ATTENDANCE

Philosophical Basis:

School administrators are required under state law to enforce compulsory school attendance laws. Regular attendance by students facilitates the development of the skills and knowledge to function in a modern democratic society.

Student Responsibilities are:

To take advantage of educational opportunities by attending all classes daily and on time.

To provide the school with an adequate explanation and appropriate documentation indicating the reason for an absence.

To promptly request make-up assignments for each excused absence.

Student Rights are:

To be informed of Board of Education policies and individual school rules regarding absenteeism and tardiness.

To appeal a decision pertaining to an absence.

To make up class work within a specified length of time when there is an excused absence.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is the belief of the Decatur City Board of Education that regular school attendance is important to all students and to the school system. It is further believed that course content and grading procedures should be structured so that regular attendance is necessary in order to successfully complete course requirements.

Subject to parental guidance, each student must be responsible for his/her own attendance. Administrators and teachers will make every effort to encourage regular attendance by students and to solicit assistance from parents and guardians in accomplishing this objective.

An absence is defined as non-attendance (except for in-school activities excused by school personnel) in a regularly scheduled class or activity regardless of the reason for such non-attendance.

Parents or guardians shall send a note of explanation to the school the day the child returns to school. Principals may request a physician’s statement if circumstances warrant.

Excused Absences

A student shall be excused for absences from school for the following reasons:
1. Illness.
2. Legal requirements.
3. Emergencies approved by the principal.
4. Special circumstances with prior approval by the principal.

Unexcused Absences

Absence for reasons other than those listed above as “excused” shall be considered as unexcused.

Make-Up Work

If a student is absent for any excused reason, it is the responsibility of the student to go to each teacher to make arrangements to make up missed work the day the student returns to school. After the student returns to school, the student has two school days to make up missed work and turn in the work to the teacher, or the student will receive a grade of “zero” on missed work. Exceptions may be made for the following:
• the student has been under a doctor’s care (documentation must be provided);
• the student has had extenuating circumstances approved by the principal; or,
• when prior arrangements have been made with the principal.

For student absences in excess of two consecutive days, teachers will prepare missed assignments by request from a student or parent/guardian.

Students who are assigned to the Center for Alternatives to Suspension or the Center for Alternatives to Expulsion will be given the opportunity to attend daily, receive academic instruction, and receive full credit for work that is satisfactorily completed. Students who are suspended from these programs will not be allowed to make up missed work and will receive “0’s” for any missed assignments during this time.

Long-term assignments such as research papers, special projects, etc., are due on or before the due date even if the student is absent on the date the assignment is due. In unusual cases, extenuating circumstances will be given consideration.

**Reporting Absences (High School)**

On the student’s report card in the column to the right of the grade is listed the number of absences from that class for that particular grading period. The figure includes absences from class for all reasons except school related functions. For example, absences from school for illness, legal matters or other reasons are shown. Absences shown here may be either excused or unexcused. Should you have questions, please call the school at your earliest convenience.

Absences for school related purposes will not be shown. Examples of school related absences could include athletic trips, band or choral trips, academic competitions and other similar functions. Absences for school related activities will not appear on the student’s cumulative record.

Students out of class for attendance in an alternative setting will be counted as present. Examples of alternative placements include In-School Suspension, the Center for Alternatives to Suspension, and the Center for Alternatives to Expulsion.

**High School Student Pregnancy**

High school students who become pregnant may request to attend Horizon High School if they or their parents/guardians feel the pregnancy would interfere with normal school activities. Homebound services for pregnant students are available only in cases of medical necessity.

**Alabama’s Compulsory Attendance Law**

Section 16-28-3, Code of Alabama, 1975. “Every child between the ages of 7 and 16 shall be required to attend a public school, private school, church school or be instructed by a competent private tutor for the entire length of the school term in every scholastic year…”

Section 16-28-12, Code of Alabama, 1975. Requires that any parent/guardian who enrolls a student in school be responsible for the student’s regular attendance and proper conduct.

Section 12-15-33, Code of Alabama, 1975. Provides that a parent may be fined $500.00 and receive up to one year of hard labor if convicted of parental neglect; contributing to the delinquency of a minor; or if the child is found to be a child in need of supervision. They may also be required to pay restitution to the Board of Education.

Section 16-28-16 (b), Code of Alabama, 1975. Each child who is enrolled in a public school shall be subject to the attendance and truancy provisions except that any parent or parents, guardian or guardians who voluntarily enrolls their child in public school, who feel that it is in the best interest of that child
shall have the right to withdraw the child at any time prior to the current minimum compulsory attendance age.

