

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

July 30, 2024

SUBJECT:

Revised policies and administrative rules, First Reading

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Administration cyclically reviews policies, administrative rules, and files in the Policy Manual. As part of the cyclical review process, the attached policies and administrative rules were reviewed.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:

The attached policies and administrative rules have been reviewed and revisions have been recommended. Minor revisions have been made to reflect current district practices and/or title changes.

Administrative Rule IJOA-R Field Trips
Policy IKD Honor Rolls, First Reading
Policy IMB Teaching about Controversial/Sensitive Issues, First Reading
Policy JFC Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts, First Reading
Policy JH Student Absences and Excuses, First Reading
Administrative Rule JH-R Student Absences and Excuses
Administrative Rule JHCB-R Released Time for Religious Instruction
Policy JICEA School-Related Student Publications, First Reading

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Approve the review of the policies and administrative rules.

Administrative Rule IJOA-R Field Trips
Policy IKD Honor Rolls, First Reading
Policy IMB Teaching about Controversial/Sensitive Issues, First Reading
Policy JFC Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts, First Reading
Policy JH Student Absences and Excuses, First Reading
Administrative Rule JH-R Student Absences and Excuses
Administrative Rule JHCB-R Released Time for Religious Instruction
Policy JICEA School-Related Student Publications, First Reading

ATTACHMENT:

Administrative Rule IJOA-R Field Trips
Policy IKD Honor Rolls
Policy IMB Teaching about Controversial/Sensitive Issues
Policy JFC Student Withdrawal from School/Dropouts
Policy JH Student Absences and Excuses
Administrative Rule JH-R Student Absences and Excuses
Administrative Rule JHCB-R Released Time for Religious Instruction
Policy JICEA School-Related Student Publications

PREPARED BY:

Dr. Salvatore Minolfo

FIELD TRIPS

Code **IJOA-R** Issued **8/16/24**

The following administrative rule guides the implementation of policy IJOA (Field Trips).

The School District of Aiken County only sponsors field trips during the school year that are directly related to advancing a specific curriculum-related objective. A brief lesson plan is to be presented with the request showing the relationship to a certain objective and what follow-up activities will occur upon the students' return to class. Field trips that are not designed to advance the learning of a specific curriculum objective will not be considered for district approval.

Each school is to require departments and grade levels to coordinate plans for field trips at the beginning of each school year. An individual student may miss class no more than 10 days per year as a result of field trips. Days selected for field trips need to be used wisely.

Field trips must not extend beyond three consecutive school days.

The principal must ensure that day-long field trips are not consumed mostly by travel time, leaving only an hour or so for activities that directly relate to curriculum objectives.

Overnight (and out-of-state) field trips must be submitted to the appropriate ~~executive director~~ assistant superintendent, who will approve or deny the request. Area advisory councils will continue to receive field trip forms as information. For trips outside the country, the superintendent's cabinet will make its decision based on consistent districtwide criteria and will be governed by whether the trip advances the school curriculum and by what is in the best interest and protection of the student.

Schools should carefully consider high-cost activities, as they may present a financial challenge to parents/legal guardians. Field trips of unusual cost must be approved by the appropriate ~~executive director~~ assistant superintendent. No student will be excluded from a field trip on the basis of an inability to pay for the trip.

Students are subject to all district policies, including the discipline code. A student may be excluded from participation in school-sponsored field trips due to suspensions, excessive absences, or habitual misbehavior.

If private companies are used to transport students, proper and adequate insurance information (containing complete coverage clauses) must be attached to request forms. Assurance must be documented that the company is able to operate in other states, especially those traveled. (The private carriers must be certified through the ~~office of the~~ assistant superintendent ~~for administration~~.)

No field trips may be submitted for approval after May 1 of any given year.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities such as athletic events, band competitions, camps, etc. are not considered field trips, but extensions to the school day, as most occur after school hours. Such activities are exempt from the 10-day rule and must relate to the goals and objectives of the organization. All school rules regarding discipline, attendance, etc. are applicable.

