

From: Chris Ford cford@bsfa.org
Subject: Attendance expectations and policies for Lab Wednesdays
Date: October 2, 2020 at 3:35 PM
To: All Students AllStudents@bsfa.org
Cc: ALL STAFF AllStaff@bsfa.org



Dear Students,

I am writing about shifting expectations from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) with regard to City Schools' Lab Wednesdays.

- Originally, it seemed the intent was to provide academic intervention (support) to students who needed it.
- Then it became apparent that the intent was for all students to attend on Wednesdays.
- Then, this week, we were notified that students were expected to attend for four hours (240 minutes) each Wednesday.
- Today I learned more, new information about how attendance would be recorded for these Wednesday sessions.

I am absolutely sure that these shifting expectations are frustrating and difficult for many. I sympathize with that perspective as there is more than a little frustration for the staff of BSA as well.

Nevertheless, we do answer to MSDE for their approval of our work with students as well as their approval of students meeting learning and participation standards.

Where are we today?

We will enter attendance for this past Wednesday to conform to the standards as we understood them on Monday. That is, attending 2 of the 3 sessions offered will count as attending for the entire day. We will take care of that adjustment where needed in the next few days.

Where will we be going forward?

I have been directed to provide a schedule of offerings that adds up to 240 minutes for each student by the of today. This is the schedule I will send to Central Office:

BSA Wednesday Schedule, v. 3

Time Purpose

9am-11am adult only meetings / Department meetings / collaborative planning /planning time

11am-12pm *Homework assistance / student consultation*

12-12:30pm Lunch

12:30-1:30pm *Academic intervention / Wednesday Workshop / arts / testing block 1*

1:30-2:30pm *Academic intervention / Wednesday Workshop / arts / testing block 2*

2:30-3:30pm *Academic intervention / Wednesday Workshop / arts / testing block 3*

3:30-4:30pm *Wednesday workshops - rotating set of at least 3 full-time teachers offering specialized sessions.*

5:30pm Teacher grades and attendance updated for previous week

Your attendance will be marked for any or all of the 5 sessions in italics.

If you attend 3 or more sessions (180+ minutes), you are considered present for the day.

If you attend any 2 sessions (120 minutes), you are considered present for ½ of the day

Also, some art departments have activities scheduled on Wednesdays as well. Attendance in those optional arts events is counted toward the 240 minute total as well.

What does this mean for you?

I want to be clear that, while these sessions may prove very valuable to you, **there are not grade penalties for absence.**

I also want to be clear that **your attendance does not appear on your transcript.**

Lastly, **these changes are a result of evolving MSDE requirements**—they are not driven by BCPS or BSA.

Please know that I understand that these shifts during the school year are really difficult for some of you. As a school, we are trying to adjust in a thoughtful way with your health and accomplishment in mind. These attendance policies will begin next Wednesday, Oct. 7.

I urge you to consider the benefits and fairly minimal consequences as you decide on your individual course of action.

Finally, I hope we will be able to continue with really powerful programming on these Lab Wednesdays. I am so happy that the attendance at the session about the Breonna Taylor case and the Election were so well attended. You and your teachers are to be applauded for that—learning and discovery about important topics of the day.

We hope to continue this specialized programming as we build out more comprehensive educational opportunities on Wednesdays.

Chris Ford