Book	Policy Manual
Section	200 Pupils
Title	Attendance
Code	204
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Purpose

The Board requires that school age students enrolled in District schools attend school regularly, in accordance with state laws and regulations. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.[1][2][3]

Authority

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in District schools during the days and hours that school is in session, except that authorized District staff may excuse a student for temporary absences when receiving satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.[3][4][5][6][7][8]

The Board shall permit a student to be excused for participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or county-wide 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA) or a combined 4-H and FFA group upon written request prior to the event.[5][9]

The Board shall establish and enforce attendance requirements, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, Board policy and administrative regulations.

Definitions

Compulsory school age shall mean the period of a student’s life from the time a student’s parent/guardian elects to have the student enter school, and which shall be no later than age six (6) until age eighteen (18). The term does not include a student who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.[10][11]

Habitually truant shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.[11]

Truant shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.[11]

Parent/guardian shall mean a:[11]

1. Custodial biological or adoptive parent.
2. Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent.
3. Guardian of the person of a student.
4. Person with whom a student lives and who is acting in a parental role of a student.

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.[12]

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 student'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.[11]

School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) shall mean a conference where the student's absences and reasons for absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance, with or without additional services.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure a school session that conforms with requirements of state laws and regulations.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop procedures for the attendance of students in accordance with the attendance standards and attendance-related procedures in the School Code of Student Conduct and Procedures.

The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians, staff, local children and youth agency and local Magisterial District Judges about the District's attendance policy by publishing such policy in student handbooks, newsletters, District website and other efficient communication methods.[9][13]

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

Guidelines

Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

All students of compulsory school age who reside in the District shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements.[4]

A student shall be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board; the student is receiving approved tutorial instruction, or health or therapeutic services; the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, workstudy or career education program; or the student is receiving approved homebound instruction or the student's placement is instruction in the home.[4][6][14][15][16][17][18]

The following students shall be excused from the requirements of attendance at District schools, upon request and with the required approval:

1. 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.[5][8][19]

2. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught.[4][20]

3. Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in District schools.[21]

4. Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law.[4][17][22][23][24][25]

5. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved.[4]

6. Students fifteen (15) years of age, and fourteen (14) years of age who have completed the highest elementary grade, engaged in farm work or private domestic service under duly issued permits.[8]

7. Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly engaged in useful and lawful employment during the school session and holding a lawfully issued employment certificate. Regularly engaged means thirty-five (35) or more hours per week of employment.[8][15]

Excused Absence

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

1. Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated district staff during school hours for health-related reasons.[5][7]

2. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.[5]

3. Quarantine.

4. Family emergency.

5. Recovery from accident.

6. Required court attendance.

7. Death in family.

8. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group, upon prior written request.[5][9]

9. Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon request by the student's parent/guardian.[26]

10. College or postsecondary institution visit, with prior approval.

11. Other urgent reasons which may include circumstances related to homelessness and foster care. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.[5][7]

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

Temporary Excusals -

The following students may be temporarily excused from the requirements of attendance at District schools:

1. Students receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the District's curricula from a properly qualified tutor approved by the Superintendent, when the excusal does not interfere with the student's regular program of studies.[4][14][17]

2. Students participating in a religious instruction program, if the following conditions are met:

    a. The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal. The request shall identify and describe the instruction, and the dates and hours of instruction.

    b. The student shall not miss more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year in order to attend classes for religious instruction.

    c. Following each absence, the parent/guardian shall submit a statement attesting that the student attended the instruction, and the dates and hours of attendance.[26][27]

3. School age children unable to attend school upon recommendation of the school physician and a psychiatrist or school psychologist, or both, and with approval of the Secretary of Education.[19]

Parent/Guardian Notice of Absence -

Absences shall be treated as unexcused until the District receives a written excuse 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 notification by a parent/guardian 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.

An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.[11]

Parent/Guardian Notification -

District staff shall provide notice to the parent/guardian upon each incident of unexcused absence, in the parent/guardian's preferred language.