PAGE 2 - IJOA-R - FIELD TRIPS

Trips that themselves form the class curriculum (such as work programs and apprenticeship programs) and individualized student experiences (such as shadowing and mentoring) are not considered field trips.

Issued 10/13/98; Revised 1/8/02, 2/7/12, 8/23/16, 7/30/24

(Richmond County will be considered as “in-state” for purposes of this administrative rule.)

HONOR ROLLS

Code **IKD** Issued **1/028/24**

Purpose: To establish a structure for the publication of student honor rolls.

The board wants to encourage and foster the development of intellectual student ability, desirable traits of character and qualities of leadership. The board will support programs that recognize outstanding student achievement far in excess of minimum requirements in these areas. These programs may include honor rolls, honor societies, special awards or special recognition at honors programs and/or commencement exercises.

The board directs the certified staff to develop criteria and procedures for these recognition programs in honor of scholarship or distinguished service by students in any school activity. The criteria and procedures will make clear the relationship between the honor and the relevant goal or goals of the schools.

The assistant superintendents ~~for the areas~~, as a group, must review criteria for honoring students to determine the degree of similarity and consistency (where practical) in the district.

Adopted 1/8/02 Revised 8/13/24

TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL/ SENSITIVE ISSUES

Code **IMB** Issued **1/028/24**

Purpose: To establish the direction for teaching about controversial/sensitive issues in district schools.

The presentation and discussion of controversial issues in the classroom should be on an informative basis. The teachers should guard against giving their personal opinions on sectarian or political questions or any other controversial issues until the students have had the opportunity to find, collect and assemble factual material on the subject; to interpret the data without prejudice; to reconsider assumptions and claims and to reach their own conclusions. By refraining from expressing personal views before and during the period of research and study, the teacher is encouraging students to search for truth and to think for themselves. The development of an ability to meet issues without prejudice and to withhold judgments while facts are being collected, assembled and weighted and relationships seen before drawing conclusions is among the most valuable outcomes of a free educational system.

The policy can best be described by listing three basic rights of the student.

- The right to study controversial issues which have political, economic or social significance about which he/she should begin to have an opinion.
- The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
- The right of access to all relevant information freely available in the school or public libraries.

Students must participate in various activities and course requirements as dictated by the teacher to demonstrate knowledge of content, be the content factual or theoretical in nature. The teacher may permit the student to write a brief statement opposing a certain theory if requested by the student.

Emotional criticism and the promotion of a cause within the classroom are inappropriate and unscholarly. The teacher's attitude should be that of the true scholar which is truth-seeking, open-minded and tolerant.

Before launching a class in the study of an obviously controversial topic, teachers will discuss it through their ~~councils~~, committees, departments and faculties as to the following.

- appropriateness to the course
- appropriateness for the maturity of the students
- approach to instruction
- teaching materials to be used

The principal must approve the instruction ~~on all counts in line with the statements above on related to~~ teaching controversial issues.

Adopted 9/9/75; Revised 1/8/02, 8/13/24

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL/DROPOUTS

Code **JFC** Issued **4/028/24**

Purpose: To establish the board's vision for the district dropout program.

The board believes that a high school diploma signifies the minimum preparation for life. Therefore, the board strongly urges every teacher, ~~guidance counselor~~ school counselor, principal, parent and citizen to exert influence to keep all students in school at least through high school graduation.

The administration and instructional staff should organize and modify the school programs to suit the needs and aspirations of the students. The instructional staff should recognize potential dropouts and do everything possible to give necessary guidance to such students.

Adopted 4/23/02, Revised 8/13/24

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Code **JH** Issued **2/128/24**

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for allowing and excusing student absences.

The board believes that attendance is a key factor in student achievement. Any absence from school represents an educational loss to the student. However, the board recognizes that some absences are unavoidable.

In order to receive credit for a high school course, a student must attend at least 85 days (for a 90-day semester course) or 170 days (for a 180-day year course). The board may grant approval of excessive absences in accordance with board policy.