**Attendance Requirements**

Any student enrolled in kindergarten who accumulates more than 10 unexcused absences in a semester is subject to forfeiting his/her enrollment. Partial day absences will be cumulative in computing this total.

Any student enrolled in grades 1-8 who accumulates more than 10 unexcused absences during the year is subject to being retained in the same grade the next school year. Partial day absences will be cumulative in computing this total.

Any student enrolled in grades 1-8 is required to return with a doctor’s note explaining each absence after the student’s tenth absence or the parent must schedule a conference with the principal or designee within two school days after the student returns to explain each absence. Failure to do so will result in future absences being unexcused. A student who is unexcused will not be allowed to make up missed work and will receive a grade of “zero” on missed work for the unexcused absences.

Any student enrolled in grades 9-12 who accumulates more than 10 unexcused absences in any course or subject in any semester is subject to losing credit for the semester’s work in that course or subject.

Any student enrolled in grades 9-12 who accumulates 10 excused absences in any course or subject in any semester is required to return with a doctor’s note explaining each absence after the student’s tenth absence in any semester or the parent must schedule a conference with the principal or designee within two school days after the student returns to explain each absence. Failure to do so will result in future absences being unexcused. A student who is unexcused will not be allowed to make up missed work and will receive a grade of “zero” on missed work for the unexcused absences.

School-sponsored or sanctioned activities are exempt and do not count toward the total absences allowed; however, arrangements must be made for making up work as required for excused absences.

A student who has been retained or who has lost credit(s) because of noncompliance with attendance policies shall receive a notation of Noncompliance Attendance (NCA) on his/her report card and cumulative record for that semester or year. The principal shall make the determination of retention or loss of credit due to noncompliance with attendance policies (NCA). In such cases, a parent or guardian and/or student may request a hearing with the Principal and Superintendent, or his designee, to appeal such loss of credit or retention. This request must be in writing, dated and signed, within five days of the notification of the loss of credit. Failure of parent or guardian and/or student to request a hearing shall be sufficient basis for sustaining the loss of credit or retention.

Credit which is lost because of absences will be made up in the same manner as academic failures.

In accordance with Act No. 93-368, the Superintendent or his/her designee is required to notify the Alabama Department of Public Safety when a student who has a driver’s license or a learner’s permit accumulates fifteen (15) total or ten (10) consecutive absences. School attendance for persons between the ages of 15-19 is mandatory for those who wish to retain their driver’s license or learner’s permit. Failure to attend school regularly will result in the forfeiture of the driver’s license or learner’s permit. Students who wish to obtain a driver’s license or learner’s permit must have certification from their principal that they are in school and in regular attendance.

**Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program**

The Early Warning Program is a joint effort between the Decatur City Board of Education and the Juvenile Court. It is designed to
reduce truancy and the number of student dropouts. The format of the program consists of a group session held once each week in the Morgan County Courthouse in Decatur. The purpose of Early Warning is to share information concerning the legal requirements and school board policies pertaining to attendance—thus, an early warning.

**Truancy Definition**

A parent, guardian, or other person having charge of any child officially enrolled in Alabama public schools (K-12) shall explain in writing the cause of any and every absence of the child no later than two (2) school days following return to school. A failure to furnish such explanation shall be evidence of the child being truant each day he/she is absent. The child shall also be deemed truant for any absence determined by the principal to be unexcused.

An attempt should be made to notify the parent/guardian when a student has been determined to be truant.

On the student’s third unexcused absence, the parent, guardian, or person having control of the child shall attend a conference with the principal or his/her designee and/or participate in the Early Warning Program provided by the juvenile court. Attendance at one of these conferences shall be mandatory except where prior arrangements have been made or an emergency exists. Failure to appear at the school conference and/or to appear at the Early Warning Program shall result in the filing of a complaint/petition against the parent under (Code of Alabama 1975), s16-28-12 (c) (failure to cooperate), or s12-15-13 (contributing to truancy) or a truancy against the child, whichever is appropriate.

On the student’s fifth unexcused absence, a complaint/petition against the child and/or parent/guardian will be filed in Juvenile Court.

**Check-Ins and Check-Outs**

Any student who arrives after school has begun must go to the office of the principal and check-in. Student attendance at school is essential to academic success. Certain educational activities that occur during an absence cannot be replicated by make-up assignments. Parents are encouraged to make dental, medical, and other appointments for their children after school hours or during the summer vacation and holiday periods.

Students who have a valid need to leave school before the dismissal bell shall be checked out at the office of the principal. Such student must be signed out by the parent or guardian. Notes or telephones call shall not be accepted for purposes of check-out of a student.

The principal has the responsibility of making decisions relating to check-outs. Such decision shall be made in the best interest of the student when emergencies or unusual circumstances arise.