Enforcement of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

Student is Truant -

When a student has been absent for three (3) days during the current school year without a lawful excuse, District staff shall provide notice to the parent/guardian who resides in the same household as the student within ten (10) school days of the student's third unexcused absence.[28]

The notice shall:[28]

1. Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the parent/guardian and:
    1. Include notice that a habitually truant student may not transfer, during the school year, to a cyber charter school unless a judge determines that the transfer is in the best interest of the student, and
    2. Include resources available to assist the student and the parent/guardian with returning the student to compliant compulsory attendance and opportunities for academic recovery in response to the truant behavior.

2. Include a description of the consequences if the student becomes habitually truant; and

3. When transmitted to a person who is not the biological or adoptive parent, also be provided to the student'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.

4, The notice may include the offer of a School Attendance Improvement Conference.[28]

If the student incurs additional unexcused absences after issuance of the notice and a School Attendance Improvement Conference was not previously held, District staff shall offer a School Attendance Improvement Conference.[28]

School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) -

District staff shall notify the parent/guardian in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the SAIC.[28]

The purpose of the SAIC is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.[11]

The following individuals shall be invited to the SAIC:[11]

1. The student.
2. The student's parent/guardian.
3. Other individuals identified by the parent/guardian who may be a resource.
4. Appropriate school personnel.
5. Recommended service providers.

Neither the student nor the parent/guardian shall be required to participate, and the SAIC shall occur even if the parent/guardian declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference.[28]

The outcome of the SAIC shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be retained in the student's file. A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the parent/guardian, the student and appropriate District staff.[28]

The District may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled SAIC has passed.[28]

Student is Habitually Truant -

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, District staff:[29]

1. Shall refer the student to:
    a. A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or
    b. The local children and youth agency.
2. May file a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the parent/guardian who resides in the same household as the student.[29]

When a student fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, District staff shall:[29]

1. Refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or

2. File a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the student or the parent/guardian who resides in the same household as the student.

District staff may refer a student who is fifteen (15) years of age or older to the local children and youth agency, if the student continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or if the student refuses to participate in such program.[29]

Regardless of age, when District staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate judge, District staff shall provide verification that the school held a SAIC.[29]

Unless a judge determines that it is in the student's best interest, a habitually truant student will not be permitted to transfer to a cyber charter school during the school year.[28]

Filing a Citation -

A citation shall be filed in the office of the appropriate judge whose jurisdiction includes the school in which the student is or should be enrolled.[30]

Additional citations for subsequent violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements may only be filed against a student or parent/guardian in accordance with the specific provisions of the law.[30]

Special Needs and Accommodations

If a truant or habitually truant student may qualify as a student with a disability, and require special education services or accommodations, the Superintendent or designee shall be notified and shall take action to address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[31][32][33]

For students with disabilities who are truant or habitually truant, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student’s needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[31][32][33]

Discipline

The District shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior.[28]

Legal
1. 24 P.S. 1301
2. 22 PA Code 11.12
3. 22 PA Code 12.1
4. 24 P.S. 1327
5. 24 P.S. 1329
6. 22 PA Code 11.23

7. 22 PA Code 11.25
8. 24 P.S. 1330
9. 22 PA Code 11.41
10. 22 PA Code 11.13
11. 24 P.S. 1326
12. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6302
13. 24 P.S. 510.2
14. 22 PA Code 11.22
15. 22 PA Code 11.28
16. Pol. 110
17. Pol. 111
18. Pol. 112
19. 22 PA Code 11.34
20. 22 PA Code 11.32
21. 22 PA Code 11.5
22. 22 PA Code 11.31
23. 22 PA Code 11.31a
24. 24 P.S. 1327.1
25. Pol. 116
26. 22 PA Code 11.21
27. 24 P.S. 1546
28. 24 P.S. 1333
29. 24 P.S. 1333.1
30. 24 P.S. 1333.2
31. Pol. 108
32. Pol. 109
33. Pol. 102.1
22 PA Code 11.8
22 PA Code 11.24
22 PA Code 11.26
24 P.S. 1332
24 P.S. 1339

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