

# SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PITTSVILLE BOARD POLICY

## STUDENTS

### ATTENDANCE

#### STUDENT ATTENDANCE - PROCEDURES

431 - Rule

##### A. Responsibilities for Student Attendance

###### 1. Parent and Guardian Responsibilities

For **all** student partial-day or full-day absences from school (except for absences resulting from a period of a school-imposed suspension), the student's parent or guardian is:

- a. Expected to call the school office's attendance line prior to 9:00 am. on the day of each absence in order to verify that the student is absent with the parent's or guardian's knowledge, except that no such call is necessary for any absence(s) that the parent or guardian arranged and that the school excused in advance.
- b. Required to submit a written communication to the school office identifying the date(s) the student will be (or was) absent from school and the reason(s) for the absence. This written notification must be provided:
  - (1) Prior to the absence for all parent-excused absences, as identified in the Board's attendance policy; or
  - (2) Either prior to or immediately following the absence for all school-excused absences, but always within two school days following the student's return to school from the absence in order for the absence to be considered excused, except when a different time period has been approved by the building principal.

Adult students (students 18 years of age or older) may carry out these responsibilities in lieu of their parents or guardians.

###### 2. Student Responsibilities

- a. During the entirety of the scheduled school day for students, students are required to attend all of their classes, lunch periods, and other school-approved activities on time, unless either they are absent from school for an excused (or excusable) reason or some other school-approved or school-directed exception applies.
- b. Failing to attend all or a portion of a scheduled class, lunch period, or other activity (e.g., skipping class) without an appropriate excuse or school approval subjects a student to appropriate consequences as both an attendance matter and as a violation of school rules, including in situations in which the student remains on school grounds but is not in a location where he/she is supposed to be.
- c. Other than at the regular student arrival and departure times for the day in question, students are required to check in and check out at the school building's designated attendance office whenever they arrive at, leave from, or return to school during the scheduled school day for any reason unrelated to their school-scheduled activities. Building principals may authorize an exception to this requirement for certain school-approved temporary absences (e.g., students who have the school's permission to regularly leave school during their scheduled lunch period, job shadow, internships, work experience, etc.).
- d. Students are expected to make up class work and any examinations missed during an absence to the extent permitted by Board policy and as directed by their classroom teacher(s). Make-up work related to excused absences is handled differently from work related to unexcused absences.

###### 3. Teacher Responsibilities

- a. Teachers are required to emphasize the importance and necessity of good attendance.
- b. Teachers shall allow students to make up class work and examinations missed during an excused or unexcused absence in accordance with Board policy, and shall not deny credit in a course solely because of the student's unexcused absences. Teachers are permitted to establish reasonable deadlines for the completion of make-up work.
- c. Teachers are required by law to take daily attendance in their classes and to maintain a record of student absences.

###### 4. School Attendance Officer Responsibilities

School attendance officers have responsibility for all matters relating to school attendance and truancy and have all of the powers and duties specified in state law. For example, each school attendance officer shall:

- a. Determine daily which students enrolled in the school are absent from school and whether that absence is excused in accordance with Board policy.
- b. Receive, review and act on requests for and notifications of pre-planned, parent-excused absences.
- c. Receive and, after consulting with appropriate school personnel to determine the district's response, respond in writing to requests from students or their parents or guardians for program or curriculum modifications.
- d. Upon the request of a teacher, assist teachers and students with excused or unexcused absences in formulating a plan for the completion of make-up work. The attendance officer may also assign students with unexcused absences to a period of detention or a supervised directed study program for the purpose of making up class work and tests/examinations missed during an unexcused absence.
- e. In the event of a challenge to or possible error in a student's attendance records, evaluate the totality of circumstances and determine whether a student's official attendance records should ultimately reflect that the student was attending, tardy, or absent with or without an acceptable excuse. The reason for any discretionary changes to a student's existing official attendance record shall be sufficiently documented.
- f. Notify, or cause a designee to notify on his/her behalf, the parent or guardian of a student who has been truant of the student's truancy and direct the parent or guardian to return the student to school no later than the next day on which school is in session or to provide an excuse. Subject to Section B of these procedures regarding tardiness, "truancy" means any absence of part or all of one or more school days during which the school attendance officer or teacher has not been notified of the legal and excusable cause of such absence by the parent or guardian of the absent student, and also means intermittent attendance carried on for the purpose of defeating the intent of the compulsory attendance law. The notice under this paragraph must be given before the end of the second school day after receiving a report of an unexcused absence. The attendance officer shall first attempt to notify the parent/guardian by personal contact, by telephone call, or, except when the parent or guardian has refused to receive electronic communication, by an electronic communication. If the attempt to give notice by one or more of these methods is not successful, the attendance officer shall send written notice of the child's truancy by 1st Class mail. The attendance officer shall maintain a record of such notice, including documenting (1) any such notice that is given in person or by telephone, or (2) if applicable, the unsuccessful attempt to give notice that caused the attendance officer to use 1st Class mail.
- g. Notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a habitual truant by registered, certified or 1st Class mail when the student initially becomes a habitual truant. Subject to Section B of these procedures regarding tardiness, "habitual truant" means a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of 5 or more days on which school is held during a semester. The notice shall include the following:
  - (1) A statement of the parent's or guardian's responsibility under state law to cause the student to attend school regularly.
  - (2) A request that the parent or guardian meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss the student's truancy. The notice must include the name of the school personnel with whom the parent or guardian should meet; a date, time and place for the meeting; and the name, address and telephone number of a person to contact to arrange a different date, time or place. The date for the meeting must be within five (5) school days after the date that the habitual truancy notice has been sent to the student's parent or guardian. However, with the consent of the student's parent or guardian the date for the meeting may be extended for an additional five (5) school days.
  - (3) A statement of the penalties that may be imposed under state law on the parent or guardian if he/she fails to cause the student to attend school regularly.
- h. After a notice of habitual truancy has been issued to the student's parent or guardian in any school year, notify the parent or guardian of any further unexcused absences as provided in the District's truancy management plan.