Any student who misses school must present a written excuse, signed by his/her parent/legal guardian or an excuse written by a medical provider. The excuse will contain such other information as directed by the administration. Student excuses are considered to be a part of student records and such excuses will be processed by those school-based employees designated to administer attendance regulations and will be provided to other staff who have a need to know.

If a student fails to bring a valid excuse to school within five days, he/she will automatically receive an unexcused or unlawful absence. If a student brings a false (or forged) excuse, the school official receiving that note must refer the student to the school administration for appropriate action. If a student accumulates absences in excess of 10, a medical note may be required in order to assist the principal in making decisions regarding lawful absences and denial of credit.

A. Lawful and unlawful absences

1. The district will consider a student **lawfully** absent under the following circumstances.

The student is ill and attendance at school would endanger the student's health or the health of others.

There is a death in the student's immediate family. Absences of this nature should not exceed three per occurrence. Excessive absences as a result of death may be deemed unlawful.

There is a serious illness in the student's immediate family. A statement from a physician or healthcare provider may be required. Absences of this nature should not exceed three per year.

There is a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith.

The student is traveling or attending events that the principal approved in advance as an educational experience.

Emergencies and/or extreme hardships at the discretion of the principal.

Other lawful absences are explained in administrative rule JH-R.

Chronic or extended illness requires a certification of the illness from the physician or other healthcare provider. Parents/Legal guardians who anticipate a student's absence of more than

PAGE 2 - JH - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

~~five consecutive days~~ 10 consecutive days in elementary or middle school, or five consecutive days in high school due to an extended health problem should apply immediately for homebound instruction by calling the school guidance office. A child is not counted as absent if the homebound is approved and the student receives instruction for each day approved.

2. The district will consider a student **unlawfully** absent under the following circumstances.

The student is willfully absent from school without the knowledge of his/her parents/legal guardians.

The student is absent without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his/her parent/legal guardian.

The student is absent and fails to turn in an acceptable note within five days of the student's return from an illness.

The student is absent after the parent/legal guardian has received notice that a medical note is required but the medical note is not presented.

B. Truancy

1. Truant

A child from age five until age 17 years meets the definition of a truant when the child has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.

2. Habitual truant

A "habitual" truant is a child, ages 12 to 17 years, who fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) and who accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences. This child may need court intervention and an initial truancy petition may be filed. The written intervention plan and documentation of non-compliance must be attached to the truancy petition asking for court intervention.

3. Chronic truant

A "chronic" truant is a child, ages 12 to 17 years, who has been through the school intervention process, has reached the level of habitual truant, has been referred to family court and placed on an order to attend school and continues to accumulate unlawful absences. Should other community alternatives and referrals fail to remedy the attendance problem, the "chronic" truant may be referred to the family court for violation of a previous court order. All school intervention plans existing to this point for this child and family must accompany the contempt of court petition as well as a written recommendation from the school and/or attendance supervisor to the court on action the court should take.

C. Intervention plans

1. Once a child is determined to be truant as defined in Section B(1) school officials must make every reasonable effort to meet with the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to identify the reasons for the student's unlawful absences. These efforts should include telephone calls and home visits as well as written messages. The principal or his/her designee and the ~~attendance clerk~~ student information clerk will coordinate communication between the parent/legal guardian,

PAGE 3 - JH - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

child, community resources and school personnel in an effort to develop a written intervention plan to address the student's unlawful absences. The attendance supervisor will meet monthly with those designated school personnel to review the attendance intervention plans of those students who have been identified as truant, habitually truant and chronically truant.

2. The intervention plan must include the following.
 - a. Reasons for the unlawful absences.
 - b. Actions to be taken by the parent/legal guardian and student to resolve the cause of the unlawful absences.
 - c. Documentation of referrals to appropriate service providers and, if available, alternative school and community-based programs.
 - d. Action to be taken by school personnel.
 - e. Actions to be taken in the event unlawful absences continue.
 - f. Signature of the parent/legal guardian or evidence that attempts were made to involve the parent/legal guardian.
 - g. Results of actions taken by all the parties.
 - h. Revisions to plans as needed.

