

Tracking Daily Attendance on Remote Days in 2020-21

State Board of Education Policy (2008):

“A student is considered to be ‘in attendance’ if present at his/her assigned school, or an activity sponsored by the school (e.g., field trip), for at least half of the regular school day.”

A remote student can be considered as being ‘in attendance’ on a particular day if the total time spent on one or more of the following activities equals at least half the school day.



Synchronous virtual classes are live classes that are streamed real time to students using a videoconferencing platform like Google Meets, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.

Synchronous virtual meetings may be with a teacher, counselor, social worker, paraprofessional, etc. using a videoconferencing platform or via telephone. They may be homeroom opportunities, daily routine check-ins, or other synchronous conversations.

Time logged in electronic systems can be used to identify *any time over and above the synchronous virtual classes and meetings* that the student may have participated in during the school day.

Assignment submission/completion time can be determined by the teacher by starting with an estimate of time it will take for a typical student to submit/complete that assignment, and using that estimate to gauge the attendance time for the day that should be allotted to each student.

Notes:

- If a student is absent on a given day (either in-person or remote), they cannot make up for that absence on another day.
- Districts should track membership and attendance *separately* for a student’s in-person vs remote days.

Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ pertains to data collection and state reporting of attendance data. Regular school attendance and overall student safety and well-being are vital for laying a foundation for success during the school year. See Addendum #14 for guidance regarding support student attendance and engagement during hybrid or remote learning.

1. *Is attendance in synchronous virtual classes required by the CSDE for a student to be counted as being “in attendance” on remote days?*

No. The CSDE does not require that a student be present in synchronous virtual classes to be counted as “in attendance” on remote days for state reporting purposes. This flexibility is designed to allow students and families who may have difficulty attending synchronous virtual classes to demonstrate presence through other means (e.g., meetings with teachers, assignment submission/completion). Students receiving special education or support under a Section 504 Plan may participate in classes in a manner determined appropriate by the student’s planning and placement team or Section 504 Team.

2. *Can a district require that students attend synchronous virtual classes in order to be considered as “in attendance”?*

No. While the district may adopt such a general expectation, the CSDE expects districts to allow for legitimate exceptions where a student may be unable to attend synchronous virtual classes (e.g., parent work-life responsibilities, power outage, Internet bandwidth, documented disability).

3. *Does a student need to complete some time in all four approaches, every day, to be considered as “in attendance”?*

No. For example, one remote student may meet the ½ day threshold entirely with synchronous classes without submitting/completing any assignment, while another remote student may meet the ½ day threshold entirely based on assignment submission/completion without attending even a single synchronous class. The total time spent on all four components on a remote day should equal at least ½ day for the student to be reported as “in attendance” for state reporting. Students with disabilities may have modified/flexible attendance requirements as part of their IEP, Learning Model IEP Implementation Plan, or Section 504 plan.

4. *When should attendance be recorded for remote days?*

Since students may demonstrate presence through asynchronous methods (e.g., assignment submission/completion) at any time during the day including after school hours, and given that some students may not be able to participate in synchronous virtual classes, it is strongly recommended that attendance on remote days be recorded on the following day so all students have a chance to submit/complete work.

5. *Can a student who otherwise should have attended school in-person on a given day, be permitted to participate remotely and counted as being “in attendance” for that specific day?*

Yes, but within reason. Knowing which students will attend in-person or remotely on any given school day is critical for educators to plan instruction and for the school building to effectively manage health and safety protocols. However, there are legitimate situations when an in-person student can be permitted to switch to learning remotely for one or more school days. For example, the student may need to quarantine for two weeks due to potential contact with a positive COVID case, or the student may have a concerning symptom making it reasonable for the parent to determine that it is best to keep the student home for monitoring. In such situations, the district may authorize a switch to remote learning for that student for a specific day or days; such a student who meets the ½ day attendance threshold on those remote days can be reported as “in attendance.” Such flexibility will allow the student to remain engaged with the learning. However, the CSDE recommends that districts construe this flexibility narrowly and establish clear protocols for situations that warrant such a shift (e.g., district required quarantining, written authorization from parent regarding illness symptoms). Districts may choose to offer this flexibility to students for reasons beyond health/safety and illness symptoms; however, in those instances, districts are strongly advised to establish clear, quantifiable limits on such flexibility (e.g., no more than three instances during the year) so as to not create a situation where students are choosing the days they wish to attend school in-person.

6. A district has learned that a student is in a different town, state, or country but is still participating in remote learning offered by the district. Is this permissible? Can the student remain enrolled in the district?

The increase in COVID-19 cases in Connecticut and the higher incidence of remote learning models will affect families, their ability to access childcare, and sometimes their location. For example, parents may have to rely on family members in a different town, or even state, to care for their children. Families may struggle to locate childcare, or face issues with finding a reliable residence. The choices families must make to ensure their children are supervised while also engaged in educational opportunities has the potential to disproportionately affect Connecticut’s families with limited resources.

If a student is temporarily attending school remotely from a location outside the usual school district for reasons related to the pandemic on any given day, and the family has expressed an intention to return to the school district or have the child continue residing in the district, the school district should maintain the student’s enrollment and allow for continued participation in remote learning. Attending school remotely in a location outside the district does not, in and of itself, mean that the student has not remained a legal resident of the district. Further, this may be a matter of equity for children whose families cannot afford to take time off or stay home to watch their children in their town of residence. Such a temporary move or use of short term childcare outside of the district should not interrupt a student’s education. In this pandemic, continuity of education and routines are critically important for our students.

Ultimately, if there are questions about residency, the district may conduct an investigation. School districts are encouraged to be thoughtful and are reminded that where a child is still residing in the district but not attending school, the district must implement its due process procedures and practices to ensure that the child starts attending school. The reporting of educational neglect must be the last resort in these situations. A district may wish to consult its own attorneys to seek advice on individual cases. If a school district denies school accommodations based on residency, the parent and student would have the hearing rights provided in C.G.S. Section 10-186. Additional information on residency disputes can be found in the [School Accommodations Guide for Parents and Guardians](#), Section C, page 4.

7. What constitutes presence in a synchronous, virtual class? Does presence need to be verified through video?

Synchronous virtual classes may be synchronous for the entire duration of the class (e.g., teacher lecture with class discussion); they may also be a combination of some synchronous time (e.g., opening lecture, closing review) coupled with some asynchronous time where students may disconnect from the live class and work independently (e.g., complete class assignments). A student can be deemed “remote-present” in a synchronous, virtual class if the student is present in the class (e.g., through video, audio, live chat, or other means) for any part of that class. Districts are recommended to not rely solely on video evidence to record a student as “remote-present” in synchronous virtual classes because students may prefer to have their video cameras off for a variety of reasons (e.g., low bandwidth and associated data costs, increased anxiety and stress, other personal reasons such as concerns about privacy).

8. If a student who is participating in-person or hybrid is assigned to remote instruction for a specific period for quarantine purposes, and the student is absent from remote instruction, should that absence be treated as excused or unexcused?

A student may participate remotely on a given day for a variety of reasons (e.g., quarantine period necessitated due to health reasons, entire district/school switched to remote instruction due to health conditions, parent opted into remote learning). Regardless of the reason why a student is remote on a given school day, the determination of whether an absence on that remote day is excused or unexcused should be made pursuant to CSDE’s [Guidelines for Excused and Unexcused Absences](#). Note that emergencies beyond the control of the student’s family can already serve as an acceptable “Level 2” reason (beyond the first 9 days) for a student’s absence to be considered excused; in 2020-21 school year, these emergencies may include new situations (e.g., device/connectivity issues) created by the construct of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.