Seneca Valley School District

Tracy L. Vitale, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Administration Center
124 Seneca School Road
Harmony, PA 16037-9134
PHONE: (724) 452-6040
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Dear Parent/Guardian,

We understand that families may occasionally plan a trip during the school year that provides meaningful learning experiences outside of the classroom. When a trip includes educational activities, Pennsylvania School Code allows families to request that the absence be approved as an educational trip. Educational trips must be approved by the building principal or assistant principal at least two weeks in advance of the trip and must include valid educational activities that provide the student with meaningful learning experiences outside the classroom.

While an educational trip may be approved, all days missed from school count toward the student's overall attendance. Families are encouraged to carefully consider the number of school days their child will miss when planning a trip. Trips that have not been pre-approved or that do not include acceptable educational activities will be recorded as unexcused and addressed accordingly. Attendance requirements also establish the following thresholds, which should be considered prior to requesting approval for an educational trip:

- Three unexcused absences are considered truant.
- Six unexcused absences are considered habitually truant and may result in additional school-based intervention and/or action as required by school code.
- If a student accumulates more than 20 absences for any reason during the school year, including excused absences, the student will be required to provide a medical excuse for any additional absences. Additional absences without a medical excuse will be considered unexcused.
- As per the Pennsylvania Department of Education, any student who is enrolled for at least 90 school days and is absent for more than 10 percent of those days is considered chronically absent.

Please note trips will not be approved during final exams or state mandated assessments.

We appreciate your partnership in supporting your child's regular school attendance and encourage you to consider both the educational value of the trip and the potential impact of missed instructional time when making travel plans.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Dr. Tina Wentz
Principal

EDUCATIONAL TRIP INFORMATION

1. Request for Excuse

The parents or guardians of a student who wish to have the student excused from compulsory school attendance in order to participate in an educational tour or trip must submit an application to the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled. Except for emergency situations, which must be fully explained, this request must be submitted at least fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the date on which the student seeks to be excused from compulsory attendance.

2. Administrator's Discretion

The principal of the school shall exercise discretion in determining whether to excuse the student from compulsory attendance. Consideration shall be given to the length of the tour or trip, the number of requests made during the school year, and whether the educational tour or trip is likely to enhance the educational growth of the student. It is the practice of the Seneca Valley School District not to approve absences for educational tours or trips during mid-term exams, final exams, or during state mandated assessments.

3. Assignments

Students and/or families are required to communicate with school staff to make up missed assignments. Assignments/responsibilities may be completed either prior to the absence or upon return to school. All assignments/classroom activities which are to be completed shall be submitted to the teacher(s) upon return to school or within the period of time as designated by the teacher(s).

A student, who after being granted an excuse, fails to complete the assignments/responsibilities within a reasonable period of time as designated by the teacher, shall earn a failing grade for the incomplete assignments/responsibilities.

4. Course Credit (Grades 9-12)

A student shall not be granted credit for any semester course if unexcused absences from that course total more than five (5) periods per semester or for any full year courses that total more than ten (10) periods for the year.

5. Return to School

The students shall return to school by the first scheduled school day after the excused absence or date previously specified by the building principal.

6. Athletic Eligibility

The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (P.I.A.A.) Constitution stipulates: A pupil who has been absent from school during a semester for a total of twenty or more school days, shall not be eligible to participate in any athletic contest until he has been in attendance for a total of sixty (60) school days following his twentieth day of absence, except that where there is a consecutive absence of five or more school days, due to confining illness, injury, or quarantine, such absence may be waived from the application of this rule by the District if a thorough and complete investigation warrants such waiver. Attendance at summer schools does not count toward the sixty days required.

Absence from school for an entire semester, or for several semesters, shall disqualify a pupil for the same period as stated in this section.

7. Implementation

This policy is designed for implementation at the building level. Frequent recurrence of requests for educational tours or trips during a school year shall result in disapproval, although the requested trip may be meritorious. These procedures are designed to foster better school student relationships rather than excessive absence.

8. Acceptable Activities

Under the Itinerary of Trip section of Educational Trip form, activities which could be educational in nature and will provide the child with some valuable experience outside the classroom need to be provided. Some examples of both acceptable and unacceptable activities are listed below.

Acceptable Educational Activities:

- Visiting museums, historical sites, or cultural institutions
- Visiting national landmarks, monuments, or historic sites
- Studying local geography, history, or government
- Learning about local ecosystems, wildlife, or marine life
- Learning about other cultures through museums or cultural centers such as Epcot

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EDUCATIONAL TRIP FORM

Requests should be submitted at LEAST TWO WEEKS PRIOR to the scheduled trip

****A form should be completed for each student****

Student name: _____ Grade: _____

Building: _____

Dates of proposed absence, from _____ to _____

Person(s) directing and/or supervising student during their absence:

Name: _____

Relationship to Student: _____

Itinerary of Trip – include activities which could be educational in nature and will, therefore, provide the child with some valuable experience outside the classroom.

_____

_____

_____

I certify the above information to be true:

Parent/Guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name (please print): _____

FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY : ☐ APPROVED ☐ NOT APPROVED

Building Administrator: _____