



The Pennsylvania Conference education system and its schools are classified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as nonpublic schools. Each nonpublic school must adopt a written attendance policy that applies to both day schools and boarding schools. This policy may differ from the policy of the school district in which the child resides but must comply with compulsory attendance laws. The following policy will apply for all the schools within the Pennsylvania Conference education system.

Copies of the attendance policy must be distributed to parents at the beginning of each school year and to new enrollees upon enrollment. The attendance policy should be translated when there are large populations of non-English speaking parents/families. It is recommended that parents sign a form acknowledging their understanding of the policy.

Excused (Lawful) Absences

- Excused (lawful) absences include illness, family emergency, death of a family member, medical or dental appointments, authorized school activities, educational travel with prior approval, and court appointments that involve the child.
- Written documentation is required within 3 days of the student's return to school, or the absence will remain unexcused regardless of the reason.
- 24 P.S. 13-1327 Compulsory Attendance and Truancy Elimination Plan of the PA Department of Education allows for a maximum of 10 days of cumulative lawful absences, verified by parental notification during a school year.
- A maximum of 5 days of pre-planned absences can be considered excused but are included in the maximum number of lawful absences. Additional days over the 5 maximum days will be recorded as unexcused (unlawful) absences. Written requests for pre-planned absences (see addendums for form) must be completed a minimum of 5 school days in advance and require principal pre-approval. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work in advance of pre-planned absence days. Make-up work will be given upon the student's return along with a timeline for completion.
- Inclement weather-related absences that do not allow the student to be brought to school safely or public school closures due to inclement weather that affect the student's transportation to and from school will be excused with written documentation.



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- In the case of documented chronic medical conditions, illnesses reported by parents with doctors note do not count towards 10 days of excused absence mentioned above.
- It is understood that a one-time, unforeseen emergency may occur. Family emergencies that center around and specifically include the student may be authorized as a lawful absence at the discretion of the Pennsylvania Conference education administration. Details about the nature of the emergency must be included in the written communication to the school.



Unexcused (Unlawful) Absences

- Absences that do not qualify for one of the reasons above will be recorded as unexcused (unlawful). Examples may include but are not limited to:
 - No parent/guardian written communication about the student's absence
 - Students kept out of school to support the needs of parents/guardians or other family members (i.e. babysitting, doing errands, chores, convenience of picking up early, appointments for siblings or parents, etc.)
 - Oversleeping or not sleeping well (student or parent/guardian)
 - Missing the bus
 - Birthday celebrations
 - Staying home to finish school work
 - Family coming to visit, out late the night before, special occasions
 - Work or job hunting
 - Not reporting pre-planned absence within required time
 - Unexcused (unlawful) absences include absences without prior approval or more than 5 days of pre-planned absences
 - More than 3 days of absence without physician's note
- It is recommended that the teacher or principal notify the parents/guardians after every incident of an unexcused absence (see addendums for letter to parents/guardians).
- Students who are absent from the school for 10 consecutive school days shall be dropped from the active enrollment unless the school is provided with evidence the absence is lawful.
- As a general policy, unexcused/unlawful absences will not permit make-up work privileges; however, administration may give consideration to extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control.

Partial Day Attendance and Early Dismissal

- Students who arrive after 9:45 am will be marked as half-day absent.
- Students who arrive after 11:45 am will be marked as full day absent and will not be allowed to participate in any extra-curricular activities or field trips for that day.
- Students dismissed prior to 11:45 am will be marked as full day absent.
- Students dismissed between 11:45 am and 1:30 pm will be marked as half-day absent.
- Students dismissed after 1:30 pm will be marked as an early dismissal.
- For students dismissed mid-school day and returned to school: Students missing more than 2 hours will be marked as half-day absent; 3.5 hours or more will be marked as full-day absent.
- A note from the doctor or dentist must accompany the student back to school in order for the absence to be recorded as excused.

If a student must be excused from school prior to the end of the school day, the request must be completed via email to the teacher or principal. It is understood that early dismissals should seldom be requested and should be restricted to circumstances that are otherwise unavoidable. Permission will generally not be granted for early



dismissal in order for a student to attend private instructional lessons, tutoring, and/or non-medical appointment, etc. A note from the doctor or dentist office must accompany the student back to school upon return to school.

