



PROPEL SCHOOLS Scholar Attendance Policy

Purpose

Propel Schools recognizes that continuous school attendance is a critical factor in scholars' education success, and Propel relies on positive family partnerships to ensure that families and scholars remain committed to attending school with consistency.

Recurring scholar absences and tardies create significant disruption in classroom learning, and those disruptions cause gaps in grade-level learning that can be difficult to regain.

Attendance Requirements

On-time attendance shall be required of all scholars enrolled in Propel Schools during the days and hours that school is in session. Temporary scholar absences may be excused by authorized Propel staff members in accordance with applicable laws and regulations for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the scholar's absences.

Definitions

Compulsory school age shall mean the period of a scholar's life from the time the scholar's person in parental relation elects to have the scholar enter school, and which shall be no later than eight (8) years of age until the scholar reaches seventeen (17) years of age. Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, compulsory school age shall mean no later than age six (6) until age eighteen (18). The term does not include a scholar who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.

Habitually truant shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a scholar subject to compulsory school attendance.

Truant shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a scholar subject to compulsory school attendance.

Person in parental relation shall mean a:

- Custodial biological or adoptive parent.
- Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent.
- Guardian of the person of a scholar.
- Person with whom a scholar lives and who is acting in a parental role of a scholar.



This definition shall not include any county agency or person acting as an agent of the county agency in the jurisdiction of a dependent child as defined by law.

School-based or community-based attendance improvement program shall mean a program designed to improve school attendance by seeking to identify and address the underlying reasons for a scholar's absences. The term may include an educational assignment in an alternative education program, provided the program does not include a program for disruptive youth established pursuant to Article XIX-C of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

A **'School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) Meeting'** shall mean a conference where the scholar's absences and reasons for absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance, with or without additional services.

Guidelines

Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

All scholars of compulsory school age who enroll in Propel Schools shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements.

A scholar shall be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board; the scholar is receiving approved tutorial instruction, or health or therapeutic services; the scholar is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program; or the scholar is receiving approved homebound instruction.

The following scholars shall be excused from the requirements of attendance at Propel Schools, upon request and with the required approval:

- On certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Department of Education, children who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance.
- Senior scholars regularly engaged in useful and lawful employment during the school session and holding a lawfully issued employment certificate in accordance with the Propel Schools Early Release Protocol.



Excused Absence

For purposes of this policy, the following conditions or situations constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

- Illness, including if a scholar is dismissed by designated school staff during school hours for health-related reasons.
- Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.
- Quarantine.
- Family emergency.
- Recovery from accident.
- Required court attendance.
- Death in family.
- Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon parental request.
- College or postsecondary institution visit, with prior approval.
- Preplanned Educational Tour or Trip, with prior approval.
- Other urgent reasons which may include circumstances related to homelessness and foster care and transportation issues outside of family control. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.

Propel Schools may limit the number and duration of college or postsecondary institution visits for which excused absences may be granted to a scholar during the school year.

Temporary Excusals

The following scholars may be temporarily excused from the requirements of attendance at Propel Schools:

- Scholars receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the Propel Schools curricula from a properly qualified tutor approved by the Superintendent, when the excusal does not interfere with the scholar's regular program of studies.
- Scholars participating in a religious instruction program, if the following conditions are met:
 - The person in parental relation submits a written request for excusal. The request shall identify and describe the instruction, and the dates and hours of instruction.
 - The student shall not miss more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year in order to attend classes for religious instruction.
 - Following each absence, the person in parental relation shall submit a statement attesting that the scholar attended the instruction, and the dates and hours of attendance.



- School age children unable to attend school upon the recommendation of of a treating physician and a psychiatrist, or school psychologist, or both, and with approval of the Secretary of Education.

Parental Notice of Absence

Absences shall be treated as unexcused until Propel Schools receives a written excuse or verified email from the guardian's email address explaining the absence, to be submitted within three (3) days of the absence.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts.

Unexcused Absence

For purposes of this policy, absences which do not meet the criteria indicated above shall be considered an unexcused absence. Scholars who accumulate 20 or more absences (excused and unexcused) are at risk of grade-level retention for the next school year.

An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.

Parental Notification

Propel Schools staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation upon each incident of unexcused absence, in the person in parental relation's preferred language via phone, email, or other automated system.

Enforcement of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

Scholar is Truant

When a scholar has been absent for three (3) days during the current school year without a lawful excuse, Propel Schools staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the scholar within ten (10) school days of the scholar's third unexcused absence.

The notice shall:

- Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation;
- Include a description of the consequences if the scholar becomes habitually truant; and
- When transmitted to a person who is not the biological or adoptive parent, also be provided to the scholar's biological or adoptive parent, if the parent's mailing address is



on file with the school and the parent is not precluded from receiving the information by court order.

The notice may include the offer of a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

If the scholar incurs additional unexcused absences after issuance of the notice and a School Attendance Improvement Conference was not previously held, Propel Schools staff shall offer a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) Meetings

School staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the SAIP.

The purpose of the SAIP meeting is to examine the scholar's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.

The following individuals shall be invited to the SAIP meeting

- The scholar.
- The scholar's person in parental relation.
- Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource.
- Appropriate school personnel.
- Recommended service providers.

