Title: **Attendance**
Code: 204
Book: Policy Manual
Section: 200 Pupils

Purpose

The Board recognizes that attendance is an important factor in educational success, and supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance issues.[1]

Authority

Attendance shall be required of all students during the days and hours that school is in session, except that authorized district staff may excuse a student for temporary absences upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.[2][3][4][5][6][7]

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 child's life from the time the child's parents/guardians elect to have the child enter school, and which shall be no later than six (6) years of age until the child reaches eighteen (18) years of age. The term does not include a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.[8][9]

Habitually truant shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.[9]

Truant shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.[9]

Person in parental relation shall mean a:[9]

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

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.[10]

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 child'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.[9]

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians, staff and local children and youth agency about the district's attendance policy by publishing such policy in student handbooks, newsletters, district website and other efficient communication methods.[1][11]

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 students
which:

1. Govern the maintenance of attendance records in accordance with law.[12][13]

2. Detail the process for submission of requests and excuses for student absences.

3. Detail the process for written notices, School Attendance Improvement Conferences, School Attendance Improvement Plans, and referrals to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, the local children and youth agency, or the appropriate judge.

4. Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.

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.[5]

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, work-study or career education program; or the student is receiving approved homebound instruction.[2][5][14][15][16][17][18][19]

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

1. Attendance at a private trade school or private business school continuously through the entire term congruent with the school term of the resident school

district and that meets the requirements set forth by the State Board of Education or the State Board of Career and Technical Education when:

2. The child is 15 and has approval from the district superintendent and the Secretary of Education, or The child is 16 and has approval from the district superintendent.

3. Attendance at a school operated by a bona fide church or other religious body which provides a minimum of 180 days of instruction or 900 hours of instruction per year at the elementary level or 990 hours per year of instruction at the secondary level.

4. Privately tutored or home-schooled students provided a minimum of 180 days of instruction or 900 hours of instruction per year at the elementary level or 990 hours per year of instruction at the secondary level.

5. Enrollment in a day or boarding school which is accredited by an accrediting association approved by the State Board of Education.

6. Children who are 16 and regularly engaged in useful and lawful employment during the school session with a valid employment certificate. Regularly engaged means 35 or more hours per week of employment.

7. Children who have been examined by an approved psychological professional and identified to be unable to profit from further public school attendance and excused by the school board.

8. Children who are 15 who hold a permit approved by the school district to engage in farm work or domestic service in a private home.

9. Children who are 14 and satisfactorily completed the equivalent of the highest grade of elementary school in their district who hold a permit recommended by the district and approved by the Secretary of Education to engage in farm work or domestic service in a private home.

Excused/Lawful Absence

Pennsylvania law broadly defines absences as excused when a student is prevented from attendance for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons. An absence is lawful when a student is dismissed during school hours by a certified school nurse,

registered nurse, licensed practical nurse or a school administrator or designee or if the student is absent to obtain professional health care or therapy care service rendered by a licensed practitioner in the healing arts. Additionally, schools and nonpublic schools should consider illness, family emergency, death of a family member, medical or dental appointments, authorized school activities, and educational travel with prior approval as lawful absences. An absence that requires a student to leave school for the purposes of attending court hearings related to their involvement with a county children and youth agency or juvenile probation may not be categorized as unlawful.

For purposes of this policy, the following conditions or situations constitute reasonable cause for absence from school. Absences may include but not limited to:

1. Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated district staff during school hours for health-related reasons.[3][6]

2. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the licensed practitioner or medical doctor in any state, commonwealth or territory.[6]

3. Family emergency.

4. Recovery from accident.

5. Required court attendance.

6. Death in family.

7. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group, upon prior written request.[1][6]

8. Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon prior written parental request.[27]

9. Non school-sponsored educational tours or trips, if the following conditions are

met:[6][28]

a. The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal prior to the absence.

b. The student's participation has been approved by the Superintendent or designee.

c. The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the parents/guardians and the Superintendent.

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

11. Quarantined

The district may limit the number and duration of non school-sponsored educational tours or trips or 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.[5][14][17]

2. Students participating in a religious instruction program, if the following conditions are met:[27][29]

   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.

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.[20]

Parental Notice of Absence -

Absences shall be treated as unlawful 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 parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed practitioner or medical doctor.

Unexcused/Unlawful Absence

For purposes of this policy, absences which do not meet the criteria indicated above shall be considered an unexcused/unlawful absence.

An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.[9]

All absences should be treated as unlawful until the school or nonpublic school receives a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for an absence. Pursuant to the school's or nonpublic school's attendance policy, parents and students should submit the written explanation within the defined time period delineated in the attendance policy. Parents should further be informed that if a written excuse is not provided within the defined time, the absence will be permanently counted as unlawful. If a parent is neglectful in providing a written excuse for an absence or fails to provide the notification in a timely fashion, reasonable allowance should be made to accept the parent's explanation for the child's absence prior to the initiation of any compulsory attendance proceeding.

Parental Notification -

District staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation upon each incident of unexcused absence.

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 person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student within ten (10) school days of the student's third unexcused absence.[30]

The notice shall:[30]

1. Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation;

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 child'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.[30]

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.[30]

School Attendance Improvement Conference -

District staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the School Attendance Improvement Conference. School Attendance Improvement Conference should be held after four (4) to five (5) unexcused absences. [30]

The purpose of the School Attendance Improvement Conference is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.[9]

The following individuals shall be invited to the School Attendance Improvement Conference:[9]

1. The student.
2. The student's person in parental relation.
3. Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource.
4. Appropriate school personnel.
5. Recommended service providers.

Neither the student nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate, and the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference.[30]

The outcome of the School Attendance Improvement Conference 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 person in parental relation, the student and appropriate district staff.[30]

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.[31]

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 School Attendance Improvement Conference.[31]

Filing a Citation -

When a student who has missed ten (10) unexcused absences 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.[32] If not already completed a referral will be made to Children and Youth Services.

Additional citations for subsequent violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements may only be filed against a student or person in parental relation in accordance with the specific provisions of the law.[32]

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 Director of Special Education shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.[33][34][35][36]

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.[33][34][36]

Discipline

The district shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior.[30]

Adopted: **October 21, 1981**
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Legal References:

- 1. 22 PA Code 11.41
- 2. 22 PA Code 11.23
- 3. 22 PA Code 11.25
- 4. 22 PA Code 12.1
- 5. 24 P.S. 1327
- 6. 24 P.S. 1329
- 7. 24 P.S. 1330
- 8. 22 PA Code 11.13
- 9. 24 P.S. 1326
- 10. 42 Pa. C.S.A. 6302
- 11. 24 P.S. 510.2
- 12. 24 P.S. 1332
- 13. 24 P.S. 1339
- 14. 22 PA Code 11.22
- 15. 22 PA Code 11.28
- 16. Pol. 115
- 17. Pol. 116
- 18. Pol. 117
- 19. Pol. 118
- 20. 22 PA Code 11.34
- 21. 22 PA Code 11.32
- 22. 22 PA Code 11.5
- 23. 22 PA Code 11.31
- 24. 22 PA Code 11.31a
- 25. 24 P.S. 1327.1
- 26. Pol. 137
- 27. 22 PA Code 11.21
- 28. 22 PA Code 11.26
- 29. 24 P.S. 1546
- 30. 24 P.S. 1333
- 31. 24 P.S. 1333.1
- 32. 24 P.S. 1333.2
- 33. Pol. 103.1
- 34. Pol. 113
- 35. Pol. 113.3
- 36. Pol. 114
- 22 PA Code 11.24
- 22 PA Code 11.8