

**Truancy Court
Notice to Parents/Guardians of School Age Children**

The 28th Judicial District Families in Need of Services (FINS) Program in collaboration with the LaSalle Parish School Board's Child Welfare & Attendance Program wish to notify LaSalle Parish residents of Truancy Court.

What is the purpose of Truancy Court?

The purpose is to alleviate unexcused absenteeism and promote good compulsory school attendance. School attendance is the single most important aspect to student achievement and life long success. Also, with new state mandates regarding high stakes testing and school accountability, good school attendance is a must for academic success, but most importantly, it's the law.

What are Compulsory School Attendance ages?

Every child in the state is required by state law to attend public or private school from the child's seventh (7th) birthday until his/her eighteenth (18th) birthday, unless the child graduates prior to his/her 18th birthday. Any child below the age of seven (7) who legally enrolls in school shall also be required to adhere to school attendance regulations.

What are the current regulations regarding school attendance for LaSalle Parish Schools?

Our LaSalle Parish School Calendar this year accounts for 168 student days scheduled for 390 instructional minutes per day.

- A. In order to be eligible to receive grades, Elementary students (K-8), shall not exceed 16 days per year of absences.
- B. In order to be eligible to receive grades/credits, high school students (9-12) shall not exceed 16 days per semester of absences in whole credit courses and 8 days in ½ credit courses.
- C. For Jena High School, who operates on a 4x4 block schedule, a student shall not exceed 8 days per semester of absences in whole credit courses and 4 days of absences in ½ credit courses.
 1. High school students (9-12) attendance shall be kept on a per period basis.
 2. For high schools counting attendance by periods, a student shall be present for more than 50% of a period to be counted as being in attendance for that class period.
- D. In regards to tardiness: Since accumulated tardiness does reflect absences, in order to help parents and students alleviate tardiness, please be aware that all LaSalle Parish Schools adhere to Universal Time which can be accessed by dialing the following local phone number:
992-9700.

Are there exceptions to Compulsory School Attendance?

The only exception to the attendance regulation shall be extenuating circumstances that are verified by the Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance. Only the following shall be considered extenuating circumstances under which absences shall be exempt from provisions of compulsory attendance laws:

1. Extended personal physical or emotional illness as verified by a physician or dentist
2. Extended hospital stay as verified by a physician or dentist

3. Extended recuperation from an accident as verified by a physician or dentist
4. Extended contagious disease within a family as verified by a physician or dentist
5. Prior school system approved travel for education
6. Death in the family (not to exceed one week)
7. Natural catastrophe and/or disaster
8. For any other extenuating circumstances, parents must make a formal appeal in accordance with the due process procedures established by the school system.

What if my child has an excuse?

All excuses, including original doctor/dentist verification, for a student's absence must be presented to the school within five (5) days of the student's return to school to be considered for extenuating circumstances. Doctor's notes presented after this time will NOT be considered. Parent notes for illness are excused for the purpose of making up work but count towards the number of days per year a student is allowed to miss and are NOT considered an extenuated circumstance.

Who will be referred to Truancy Court?

1. Jena High School students who exceed 6 days absence per semester or as deemed eligible for referral by SCWA and who do not provide a valid excuse according to the criteria for extenuated circumstances as listed above, will be referred to Truancy Court.
2. All other LaSalle Parish Schools students who exceed 8 days absence the first semester or a total of 12 days absence within the second semester or as deemed eligible for referral by SCWA and who do not provide a valid excuse according to the criteria for extenuated circumstances as listed above, will be referred to Truancy Court.

What happens then?

1. A list of students who have met the referral criteria above will be presented to the FINS Officer.
2. Both the parents or guardians and the student will be notified in writing by the FINS Officer of the date and time in which they are required to be present in Court.
3. There will be a mandatory \$25.00 Court Fee for each child referred payable upon entrance into the courtroom.
4. The family will be asked to sign an Informal FINS Contract agreeing to comply with the attendance regulations of the school and adhere to compulsory school attendance laws.
5. Non-compliance to attend, refusal to sign the Informal FINS Contract, or failure to adhere to the FINS Contract will result in a referral to the District Attorney for formal court proceedings to enforce the provisions relative to Revised Statute 17:221 and Children's Code Article 730 regarding laws that pertain to school attendance, compulsory ages, duty

of parents, excessive absenteeism, and FINS.

When will Truancy Court be held?

Truancy Court will be held as deemed necessary by the Supervisor of Child Welfare & Attendance and the FINS Officer. It will be held at the LaSalle Parish Courthouse Courtroom.

If I have questions regarding my child's attendance, who do I contact?

You first need to contact your child's teacher and/or school principal if you have questions regarding your student's attendance. If you need further assistance, you may contact Melinda Edwards, LCSW, Child Welfare & Attendance Supervisor, at 992-2161.