Neither the scholar nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate, and the SAIP shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference.

The outcome of the SAIP shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be retained in the scholar's file. A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the person in parental relation, the student and appropriate school staff.

The school may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled SAIP has passed.

Scholar is Habitually Truant

When a scholar under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, Propel Schools staff:

- Shall refer the scholar to:
 - A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
 - The local children and youth agency.



- May file a citation in the office of the appropriate magistrate judge against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.

When a scholar fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, Propel Schools staff shall:

- Refer the scholar to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
- File a citation in the office of the appropriate magistrate judge against the scholar or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the scholar.

Propel Schools staff may refer a scholar who is fifteen (15) years of age or older to the local children and youth agency, if the scholar continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or if the scholar refuses to participate in such program.

Regardless of age, when Propel Schools staff refer a habitually truant scholar to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate magistrate judge, Propel Schools staff shall provide verification that the school held a SAIP.

Filing a Citation

A citation shall be filed in the office of the appropriate magistrate judge whose jurisdiction includes the school in which the scholar is or should be enrolled.

Additional citations for subsequent violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements may only be filed against a scholar or person in parental relation in accordance with the specific provisions of the law.

Special Needs and Accommodations

If a truant or habitually truant scholar may qualify as a scholar with a disability, and require special education services or accommodations, the Superintendent or designee shall be notified and shall take action to address the scholar's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

For scholars with disabilities who are truant or habitually truant, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the scholar's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.



Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify scholars, persons in parental relation and staff about the attendance policy by publishing such policy in scholar handbooks and newsletters, on the school website and through other efficient communication methods.

The Superintendent shall require the signature of the person in parental relation confirming that the policy has been reviewed and that the person in parental relation understands the compulsory school attendance requirements.

The Superintendent or designee, in coordination with the building principal, shall be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative regulations for the attendance of scholars which:

- Govern the maintenance of attendance records in accordance with law.
- Detail the process for submission of requests and excuses for scholar absences.
- Detail the process for written notices, School Attendance Improvement Plans/meetings, and referrals to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, the local children and youth agency, or the appropriate magisterial district judge.

Teacher and Administrative Staff Responsibility

Attendance shall be recorded daily by classroom educators in K-5 schools, K-8 schools, and middle schools. Attendance shall be recorded every class period by classroom educators in high schools. A report of those scholars who are absent shall be made available to all staff members as early in the day as possible. The list shall be updated with the names of scholars who are excused early from school or admitted late to school, and made available to the staff members, for the purpose of accounting for scholars who were not present in class. Each absence for scholars must be recorded in Propel's Student Information System.

As deemed advisable by the building principal for absences and/or days of tardiness, the school counselors and/or attendance specialists will contact the parents/guardians concerning the scholar's attendance pattern. The school will seek to assist parents/guardians and scholars in resolving the chronic attendance pattern through counseling or referral to the Propel Partners in Wellness.

All attendance/absences are recorded on the scholar's permanent record.



Family and Guardian Responsibility

Strong relationships with families and family and guardian support is key to strong scholar attendance. All guardians are recommended to review this Policy and the Scholar and Family Handbook for attendance procedures.

The parent/guardian is responsible for sending a dated, written excuse with their scholar to the educator for each absence. This excuse must be submitted within three (3) days of the scholar's return to school.

After the fifth (5th) consecutive day of absence or tenth (10th) cumulative absence, a medical excuse from a licensed physician will be required upon the scholar's return. A doctor's excuse is required each time a scholar is absent after the tenth (10th) day for the remainder of the year.

Any questions or disputes of a scholar's attendance record must be received by the school principal during the year of the dispute. No reviews or potential corrections of an attendance record will take place after a school year has ended.

Scholar Responsibility

Scholars are expected to "Walk Through The Door" every day by arriving to school each day on time and reporting to all classes.

Any scholar in violation of this policy may be determined ineligible to participate in any extracurricular activity.

It is the responsibility of the scholar to make arrangements with their educator for making up academic/class work missed because of legal and/or excused absence.

A scholar, absent beyond three (3) consecutive days, should contact the school to arrange for a third party to convey assignments and necessary books.

Scholars must be given the opportunity to make up work missed during legal absence(s):

- All make-up work must be submitted within three (3) school days after the scholar's return or by the end of the grading period, whichever comes first.
- Only in extreme cases of extended absence will a longer period of time be allowed for work to be made up. The time and nature of the make-up work may be determined by the teacher.



Participation in Resident District Sports Teams

As per Pennsylvania Charter School Law and the PIAA, should Propel Schools not sponsor an athletic program in your child's school building, they are eligible to participate in that sport at the school which they would otherwise attend, provided that the scholar meets all other eligibility requirements, including, but not limited to, school verified evidence of full-time attendance.

On days of athletic games, scholars will be permitted to be excused early from school without an impact on truancy or habitual truancy. Propel's Athletic Director will coordinate with Resident District Athletic Coordinator to agree on the early dismissal time based on travel time and game days.

Approved By	Date
Dr. Tina Chekan	10/23/23
Board of Trustees	10/23/23