

Instant Alert

Galax City Public Schools has introduced SchoolMessenger, a system that provides emergency notification services for K-12 Education. The SchoolMessenger service will complement current emergency preparedness procedures and is intended to reinforce the district's commitment to provide prompt emergency information regarding their children.

The system is programmed to call the primary phone number of parents in the event of an emergency. SchoolMessenger is capable of sending personalized voice messages to thousands of parents within minutes.

This system will not replace current modes of school communication. The Principals are still accessible in person and by phone and schools will continue to send home paper-based communication regarding academic performance, attendance, activity schedules, etc.

Parents are encouraged to review the Emergency Contact Forms carefully to be sure all telephone and email information is up to date and accurate. Two emergency contacts from each family are entered into the notification database, which is automatically and regularly updated throughout the year so that it is always emergency-ready. If at any time contact information changes, parents are advised to notify the school immediately so that records can be updated.

Student Absences/Excuses/Dismissals

Attendance Policy

A. Generally

Students are expected to be in school every day for the entire instructional day. Valid parent notes of explanation for a student's absence will be necessary for absences which are not verified by a medical doctor's statement, if such absences are to be evaluated as excused. The principal or his designee will determine if an absence is to be excused or unexcused.

B. Definitions

Absent means a student not being in attendance in regularly scheduled classes. Approved school-related activities do not count as an absence.

Present means a student being in attendance in regularly scheduled classes.

Tardy means a student not being in his/her assigned class when the class begins.

Early dismissal means a student leaving class or school early.

Excused absences: (The following are excused absences until the school-based attendance committee prohibits further "excused" absences).

1. An illness or incapacitating condition of the student or of immediate family member which requires the temporary help of the student. A written parental explanation is required.

2. A death in the immediate family. (Parents, step-parents, guardians, grandparents, brother/sister, step-brother/sister, aunt/uncle, husband/wife, child, or other relative living in the same household).
3. Recognized religious holidays/events. Parents must apply in writing to the principal ten days prior for a student to be excused. Such applications must include a statement from the church.
4. Required court appearance. A student may be excused from school for a required court appearance. A written note from appropriate authorities must be provided.
5. Approved school-related activities.
6. Extenuating circumstances. If approved by the principal (should be pre-arranged).

Unexcused absences: Any absence not verified by a doctor's statement and not fitting the six definitions of an excused absence listed above. Absences for hunting, fishing, out-of-school suspension, or other non-educational activities are unexcused.

The six definitions of absence will be recognized through eight (8) days of absence. Once any student has missed eight (8) days, a medical doctor's statement is required for absences to be excused.

C. Make-Up Work

Upon return to class after an excused absence, students shall be informed of the work they missed, the teacher shall assign the make-up work, and determine when the work will be completed (generally three days). All graded work such as tests or quizzes that must be done at school shall be completed before or after school, during lunch, or during study hall. At no time is a student to miss additional class time to make up missed work.

The above make-up work procedure will apply to excused absences including illness, early dismissals, work missed for sports activities, field trips, and in-school suspension. Students with unexcused absences will be required to make up all work. Students will be assigned, by the administration, to after school tutoring and/or Saturday school until all work is complete.

D. Follow-Up of Absences

1. Teachers will keep an accurate record of daily absences by students.
2. A reasonable effort shall be made to contact a parent/guardian of each absent student every day, and to obtain an explanation for the student's absence, where there is no indication that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence. A log will be kept of call attempts.

3. After three (3) unexcused absences, the family will be invited to the school. The purpose of the visit is to allow family, teachers, and administration the opportunity to forge a relationship that will support the student and his/her attendance at school.
4. If a fourth (4th) unexcused absence occurs, the school administrators will make a home visit. At school, a mentor teacher will be assigned to make daily contact with the student. If appropriate, a peer mentor may also be assigned to the student.
5. Upon a fifth (5th) unexcused absence, and in accordance with Virginia law, a parent conference will be scheduled to develop a plan to encourage student attendance.
6. If a sixth (6th) unexcused absence occurs, the student and family will be referred to a community services team for assistance.
7. If absenteeism continues, the principal will refer the case to court.
8. Parents will receive a letter anytime their child misses three (3) days of school. A letter will be sent again if the child misses five (5) days of school and again with eight (8) days of absences.
9. If a student is absent for more than eight (8) days and does not have a doctor's statement for the additional absences, the procedure for three (3) unexcused absences will be followed. The family will be invited to school for a conference.

Additional absences will be considered unexcused and the procedures listed in (4.-7.) above will be followed.

E. Tardies and Early Dismissals

The student shall have his/her parents or guardians contact the school or send a note stating the reason for tardiness or for early dismissals. Excessive tardiness and early dismissals will be investigated and appropriate disciplinary action will be administered. Parents will receive a letter when their student has five (5) tardies or early dismissals. If students have ten (10) tardies or early dismissals, a letter will be sent home and the procedure for three (3) unexcused absences will be followed. The procedures listed in (4.-7.) above will be followed for any additional tardies or early dismissals.

Acceptable Computer Use

The School Board provides a computer system, including the Internet, to promote educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation and communication. The term computer system includes hardware, software, data, communication lines and devices, terminals, printers, CDROM devices, tape drives, servers, mainframe and personal computers, the Internet and other internal or external networks.

All use of the Division's computer system must be (1) in support of education and/or research or, (2) for legitimate school business. Use of the computer system is a privilege, not a right. Any communication or material used on the computer system, including electronic mail or other files deleted from a user's account may be monitored or read by school officials.

