

# Back to the Basics

Derezma Little, School Counselor, SWEGA  
& Sonia Padial, School Social Worker, Pickett & SWEGA

My primary goal: to help students access their education by eliminating barriers

## Things I do as a School Social Worker...

- Liaison between student, family, school and community
- Connect families to resources
- Advocate for Students and Staff
- Family Support
- Attendance Issues
- Mental Health Assessments
- Solution Focused counseling
- School Supplies
- Other

My Passion is understanding how trauma affects students/staff and seeing things through the lens of trauma informed care.

# It's the Law

North Carolina has a compulsory attendance law which means that children have to attend school.

## Article 26.

### Attendance.

#### Part 1. Compulsory Attendance.

##### § 115C-378. Children required to attend.

(a) Every parent, guardian or custodian in this State having charge or control of a child between the ages of seven and 16 years shall cause the child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session. Every parent, guardian, or custodian in this State having charge or control of a child under age seven who is enrolled in a public school in grades kindergarten through two shall also cause the child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session unless the child has withdrawn from school.

(b) No person shall encourage, entice or counsel any child of compulsory school age to be unlawfully absent from school. The parent, guardian, or custodian of a child shall notify the school of the reason for each known absence of the child, in accordance with local school board policy.

(c) The principal, superintendent, or a designee of the principal or superintendent shall have the right to excuse a child temporarily from attendance on account of sickness or other unavoidable cause that does not constitute unlawful absence as defined by the State Board of Education. The term "school" as used in this section includes all public schools and any nonpublic schools which have teachers and curricula that are approved by the State Board of Education.

(d) All nonpublic schools receiving and instructing children of compulsory school age shall be required to make, maintain, and render attendance records of those children and maintain the minimum curriculum standards required of public schools. If a nonpublic school refuses or neglects to make, maintain, and render required attendance records, attendance at that school shall not be accepted in lieu of attendance at the public school of the district to which the child shall be assigned. Instruction in a nonpublic school shall not be regarded as meeting the requirements of the law unless the courses of instruction run concurrently with the term of the public school in the district and extend for at least as long a term.

(e) The principal or the principal's designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of his or her child's excessive absences after the child has accumulated three unexcused absences in a school year. After not more than six unexcused absences, the principal or the principal's designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian by mail that he or she may be in violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under the established attendance policies of the State and local boards of education. Once the parents are notified, the school attendance counselor shall work with the child and the child's family to analyze the causes of the absences and determine steps, including adjustment of the school program or obtaining supplemental services, to eliminate the problem. The attendance counselor may request that a law enforcement officer accompany him or her if the attendance counselor believes that a home visit is necessary.

(f) After 10 accumulated unexcused absences in a school year, the principal or the principal's designee shall review any report or investigation prepared under G.S. 115C-381 and shall confer with the student and the student's parent, guardian, or custodian, if possible, to determine whether the parent, guardian, or custodian has received notification pursuant to this section and made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal or the principal's designee determines that the parent, guardian, or custodian has not made a good faith effort to comply with the law, the principal shall notify the district attorney and the director of social

# Excused Absences

1. Student illness/Injury
2. Isolation ordered by the local health officer/department
3. Death in the immediate family.
4. Medical or dental appointment.
5. Court Proceedings/student involvement
6. Religious Observances
7. Valid Educational Opportunity–MUST BE PREAPPROVED
8. Pregnancy of student
9. Active duty member of military -Special circumstances surrounding deployment/Superintendent



# 16

# 10

After 16 unexcused absences—Principal can withhold promotion

After 10 unexcused absences-Parents can be taken to Truancy Court

## Excessive Tardies/Checkouts

5 Unexcused Tardies=1 unexcused absence

5 Unexcused Checkouts = 1 Unexcused absence



# Communication is Key

Communication about attendance must be in writing.

Written note from parent

Dojo communication with teacher

Doctor/Dentist Note



# Attendance Mediation

## School Attendance Mediation

School Official: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Student/School: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

School Official reviewed and/or provided me with a copy of the following items:

\_\_\_ Current Attendance Summary

\_\_\_ 3 Day Attendance Letter

\_\_\_ 6 Day Attendance Letter

\_\_\_ 10 Day Attendance Letter

\_\_\_ Tardy Letter

\_\_\_ Report Card/Grades

\_\_\_ Reviewed/Provided LexCS Attendance Policy

\_\_\_ Reviewed/Provided the NC Compulsory Attendance Law

\_\_\_ Requesting student/parent to provide doctor's notes when student is absent for remainder of school year.

