is "excused" or "unexcused" should be established by district procedures and policies and be consistent with state law and regulations. NOTE: Absences associated with COVID-19 should be excused, using the SC-FLU code. To distinguish COVID-19 from the flu, districts must use the following descriptor in the comment field: **COVID-19**.

NOTE: For a hybrid schedule (onsite instructional days combined with virtual instructional days), if assignments are to be completed over a number of scheduled virtual days and students submit the assignments by the deadline established by the classroom teacher, students should be considered present for each of the associated virtual instructional days. To reduce the possibility of students being unaccounted for for an extended period of time, educators must reconcile attendance at least weekly. Procedural guidance and training for confirming and documenting virtual attendance in PowerSchool will be provided by the Office of Research and Data Analysis.

As state law requires all public schools to track attendance (beginning with the first day of school) to monitor membership for funding purposes and to monitor truancy, nothing in this guidance is intended to modify current procedures related to membership, the 10-day drop period, or truancy reporting. Furthermore, districts are reminded to update current attendance policies to include hybrid schedules and virtual attendance and to share updated policies with students and families.

Finally, districts are required to track both student and educator attendance during the LEAP period, using the following templates:

- [Student Attendance Template](#) and
- [Educator Attendance Template](#).

The student spreadsheet should be titled "District_code_Student_Leap_Attendance" and the educator spreadsheet should be titled "District_code_Educator_Leap_Attendance" (Examples

4602_Student_Leap_Attendance and 4602_Educator_Leap_Attendance). The completed spreadsheets must be placed in the ADT in the Technology Coordinators folder.

Both attendance spreadsheets are required to receive full funding and are due within five business days of the last scheduled LEAP day and no later than September 15, 2020.

If you have any questions about the above guidance, please contact Aveene Coleman, acoleman@ed.sc.gov or Sabrina Moore, smoore@ed.sc.gov. If you have any questions about PowerSchool coding, please contact Dan Ralyea, dralyea@ed.sc.gov.