The Division Superintendent shall establish administrative procedures, for the School Board's approval, containing the appropriate uses, ethics and protocol for the computer system. The procedures shall include:

1. A prohibition against use by division employees and students of the division's computer equipment and communications services for sending, receiving, viewing or downloading illegal material via the Internet;
2. Provisions, including the selection and operation of a technology protection measure for the division's computers having Internet access to filter or block Internet access through such computers, that seek to prevent access to
 - a. child pornography as set out in *Va. Code* § 18.2-374.1:1 or as defined in 18 *U.S.C.* § 2256;
 - b. obscenity as defined by *Va. Code* § 18.2-372 or 18 *U.S.C.* § 1460; and
 - c. material that the school division deems to be harmful to juveniles as defined in *Va. Code* § 18.2-390, material that is harmful to minors as defined in 47 *U.S.C.* §254(h)(7)(G), and material that is otherwise inappropriate for minors;
3. provisions establishing that the technology protection measure is enforced during any use of the Division's computers by minors;
4. Provisions establishing that the online activities of minors will be monitored;
- 5 Provisions designed to protect the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
6. Provisions designed to prevent unauthorized online access by minors, including "hacking" and other unlawful activities by minors online; and
7. Provisions prohibiting the unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and
8. A component of Internet safety for students that is integrated in the division's instructional program.

Use of the School Division's computer system shall be consistent with the educational or instructional mission or administrative function of the Division as well as the varied instructional needs, learning styles, abilities and developmental levels of students. The Division's computer system is not a public forum.

Each teacher, administrator, student and parent/guardian of each student shall sign the Acceptable Computer System Use Agreement, GAB-E1/IIBEA-E2, before using the Division's computer system. The failure of any student, teacher or administrator to follow the terms of the Agreement, this policy or accompanying regulation may result in loss of computer system privileges, disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

The School Board is not responsible for any information that may be lost, damaged or unavailable when using the computer system or for any information retrieved via the Internet.

Furthermore, the School Board will not be responsible for any unauthorized charges or fees resulting from access to the computer system.

The Division Superintendent shall submit to the Virginia Department of Education this policy and accompanying regulation biennially.

All use of the Galax City School Division's computer system shall be consistent with the School Board's goal of promoting educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation and communication. The term computer system includes hardware, software, data, communication lines and devices, terminals, printers, CD-ROM devices, tape drives, servers, mainframe and personal computers, the Internet and any other internal or external network.

Computer System Use-Terms and Conditions:

1. Acceptable Use. Access to the Division's computer system shall be (1) for the purposes of education or research and be consistent with the educational objectives of the Division or (2) for legitimate school business.
2. Privilege. The use of the Division's computer system is a privilege, not a right.
3. Unacceptable Use. Each user is responsible for his or her actions on the computer system. Prohibited conduct includes:
 - using the network for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other contracts, or transmitting any material in violation of any federal, state or local law.
 - sending, receiving, viewing or downloading illegal material via the computer system.
 - unauthorized downloading of software.
 - downloading copyrighted material for unauthorized use.
 - using the computer system for private financial or commercial gain.
 - wastefully using resources, such as file space.
 - gaining unauthorized access to resources or entities.
 - posting material authorized or created by another without his or her consent.
 - using the computer system for commercial or private advertising.
 - submitting, posting, publishing or displaying any obscene, profane, threatening, illegal or other inappropriate material.

- using the computer system while access privileges are suspended or revoked.
 - vandalizing the computer system, including destroying data by creating or spreading viruses or by other means.
4. Network Etiquette. Each user is expected to abide by generally accepted rules of etiquette, including the following:
- Be polite.
 - Users shall not forge, intercept or interfere with electronic mail messages.
 - Use appropriate language. The use of obscene, lewd, profane, threatening or disrespectful language is prohibited.
 - Users shall not post personal contact information, including names, home, school or work addresses, telephone numbers, or photographs, about themselves or others.
 - Users shall respect the computer system's resource limits.
 - Users shall not post chain letters or download large files.
 - Users shall not use the computer system to disrupt others.
 - Users shall not read, modify or delete data owned by others.
5. Liability. The School Board makes no warranties for the computer system it provides. The School Board shall not be responsible for any damages to the user from use of the computer system, including loss of data, non-delivery or missed delivery of information, or service interruptions. The School Division denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the computer system. The user agrees to indemnify the School Board for any losses, costs or damages incurred by the School Board relating to or arising out of any violation of these procedures.
6. Security. Computer system security is a high priority for the school division. If any user identifies a security problem, the user shall notify the building principal or system administrator immediately. All users shall keep their passwords confidential and shall follow computer virus protection procedures.
7. Vandalism. Intentional destruction of any part of the computer system through creating or downloading computer viruses or by any other means is prohibited.
8. Charges. The School Division assumes no responsibility for any unauthorized charges or fees as a result of using the computer system, including telephone or long distance charges.
9. Electronic Mail. The School Division's electronic mail system is owned and controlled by the School Division. The School Division may provide electronic mail to aid students and staff in fulfilling their duties and as an education tool. Electronic mail is not private. Students' electronic mail will be monitored. The

electronic mail of staff may be monitored and accessed by the School Division. Unauthorized access to an electronic mail account by any student or employee is prohibited. Users shall be held personally liable for the content of any electronic message they create. Downloading any file attached to an electronic message is prohibited unless the user is certain of that message's authenticity and the nature of the file.

10. Enforcement. Software will be installed on the division's computers having Internet access to filter or block Internet access through such computers to child pornography and obscenity. The online activities of minors may also be monitored manually. Any violation of these regulations shall result in loss of computer system privileges and may also result in appropriate disciplinary action, as determined by School Board policy, or legal action.