

MR. JOSEPH PYE
Superintendent



Dorchester
School
District Two

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Dear Parents/Guardians:

Due to changes to federal law that governs the United States K–12 public education policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights changed the definition of “absent.” Their new definition uses the minutes in a school day formula.

In accordance with Board Policy JH on Attendance and Absences, students are considered present only when they are actually at school, on homebound instruction or attending an activity authorized by the school such as field studies, athletic contests, music festivals, student conventions, etc. If absent, a student must present a written excuse signed by a parent/guardian, physician or other appropriate person within three days after returning to school, and the excuse must include the date the excuse is written, date of the absence, reason for the absence, telephone number where the parent/guardian may be reached and the required signature. If a student fails to provide a proper excuse, the excuse may be recorded as unexcused.

These attendance procedures remain unchanged.

What has changed is that **when a student misses 50 percent of his/her instructional day for any reason, whether the missed time is excused or unexcused, he/she will be marked absent.** The instructional day in elementary, middle, and high schools is a 7 hour school day. Students must attend school at least 3 ½ hours to be counted present for the school day. As the South Carolina State Department of Education aligns the method of recording attendance in Power School with this new law, our district will be reviewing guidelines for reporting attendance that will be shared with parents soon.

We believe that attendance is a key factor in student achievement and that any absence from school represents an educational loss. We recognize that some absences are unavoidable. We also know that during this first “change” year, the reporting could be slightly confusing. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we continue to work with the South Carolina Department of Education to refine our procedures for processing these new attendance requirements.

Dorchester School District Two.