



Clara Byrd Baker Elementary School

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Michael Hurley Principal
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Dear Clara Byrd Baker Families,

Your child's regular and timely attendance is an important first step to academic success. In support of this, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has made changes to definitions and requirements related to absenteeism and school actions after excessive unexcused absences.

VDOE defines "chronic absenteeism" as missing at least 10% of the school year for any reason. As our school year is 180 days, a student is considered "chronically absent" if he/she misses 18 or more school days for any reason.

Additionally, VDOE has required the use and reporting of Attendance Plans, Attendance Conferences, and Referrals to Court as a result of excessive unexcused absences. The Code of Virginia defines "unexcused absence" as any absence *where: 1) the student misses his scheduled instructional school day in its entirety; and 2) no indication has been received by school personnel within three days of the absence that the student's parent is aware and supports the absence, or the parent provides a reason for the absence that is unacceptable to the school administration.* In accordance with new reporting requirements from the Virginia Department of Education, our school division will continue to be adhering to the following procedures:

- Attendance Letters will be issued when a student has accumulated five or more absences for any reason.
- Attendance Improvement Plans will be created for students who have five or more unexcused absences.
- Attendance Meetings will be scheduled with parents of students with six or more unexcused absences.
- Excessive unexcused student absences will result in a referral to court for the student and his/her parent.

Given the above changes and new guidance from VDOE, our school division is reviewing current policies and procedures with respect to student attendance, with the expectation for changes effective in 2018-2019. It is important both to comply with the Commonwealth's requirements and provide consistent expectations and support for students. We will communicate our school division's updated Attendance Supports and Guidelines for 2018-2019 after it has been completed.

Thank you for helping your child to attend school on a regular and timely basis.

Sincerely,

Michael Hurley