D. Referral to the attendance supervisor

1. Once school officials have completed an intervention plan with the parent/legal guardian (and the student if he/she is 12 years of age or older) and the student accumulates ~~one~~ two additional unlawful absence, a referral must be made to the district attendance supervisor. Documentation of continued efforts by the school and/or attendance supervisor must be documented on the intervention plan form.
2. In addition, if attempts to involve the parents/legal guardians have been unsuccessful and the student has been identified as truant, a referral must be made to the district attendance office. Documentation of all attempts to involve the parent/legal guardian must be included in the referral packet.

E. Referrals and judicial intervention

At no time should a child or parent/legal guardian be referred to family court to be placed under an order to attend school prior to the written intervention planning being completed with the parent/legal guardian. Should the parent/legal guardian refuse to cooperate with the intervention planning to remedy the attendance problem, the school district has the authority to refer the student to family court in accordance with S.C. Code Ann. 59-65-50. In addition, schools must exhaust all reasonable alternatives to court action if a child or parent/legal guardian has already been placed on a school attendance order before a referral is made to family court for violation of that order.

F. Transfer of plans

If a student transfers to another public school in South Carolina, intervention plans will be forwarded to the receiving school. School officials will contact the parent/legal guardian to review the plan and revise as appropriate.

G. Approval of absences in excess of 10 days and approval of credit

1. Approval or disapproval of absences

The principal will approve or disapprove any student's absence in excess of 10 days for the purpose of awarding credit and to determine if these absences are lawful or unlawful.

PAGE 4 - JH - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

A medical note or other documentation will be required after a student accumulates 10 absences in order to assist the principal in making that decision. A principal may decide not to include those absences that are medically excused as part of the 10 total absences provided the number of medical notes is not deemed excessive.

2. High school credit

In order to receive one Carnegie unit of credit, a student must be in attendance at least 120 hours, per unit, regardless of the number of days missed. Students whose absences are approved for the purpose of awarding credit should be allowed to make up any work missed in order to satisfy the 120-hour requirement. Principals should consider student absences giving appropriate consideration to unique situations that may arise within their districts when students do not meet the minimum attendance requirements. Therefore, principals should allow students whose excessive absences are approved, regardless of whether these absences are lawful, unlawful or a combination thereof, to make up work missed to satisfy the 120-hour requirement.

Appeals procedures for denial of promotion/credit

Appeals of the principal's decision will be processed through the district's administrative functions (academic officer, district superintendent, respectively) with the board of education being the final appeal step.

Adopted 9/9/75; Revised 8/29/79, 2/28/84, 11/13/90, 6/25/91, 4/23/02, 9/28/04, 2/7/12, [8/13/24](#)

Legal references:

- A. S.C. Code, 1976, as amended:
 - 1. Section 59-65-90 - State Board to establish rules and regulations defining lawful and unlawful absences.

- B. State Board of Education Regulations:
 - 1. R-43-274-Student attendance.

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Code **JH-R** Issued **9/04/24**

In order to encourage and assist students in attending school regularly, the administration will administer the following intervention procedures.

Absences

The ~~attendance clerk~~ student information clerk and principal or his/her designee will routinely identify those students who have accumulated three consecutive or five total unlawful absences and identify these students as truant, habitually truant or chronically truant. An approved intervention plan form will be used to document parental involvement, the reasons for the unlawful absences, actions to be taken by the parent/legal guardian, actions to be taken by school personnel and results of those actions. The student's progress will be monitored and documented on the appropriate form.

The board of trustees designates the principal of the school to promptly approve or disapprove any student's absence of more than 10 days in order to award credit/promotion and to determine the lawful or unlawful status of an absence. A note from a doctor or approved medical provider may be required after a student has accumulated 10 absences in order to assist the principal in making that decision.

Unlawful absences

After three consecutive unlawful absences or total of five unlawful absences occur, school officials will do the following.