\_\_\_ Review LCS Policy that states that doctor's notes/excuses are required to be returned to the school within 3 days of the absence. For example, if a student returns to school on Tuesday, the parent has until Friday to submit the excuse to the front office. Parents can call the front office to ensure that these notes were received within the required time frame and/or hand deliver the notes themselves.

\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian understand that if their child is sent home sick they must still send in a note/excuse when the child returns the next day. Notes should be specific indicating the date and the reason the child was sent home. Notes must be sent within three days of the absence.

\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian understands that the social worker does not want to pursue legal action and a mediation/conference is this social worker's attempt at avoiding court. Future unexcused absences could result in this social worker pursuing legal action.

\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian understands that it is imperative that he/she communicate with school officials if there is a need for the child to be absent from school. Ms. Sonia Padial at 336-596-2404 or can be reached by email at [spadial@lexcs.org](mailto:spadial@lexcs.org). If she is unavailable, I will ask to speak with another school official.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Official



# Truancy Court

- I do not like going to court for any reason.
- If i have to take a family to truancy court, I have tried everything possible to avoid it
- Truancy Court is about putting supports in place to help the children and family so the children can attend school.
- The judge can and has put parents in jail for not complying with state attendance laws and/or disregarding her orders.

# Parent involvement w/ your child's school is important!

- I.e. attend parent/teacher conferences,
- check Class Dojo or all of your child's school communication platforms.
- Communicate w/ your child's teacher.
- Try to do weekly check-ins w/ your child's teacher
- Please do not wait until parent/teacher conferences or wait close to the end of the year to request academic services- IEP, 504, etc.



Actively engage in your child's learning.

- ★ When our scholars' parents are involved in their child's school & school activities, the Students academically improve!

The background is a solid pink color. In the top right corner, there are several overlapping geometric shapes: a light pink triangle pointing down and to the left, a darker pink triangle pointing up and to the left, and a dark pink square partially visible on the right edge.

Build

RELATIONSHIPS

w/ your child's

teacher!

- School Counselors & School Social Workers can assist with mental health resources for individual and family counseling. Please contact us w/ this request-

# How can We help?

## **Charles England Elementary**

336.242.1552

### **Counselor**

Hannah Hewett, [hhewett@lexcs.org](mailto:hhewett@lexcs.org)

### **School Social Worker**

Chevonna Warren, [cwarren@lexcs.org](mailto:cwarren@lexcs.org)

## **Pickett Elementary**

336.242.1546

### **Counselor**

### **Vacant**

### **School Social Worker**

Sonia Padial, [spadial@lexcs.org](mailto:spadial@lexcs.org)

## **South Lexington School & Developmental Center**

336.242.1544

### **Counselor**

Staley Burkhart, [sburkhart@lexcs.org](mailto:sburkhart@lexcs.org)

### **School Social Worker**

Chevonna Warren, [cwarren@lexcs.org](mailto:cwarren@lexcs.org)

## **Southwest Global Academy**

336.242.1548

### **Counselor**

Derezma Little, [dlittle@lexcs.org](mailto:dlittle@lexcs.org)

### **School Social Worker**

Sonia Padial, [spadial@lexcs.org](mailto:spadial@lexcs.org)

## **Lexington Middle**

336.242.1567

### **Counselors**

Jhonnies Holloway, [jholloway@lexcs.org](mailto:jholloway@lexcs.org)

Olivia McMillian, [omcmillian@lexcs.org](mailto:omcmillian@lexcs.org)

### **School Social Worker**

Angela Whiteside, [awhiteside@lexcs.org](mailto:awhiteside@lexcs.org)

Cheyenne Sluder, [csluder@lexcs.org](mailto:csluder@lexcs.org)

## **Lexington High School**

336.242.1574

### **Counselor**

Tonya Withers, [twithers@lexcs.org](mailto:twithers@lexcs.org)

Darcia Waller, [dwaller@lexcs.org](mailto:dwaller@lexcs.org)

Latarra Loftin, [lloftin@lexcs.org](mailto:lloftin@lexcs.org)

### **School Social Worker**

Angela Whiteside, [awhiteside@lexcs.org](mailto:awhiteside@lexcs.org)