Excessive Absences

- A doctor’s note is required if the student is absent longer than 3 days due to any illness. Students may not be permitted to attend school until a doctor’s note is received. If the student is absent due to illness and visited the doctor, a note should be turned in to the office so proper documentation of the absence as “excused by doctor’s note” is recorded. Absences excused by a doctor’s note are recorded differently and are not calculated into the 10 day threshold of absences allowed per school year.
- Pennsylvania Compulsory Attendance Statutes require that every teacher or principal must report to the superintendent or school board when a child of compulsory school age has been absent three days, or their equivalent, without a lawful excuse. The rationale of such reporting is to actively respond to habitual truancy in an appropriate manner. The need for early intervention is crucial to truancy issues. Research demonstrates that a comprehensive approach that brings together the family, child, and other interested parties to create specific intervention strategies and plans is typically most effective. This comprehensive approach will include a Student Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) with the student’s parents/guardians, the student, other interested parties, and the principal to determine the student’s academic status and develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). See addendum for SAIP form.
 - The purpose of the SAIC is to discuss the root cause(s) of non-attendance and to develop a mutually agreed upon plan to facilitate regular school attendance. The SAIC provides all parties with the opportunity to identify, understand, and explore all issues contributing to the student’s non-attending behavior.
 - The following individual are to be invited to the conference:
 - Student
 - Student’s parent or person in parental relation
 - Individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource
 - Appropriate school personnel
 - Recommended service providers
 - An SAIC may be held even if parents/guardians decline to attend
 - Issues to be addressed at the SAIC should include but are not limited to:
 - Appropriateness of the student’s educational environment
 - Possible elements of the school environment that inhibit student success
 - Student’s current academic level and needs
 - Social, emotional, physical, mental, and behavioral health issues
 - Issues concerning family and home environment
 - Any other issues affecting the student’s attendance
 - The participants in the SAIC should work collaboratively to conduct a holistic assessment to determine the reason(s) the student is exhibiting truant behavior. Every member should have a vested interest in, and responsibility for, determining an appropriate plan to assist the student toward success both socially and academically. This SAIC also provides an opportunity to ensure that both the student and



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the family clearly understand the legal ramification of not adhering to compulsory attendance requirements.

- The primary goal of the SAIC is the development of a comprehensive School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) that is understood by, agreed upon, and supported by the student, parent, or person in parental relation, school representatives, and all other conference participants.
- The SAIP substantiates efforts made by the school, the family, and other vested parties to assist the student in addressing and resolving school attendance issues. This comprehensive system of supports and services provides documentation of the “good faith” effort between the school and the student’s family should future action be required (e.g., citation to the magisterial district judge and referral to the county children and youth agency upon the sixth unexcused absence.)
- Students having more than 3 unexcused absences are considered truant per the PA Compulsory School Attendance statutes and the school is to report these students to their local school district. Records of the SAIC and SAIP will be given to the local school district.
- If the student is subsequently, unlawfully absent at any point within the school year after the SAIP is in place, an official notice of the unexcused absence will be sent to the parents/guardians to inform them that the SAIP has been violated and that further action will be initiated by the local school district.
- Absences of 15 or more days within a school year may affect promotion to the next grade level.

Habitual truancy negatively impacts a child’s school performance and increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. An intensive and timely response to truancy is critical in those cases where a clear pattern of habitual truancy is evident. The local school district is required by Pennsylvania Compulsory Attendance Statutes to follow a reporting procedure that includes the local magisterial district judge. Parents/guardians who fail to comply with the provisions of the compulsory attendance law may be required to pay a fine plus court costs. Where it is evident that a parent’s actions or inactions directly impact their child’s attendance, a referral to the county children and youth agency may be considered when exhaustive efforts to engage a habitually truant child and family have failed.

Educational success for the student can only be achieved when there is mutual cooperation with parents/guardians and the school. “No other work committed to us is so important as the training of the youth, and every outlay demanded for its right accomplishment is means well spent.” – *Education*, page 218.

Addendums

- Student Absence Form
- Student Pre-Planned Absence Form
- Sample Letter to Parent of Absent/Truant Student – first unlawful absence
- Sample Letter to Parent of Absent/Truant Student – second unlawful absence
- Official Notice of Child’s Unlawful Absence – third unlawful absence



School Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian First Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Last Name: _____

Absent Student(s) First Name(s): _____

Absent Student(s) Last Name(s): _____

What day (or days) was the student(s) out? _____

Reason for Absence:

Student Illness Medical Appointment* Dental Appointment* Other – please specify

**Requires a note from a doctor or physician.*

Other:

(For Illness ONLY) Please give us some details on how your student was ill:

The student(s) was/will be: Out All Day Late Leaving Early

What date can we expect the student to return? _____

(For partial day absentees ONLY), what estimated time will the student(s) return or need to leave? _____

Pre-Planned Student Absence Form



School Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Planned Absences Request Form

- The Pennsylvania Conference Schools allow a maximum of 5 school days per school year for pre-planned absences. Additional days over the 5 maximum will be recorded as unexcused days.
- The required form must be completed a minimum of 5 school days in advance and requires Principal pre-approval. Absences taken without the required notice will be recorded as unexcused days.
- Pre-planned absences can include vacations, traveling, etc.
- Teachers are not required to provide make-up work in advance of pre-planned absence days. Make-up work will be given upon the student's return along with a timeline for completion.