- Immediately intervene by identifying the reasons for the student's continued absences and develop a plan in conjunction with the student (if 12 or older) and parent/legal guardian to improve future attendance. Every reasonable effort will be made to meet with the parent/legal guardian to identify the reasons for the continued absence, to include phone calls, written messages and home visits, both during and after normal business hours.
- Hold a conference with the student (if 12 or older) and the parent/legal guardian for the purpose of improving the student's attendance. This conference will be documented on an approved intervention plan form and will include but is not limited to the following.
 - Reasons for the unlawful absences.
 - Actions to be taken by the parent/legal guardian and student to resolve the cause of the unlawful absences.
 - Documentation of referrals to appropriate service providers and if available, alternative school and community-based programs.
 - Actions to be taken by school personnel.
 - Actions to be taken in the event unlawful absences continue.
 - Signature of the parent/legal guardian or evidence that attempts were made to involve the parent/legal guardian.
 - Signature of all school personnel that have been involved in developing the plan.

PAGE 2 - JH-R - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

- Results of the actions taken by the parent/legal guardian and school personnel.
- Addendum to the plans as needed.
- Guidelines for making revisions to the plan.

Designated school personnel will document any future actions taken and the result of actions taken throughout the school years as needed.

After the intervention plan is completed at the school level, if the student is unlawfully absent again, he/she will be immediately referred to the attendance supervisor with a copy of the intervention plan, attendance printout, student information screen, contact numbers and any documentation of efforts taken by the school to involve the student and/or his/her parent/legal guardian.

If the parent/legal guardian does not respond to attempts to be involved in the intervention process, a referral to the attendance supervisor will be made after five business days.

After 10 lawful absences, unlawful absences or a combination of the two, the principal of the school will approve or disapprove each succeeding absence. A medical note will be required to assist the principal in making that decision. The principal may decide to not include those absences that are medically excused as a part of the 10 total absences provided the medical excuses are not deemed excessive (less than 10).

The attendance supervisor will refer parents/legal guardians of students who are five through 11 years of age to family court only after an intervention plan has been completed and the student accumulates two additional unlawful absences. Those students who are 12 through 16 and/or their parents/legal guardians will also be referred to family court only after an intervention plan has been completed and the student accumulates two additional unlawful absences. Students and/or parent/legal guardians who are already under a school attendance order will also be referred to family court only after an intervention plan is completed.

In addition, the principal or his/her designee will be responsible for implementing and expediting the homebound program for students experiencing a prolonged illness or injury requiring them to be absent from school.

Procedures for approving/disapproving absences

Late entrance

Students are expected to attend school for the full year beginning with the first day of school. For students who enter school after the first 10 days (five days for semester classes) and whose reasons for failing to attend are not accepted according to board policy, credit will be withheld.

Transfers from out-of-state or district

If a student begins school in another state or district and transfers into the school district, the following rules will be observed.

- Rules prevailing in the former school system will be considered.
- Prorate application of South Carolina attendance policies may be used.

Field trips

Students may be permitted to miss class to participate in approved field trips.

PAGE 3 - JH-R - STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Early dismissal

School principals are required to schedule competitive events at times that will not conflict with the instructional day of the school. However, there may be times when tournaments and playoffs will require students to miss class in order to participate. Lawful absences for these purposes are not to exceed five during the school year. No student may be excused from class for practice or team meetings

Suspension

In-school suspensions will not count as absences. Out-of-school suspensions will count as lawful absences.

Routine scheduled visits for dental/medical/mental health

Students who require routine periodic visits to their orthodontist, dentist, physician, mental health specialist, health department specialist and other health-related professional should schedule their appointments at other than instructional time. If such visits are required during the school day, they will be scheduled at varying times. Lawful absences for these purposes are not to exceed five during the school year.

Late buses

Students who are late to class or school due to tardy arrival of school buses will not be counted absent or tardy.

Court appearances

Student absences resulting from required court appearances will be considered as lawful.

These regulations apply to all students in grades K-12. Secondary attendance will be maintained on a class by class basis.

Make-up work

Teachers will permit students to make-up work missed during an absence as long as the student makes appropriate arrangements with the teacher.

School principals will exert every realistic effort to provide assurance that these regulations are adhered to in a fair and consistent manner. Principals will place special emphasis on coordinating implementation affecting students within the same family.

