



SECTION: STUDENTS

POLICY: 204

TITLE: ATTENDANCE

ORIGINAL: June 12, 2017

CURRENT REVISION: April 5, 2021

**LAST REVIEWED BY THE
COMMITTEE:**

I. PURPOSE

- A. The Board recognizes that attendance is an important factor in educational success, and supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance issues.
- B. Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in District schools during the days and hours that the school is in session, except that a principal or teacher may excuse a student for temporary absences when she/he receives satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons, which may reasonably cause the student's absence.
- C. The Board shall establish and enforce attendance requirements, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and board policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Compulsory school age** shall mean the period of a child's life from the time 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 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.
- B. **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.
- C. **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.
- D. **Person in parental relation** shall mean a:
 - a. custodial biological or adoptive parent
 - b. noncustodial biological or adoptive parent
 - c. guardian of the person of a student
 - d. person with whom a student lives and who is acting in a parental role to the student
 - e. 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.
- E. **School attendance improvement conference** shall mean a conference where the student's absences and reasons for the absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance, with or without additional services. The following individuals shall be invited to the conference:
 - a. the student
 - b. the student's person in parental relation

- c. other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource
 - d. appropriate school personnel
 - e. recommended service providers
- F. **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.

III. **POLICY**

A. Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

- a. All students of compulsory school age who reside in the District shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements.
- b. 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 instructional, or health or therapeutic services; the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program; the student is receiving approved homebound instruction; or the student's placement is instruction in the home.
- c. The following students shall be excused from the requirements of attendance at District schools, upon request and with the required approval:
 - i. on certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Department of Education, students who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance.
 - ii. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught.
 - iii. Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in District schools.
 - iv. Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law.
 - v. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools have been approved.
 - vi. 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 services under duly licensed permits.
 - vii. Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly employed during the school session and holding a lawfully issued employment certificate. Regularly employed means thirty-five (35) or more hours per week of employment.

B. Excused/Lawful Absences

- a. For purposes of this policy, the following conditions or situations constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:
 - i. Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated District staff during school hours for health-related reasons.

- ii. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.
- iii. Quarantine.
- iv. Family emergency.
- v. Recovery from accident.
- vi. Required court attendance.
- vii. Death in family.
- viii. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countrywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group, upon prior written request.
- ix. Observance of a religious holiday observed by bona fide religious group, upon prior written parental request.
- x. Upon written parent request, a student shall be excused from school to attend classes for religious instruction. The excusal shall be limited to a total of not more than 36 hours per school year. Further, the request shall identify and describe the instruction, and the dates and hours for which the absence is requested and that the parent or person in parental relation shall, following each such absence, furnish in writing to the District a statement attesting that the student did in fact attend the instruction and the dates and hours upon which such attendance took place.
- xi. non-school-sponsored educational tours or trips, if the following conditions are met:
 - 1. The student's parent or guardian prior to the trip(s) submits to the District a written request for the excusal.
 - 2. The student's participation in the tour(s) or trip(s) has been approved by the Superintendent or a designee.
 - 3. There is an adult who is directing and supervising the student during the tour(s) or trip(s) who is acceptable to both the parents or guardians and the Superintendent.
 - 4. The Board may limit the number and duration of tour(s) or trip(s) for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school term.
 - 5. No educational tour(s) and/or trip(s) in excess of ten (10) school days will be approved.
 - 6. There is a five-day limit to non-school sponsored travel per year. Non-school sponsored travel WILL NOT be approved as an excused absence during the Standardized testing dates.
- xii. 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.
- xiii. School age children unable to attend school upon recommendation of the school physician and a psychiatrist or school psychologist, or both, with approval of the Secretary of Education. The excusal, which shall be reevaluated every 3 months, may be extended upon the recommendation of the school physician and with the approval of the Secretary of Education. Students so excused shall be entered on

the inactive role. Prior to seeking excusal and the Secretary of Education's approval, the District shall provide the student's parents with written notice of both the proposed excusal, including the reasons for the excusal, and an opportunity to be heard. For a student enrolled in special education, the notice and opportunity to be heard shall be governed by the law applicable to special education.

- xiv. Other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause a student's absence, as well as circumstances related to homelessness and foster care. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and shall not permit irregular attendance.
 - xv. Participation in a musical performance in conjunction with a national veterans' organization or incorporated unit, as defined in law, for an event or funeral, provided that in advance of the absence, the student presents to the district a signed excuse from the national veterans' organization or incorporated unit, which excuse shall include the date, location, and time of the event or funeral.
- b. 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.
 - c. 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.

C. Unexcused/Unlawful Absence

- a. Absences, which do not meet the criteria indicated above, shall be considered an unexcused/unlawful absence.
- b. An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence.
- c. District staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation upon each incident of unexcused absence.

D. Enforcement of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

- a. Student is Truant
 - i. 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.
 - ii. the notice shall:
 - 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 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.

- iii. 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.
 - iv. 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.
 - v. 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.
 - vi. the following individuals shall be invited to the School attendance Improvement Conference:
 - 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
 - vii. 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.
 - viii. 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.
 - ix. The District may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled School Attendance Improvement Conference has passed.
- b. Student is Habitually Truant
- i. When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, District staff shall refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or the local children and youth agency.
 - ii. District staff may file a citation in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.
 - iii. when a student fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, District staff shall refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or file a citation in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge against the student or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.
 - iv. 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.
- v. 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 magisterial district judge, District staff shall provide verification that the school held a School Attendance Improvement Conference.
- c. Filing a Citation
 - i. A citation shall be filed in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge whose jurisdiction includes the school in which the student is or should be enrolled.
 - ii. 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.
- d. Special Needs and Accommodations
 - i. If a truant or habitually truant student may qualify as a student with a disability, and require special educational 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.
 - ii. 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.
- e. Discipline
 - i. The District shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior.

IV. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

- A. The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians, and staff about the District's attendance policy by publishing such policy in student handbooks and on the District website.
- B. 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.
- C. The Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for implementation and enforcement of this policy.
- D. The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative guidelines for the attendance of students which:
 - a. govern the maintenance of attendance records in accordance with law;
 - b. detail the process for submission of requests and excuses for student absences;
 - c. 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;

- d. clarify the district's responsibility for collaboration with nonpublic schools in the enforcement of compulsory school attendance requirements; and
- e. Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.

V. REFERENCES

22 PA Code 11.41
22 PA Code 11.23
22 PA Code 11.25
22 PA Code 12.1
24 P.S. 1327
24 P.S. 1329
24 P.S. 1330
22 PA Code 11.13
24 P.S. 1326
42 Pa.C.S.A. 6302
24 P.S. 510.2
24 P.S. 1332
24 P.S. 1339
22 PA Code 11.22
22 PA Code 11.28
22 PA Code 11.34
22 PA Code 11.32
22 PA Code 11.5
24 P.S. 1327.1
22 PA Code 11.21
24 P.S. 1546
24 P.S. 1326
24 P.S. 1333
24 P.S. 1333.1
24 P.S. 1333.2