#### **B. Tardiness as it Relates to Absences and Truancy**

The District recognizes that a student, without an acceptable excuse, may arrive late for school or for a particular class or activity on an occasional and sporadic basis, and that such tardiness should not immediately and in all cases result in a finding of truancy. At the same time, repeated tardiness is inconsistent with the purpose of the compulsory attendance law and can be disruptive to a student's learning and/or to school/classroom operations. Further, regularly tolerating tardiness without any consequence can inhibit the development of personal responsibility.

Accordingly, if a student accumulates more than four (4) tardy notations in his/her attendance record during a quarter of the school year, the school attendance officer or a designee will attempt to meet with the student and/or the student's parent or guardian to evaluate the reasons for the tardiness, to consider any available strategies the parent/student can use to avoid future tardiness, and to establish progressive consequences. Following such a meeting (or attempt to hold a meeting) that involves the student's parent or guardian, tardiness during the remainder of the term that also involves an unexcused lack of the student's physical presence at school will be considered an instance of truancy under these procedures, but prior to such a meeting (or attempted meeting) such tardiness will not be considered truancy.

In grades K through 3, a student will be marked tardy (rather than absent) if he/she is not present at school and in his/her assigned classroom at the established start of the instructional day. Tardy students who initially arrive at school after the normal arrival time for students on the day in question shall check in at the designated school attendance office before proceeding to their classroom or other assigned location.

In grades 4 through 12, a student will be marked tardy (rather than absent) if he/she is not at school or not otherwise present in his/her regularly assigned class/activity (or another school-approved location) at the start of each instructional period where attendance is taken. Tardy students who initially arrive at school after the normal arrival time for students on the day in question shall check in at the designated school attendance office before proceeding to their classroom or other assigned location.

Tardiness that was not caused by any of the reasons that qualify as an excused absence is considered unexcused, and any opportunities for make-up work shall be provided according to make-up work procedures that apply to unexcused absences.

A student who arrives at school late because the student's school-provided transportation arrived late shall not be considered tardy and the student's non-attendance in the relevant class/activity shall be deemed excused in all respects.

### **C. Procedures Leading To Legal Referral**

Prior to any proceedings being brought against a student for habitual truancy or against the student's parent or guardian for failing to cause the student to attend school regularly, the school attendance officer must provide evidence that appropriate school personnel have, within the school year during which the truancy occurred, done all of the following:

1. Documented the student's truanancies and notified the student's parent or guardian of the truanancies as required by law and these procedures.
2. Met with the child's parent or guardian to discuss the student's truancy and various options under the law, or attempted to meet with the parent or guardian and received no response or been refused.
  - a. This meeting may also be used to obtain parent consent for any evaluation(s) (e.g., special education) which the district has determined are necessary and which require the consent of the student's parent or guardian.
  - b. This meeting is not required if it is not held within 10 days of the District's initial notice to the parent or guardian that the student is a habitual truant (after the student's fifth unexcused absence during a school semester).
3. Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the student to determine whether a change in the student's curriculum would resolve the student's truancy problem, and have considered any appropriate program or curriculum modifications.
  - a. The school attendance officer or designee should specifically review the compulsory attendance and truancy laws regarding curriculum modification options. The educational counseling may generally be conducted by school counselors, principals, or teachers.
  - b. If the student has a disability and either an individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan, the relevant team shall be involved in any decisions affecting the student's curriculum, educational program, or placement.
4. Evaluated the student to determine whether learning problems may be the cause of the student's truancy and, if so, taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals to overcome the learning problems. However, the student need not be further evaluated for learning problems as a prerequisite to a legal referral for truancy if tests administered within the previous year indicate that the student is performing at his/her grade level.
5. Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be the cause of the student's truancy, and, if so, taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.

With respect to the evaluations identified in items C.4 and C.5 of these procedures:

- The evaluations should include at least a review of the student's records, communication with the student, the student's teacher(s), and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s). Additional steps, such as direct observations may also be considered.