STUDENT NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

STUDENT NAME: _____ GRADE: _____

Dates requested: _____

Prior number of excused days for educational trips during the current school year*: _____

**Policy: A maximum of five (5) days per school year will be approved for pre-planned absences. Any days requested beyond the five (5) approved cumulative days will be coded as unexcused/unlawful. Three (3) or more unlawful absences during the school year is considered habitually truant under definitions set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.*

Name of adult accompanying student: _____

Relationship of adult accompanying student: _____

PARENT NAME PRINTED

SIGNATURE OF PARENT

DATE

THIS SECTION FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY:

Date Completed Form Received: _____

Approved Denied Principal's Signature: _____

Parents/Guardians Notified Teachers Notified Recorded in Attendance

Office Notes:



First Unlawful Absence Letter to parent of Absent/Truant Student
(all letters should be on school letterhead and dated)

Parent/Guardian Name

Address

City, PA Zip Code

Dear <PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME>:

Regular attendance at school is an important part of every student's success and is necessary in order to gain the greatest benefit from the educational experience. Students who are frequently absent from school miss direct instruction and regular contact with their teachers. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania law and school policy require regular daily attendance. When absences accumulate, it may ultimately result in academic difficulty for your child.

This letter is sent to make you aware of <STUDENT NAME>'s unlawful absence on <DATE>. As the attached School Attendance Policy states, all absences are counted as unlawful until the school administrator receives a written excuse explaining the reason for absence. If a written excuse is not received within three school days, the absence will permanently be added to the student's file as unlawful. This letter serves as our first communication regarding <STUDENT'S NAME>'s unlawful absences. The attached policy will also describe the process that will be used should any further unlawful absences occur.

The <SCHOOL NAME> and you as [parent(s)/guardian(s)] share a common goal to ensure that your child reaches [his/her] full potential. If you have any questions, please call my office at <PHONE> so that we may work together to ensure <STUDENT'S NAME>'s educational success.

Sincerely,

<PRINCIPAL>



Second Unlawful Absence Letter to parent of Absent/Truant Student
(all letters should be on school letterhead and dated)

Parent/Guardian Name

Address

City, PA Zip Code

Dear <PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME>:

This letter is sent to make you aware that <STUDENT NAME> was absent unlawfully from school on <DATE>. This is the second unlawful absence recorded this year. Attendance requirements are meant to benefit your child's educational experience. I appreciate your cooperation in trying to improve your child's school attendance. You may request a school attendance improvement conference at this time to explore possible solutions to your child's unlawful absences. If you have any questions, please call my office at <PHONE>.

Sincerely,

<PRINCIPAL>



Third Unlawful Absence Letter to parent of Absent/Tuant Student

Send via certified mail and return receipt requested

(all letters should be on school letterhead and dated)

Parent/Guardian Name

Address

City, PA Zip Code

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF CHILD'S UNLAWFUL ABSENCE

Dear <PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME>:

This letter is to officially notify you that <STUDENT NAME> has been absent from school without a lawful excuse on the following dates:

- <DATE1>
- <DATE2>
- <DATE3>

These absences are unlawful and therefore constitute a violation of the compulsory attendance provision of the Pennsylvania School Code 24 P.S. 13-1327. Three unexcused absences during a single school year constitutes truancy under the Pennsylvania School Code.

This letter is also notification that the process for development of a School Attendance Improvement Plan for your child has now begun, which requires a **School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC)**. A SAIC is a conference where the child's absences and reasons for the absences are examined in order to improve attendance, with or without additional services (e.g. intermediate unit or county services). **You and your child are asked to attend this conference on <DATE, TIME, and PLACE>**. You may also invite any other person who has direct involvement with the student and their attendance at school. **Please contact me immediately if this date and time conflict with your schedule. If we don't hear from you, the conference must take place without your presence.**

If subsequent unlawful absences occur, Pennsylvania School Code 24 P.S. 13-1327 requires that your child's truancy be reported to your local school district for further action, with a copy of the above-mentioned School Attendance Improvement Plan. The local school district then has the authority to proceed with the Magisterial Court and/or County Children and Youth Agency, as they feel appropriate.

It is our sincere desire to resolve this situation in the best way possible for the educational, emotional, and spiritual success of your child. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

<PRINCIPAL>

<CONTACT PHONE AND EMAIL>