



School Attendance

Consistent school attendance is critical for student achievement. If students are not present, they cannot benefit from classroom instruction. State attendance laws require student attendance for course credit and grade-level promotion. Additionally, state attendance laws require intervention when a student is deemed truant.

Attendance for Promotion/Retention Purposes

To be promoted to the next grade or receive credit for high school courses, students may not be absent from school or class for more than ten (10) days for year-long courses or five (5) days for semester courses, unless the absences are excused.

Excused Absences

- An absence is considered excused if a valid medical doctor's written statement is provided within 3 school days after the absence.
- An absence for bereavement, due to a death in the student's immediate family, may be excused if an obituary or program of service verifying the death is provided to the attendance clerk within 3 school days after the absence.
- An absence for a nationally recognized religious holiday of the student's faith may be excused if a request is made in writing to the principal and written approval is received prior to the absence.
- A parent may request approval of an absence for a hardship, in writing, utilizing the Request for Approval form. This form may be obtained from the school or online at <http://www.horrycountyschools.net>, under *Departments*, choose *Attendance & Truancy*. The form must be completed and submitted prior to the absence (if the parent has prior knowledge), or within 3 days following the absence.

Attendance for Truancy Intervention Purposes

A student is considered truant:

1. After three (3) consecutive all-day absences, five (5) cumulative all-day absences, or five cumulative class absences within the same class period, which are not excused by

- a medical doctor's written statement, proof of bereavement, or principal's approval;
or,
2. After an elementary school student has accumulated ten (10) or more unexcused tardy or early release days. (Note: Tardiness in middle and high schools is considered a disciplinary issue.)

After a student reaches truancy status, the principal or his/her designee will immediately attempt to establish contact with the parent to arrange a conference. During this conference, the principal or his/her designee will develop a written plan with the parent to insure that the parent, the student, and the school have an understanding regarding the future attendance of the student. The plan will help to establish goals for regular school attendance and will be monitored to ensure compliance. Failure to comply with the plan may result in legal proceedings through family court. If a conference is held, and the student is unlawfully absent again, he/she will be referred to the District Attendance Coordinator. The District Attendance Coordinator may refer the student to family court for a motion for court-ordered attendance. No student who is lawfully absent will be referred.

Appeal Process for Attendance Records

If a parent believes that his/her child's attendance record is incorrect, he/she may meet with the principal to present the reasons why the record should be changed along with any documentation relative to the disputed day(s). After the above, if the parent is not satisfied with the principal's decision, an appeal may be made to the Executive Director of Student Affairs. To request an appeal, the parent must write a letter to the Executive Director of Student Affairs within five workdays after the conference with the principal, advising the Executive Director of Student Affairs why it is believed that the principal's decision should be reversed.

The appeal hearing, which should be held within ten workdays of receipt of the request for an appeal, will be conducted as an informal hearing by the Executive Director of Student Affairs (or his/her designee) or other Superintendent's designee (hereafter referred to as "Hearing Officer"). The principal (or his/her designee), parent, and student may be present. If the Hearing Officer and the parent agree, the student may be dismissed during portions of the hearing. The parent, student, and principal (or his/her designee) will be allowed to address the Hearing Officer.

Within ten workdays of the hearing, the Hearing Officer shall render a decision as to whether the attendance record should be changed. The Hearing Officer shall report his/her decision in writing to the parents and the school. The decision of the Hearing Officer ends the appeals process in such matters.