Issued 10/9/84; Revised 11/13/90, 4/23/02, 3/25/03, 9/28/04, [7/30/24](#)

RELEASED TIME FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

Code **JHCB-R** Issued **4/027/24**

The following administrative rule applies to released time for religious instruction programs.

School and student

Elementary school, middle school and high school students may be excused for religious instruction only upon receipt of written request from a parent or guardian.

School officials will set dates and time for absences for religious instruction.

Released time for religious instruction may only occur during non-instructional time.

No public funds will be used to promote or support religious instruction.

District faculty and staff may not promote program attendance through encouragement, coercion or other means.

Students' records will not document grades or credit for religious instruction.

Religious instruction

The religious instruction must be under the sponsorship of a recognized religious organization or group.

The board is to receive a report of all religious organizations requesting approval under these procedures.

To consider the requests of parents and to secure appropriate information from the religious organizations, a written application must be submitted by the religious organization to the district annually and must include the following.

- anticipated starting and ending dates for the program
- vacation dates
- name of church or religious organization
- location and address of the program site
- requested grade levels for religious instruction
- names of schools from which students will be drawn
- description of the organization's experience with released time programs
- statement assuring that the religious organization will state on any correspondence that the program is sponsored by the church or religious organization and not by the district
- statement assuring that the religious organization will assume the full financial responsibility for all aspects of the program, including transportation
- statement assuring that the religious organization is solely responsible for the supervision and security of students from the time of release to the time of return to district schools

PAGE 2 – JHCB-R - RELEASED TIME FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

- statement that the religious organization will provide proof of liability insurance coverage to include supervision, safety and transportation of students to and from the program, including at all times when students are not on school property, and that the religious organization will indemnify and hold harmless the district, its agents and employees from any and all liability arising from any aspect of the operation of the program
- name, phone number and signature of contact person

Applications must be received by the superintendent at least two months prior to the requested starting date.

Once an application is approved by the district, students must register for the course and a copy of the registration with a signed parent's request form must be filed in the appropriate school office.

A list of those students who attend released time instruction will be forwarded to the school principal weekly.

No individual connected with any religious organization will be permitted to promote student participation by directly contacting students on school grounds or by involving students in the released time program to recruit other students on school grounds.

Safe passage from the school to the released time program site and back to the school will be the responsibility of the organization sponsoring the released time classes.

No released time classes for religious instruction may be held on any school property.

The ~~Chief Officer of Instruction~~ ~~director of secondary education~~ will receive reports each semester from the religious organization and from the school(s) involved in the released time program. These reports will provide such information as the number students attending, assessment of program implementation and any operational concern.

The district reserves the right to deny approval for any applications that are not consistent with the requirements outlined in this policy and administrative rule. The district further reserves the right to withdraw approval for any programs that fail to operate consistently with the requirements outlined in this policy and administrative rule.

Issued 10/26/99; Revised 4/23/02, 7/30/24

SCHOOL-RELATED STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Code **JICEA** Issued **2/128/24**

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for student publications.

The board sanctions student publications as long as students are willing to accept the responsibilities of the freedoms of speech and of the press. The board or its designee will make rules as to time and place for distribution of such publications and any other regulations necessary to assure that student publications do not infringe on the rights of others.

The designated sponsor(s) of any officially recognized school-sanctioned and school-financed publication (e.g., newspaper, yearbook, literary magazine, et al.) will assume the initial responsibility of screening and editing all materials earmarked for publication. Although journalism students should be given meaningful editorial latitude, the sponsor(s) retains the inherent obligation to delete any article or comment likely to create substantial disruption of, or significant interference with, school activities.

Any student objecting to a sponsor's exercise of discretion in this regard should bring the objection to the attention of the sponsor in writing. The school principal will hold a conference to discuss the complaints with the complainant(s), the sponsor and the principal. It is the principal's responsibility to decide the matter in close consultation with the appropriate assistant superintendent-academic officer, the district superintendent and legal counsel.

Adopted 6/10/75; Revised 4/23/02, 2/7/12, 8/13/24