

Sylvan Heights Science Charter School

Policy Number: 204

Policy Title: Student Attendance

Adopted: December 4, 2002

Revised: November 25, 2019

Purpose:

The Board of the Sylvan Heights Science Charter School (School) recognizes that attendance is an important factor in educational success, and supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance issues.

Authority:

The Board requires the attendance of all students during the days and hours that school is in session, except that the Principal/Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and his/her designee may excuse a student for temporary absences in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, Board policy, and administrative regulations.

Definitions:

Compulsory school age shall mean the period of a student's life from the time the student's parents/guardians elect to have the student enter school, and which shall be no later than eight (8) years of age until the child reaches seventeen (17) years of age. Beginning with academic year 2020-2021, compulsory school age shall mean no later than age six (6) until age eighteen (18). The term does not include a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.

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.

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.

Person in parental relation shall mean a:

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

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.

Delegation of Responsibility:

The Principal/CAO or his/her designee, as well as the attendance officer, shall be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy. The Principal/CAO shall annually notify students, parents/guardians and staff about the School's attendance policy by publishing such policy in the Sylvan Heights Science Charter School Handbook, on the School website and via other efficient methods. The Principal/CAO shall develop administrative regulations for the attendance of students which:

1. Govern the maintenance of attendance records in accordance with law. Detail the process for submission of requests and excuses for student absences.
2. 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 magisterial district judge.
3. Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.

Guidelines

Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

All students who attend Sylvan Heights Science Charter School shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements.

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.

Excused/Lawful Absence

The Board considers the following conditions to constitute reasonable cause for absence from School:

1. Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated School staff during school hours

for health-related reasons.

2. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth, or territory.
3. Quarantine.
4. Family emergency.
5. Recovery from accident.
6. Required court attendance.
7. Death in the immediate family.
8. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA), or combined 4-H and FFA group, with prior approval.
9. Participation in a musical performance in conjunction with a national veterans' organization or incorporated unit for an event or funeral, upon prior written request.
10. Observance of religious holidays of bona fide religious group, with prior approval.
11. Participation in a religious instructional programs, if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The parent/guardians 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.
12. Educational tours and trips not sponsored by the School if the following elements are met:
 - a. The parent/guardian submits a written request to the Principal/CAO for permission that the educational tour or trip be excused, at least five (5) days prior to the absence. The application should state the date(s) of proposed absence, student's name, location of the trip, and an explanation of the educational value the student will receive for

participating in the trip. This form is available on the School's website and at the Front Office.

- b. The adult directing and supervising the educational tour or trip is acceptable to the parents/guardians and the Principal/CAO. Excused trips shall not exceed five (5) school days per school year; and
- c. The student's participation has been approved by the Principal/CAO.

Students may take educational trips totaling no more than five (5) days per school year. The student required to complete classroom assignments occurring during the absence. Trips that include days of absence during PSSA state testing will not be approved.

- 13. Homebound students unable to attend school on a regular basis, upon the written recommendation of a physician, school psychologist, or a school psychiatrist, and upon the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education.
- 14. Other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause a student's absence, including but not limited to circumstances related to homelessness and foster care.

Absences shall be treated as unlawful until the School receives a written excuse signed by the parent/guardian explaining the absence, to be submitted within five (5) days of the absence. Absences of three (3) or more consecutive school days, or of ten (10) cumulative days, shall require medical documentation.

The Board shall report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of seventeen (17). The Board shall issue notice to parents/guardians who fail to comply with the requirements of compulsory attendance that such infractions will be prosecuted according to law.

Procedures for Tardiness and Early Dismissals:

Students' attendance, tardiness, and early dismissals to and from school are recorded daily by School staff.

Students arriving after 8:30 AM must enter the building from the front entrance with their parent or guardian. The parent or guardian must sign in at the Reception Desk. All other doors will be locked at 8:30 AM. This enhances school safety while ensuring that each tardy offense is verified.

Students will be dismissed at the scheduled time of 3:30 PM. Parent/guardians must notify the School receptionist if a student is to be dismissed early from school. Parents/guardians must send a note to the teacher about the early dismissal. Early dismissal from school should be for medical appointments or previously approved educational trips. To the extent feasible, parents should strive to schedule routine medical appointments outside of the school day.

Parents must send a doctor's note verifying the tardiness, early dismissal, or half-day absence within five (5) days. When an early dismissal is necessary, parents/guardians must come inside the building to sign students out at the front desk. Students will only be released to the parent/guardian of record or to persons designated on the School's emergency forms completed by the parent/guardian. Persons listed on the School's emergency form who arrive to pick up a student will be required to show picture identification before the student is permitted to leave School property. If the names of the persons on the emergency form change, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to send a note to the School administration with the changed information.

For instances when students are tardy or dismissed without lawful excuse, students will be issued a tardy/unlawful early dismissal letter after five (5) offenses. Seven (7) tardy/unlawful early dismissal offenses shall equate to one (1) unexcused absence. The parent/guardian will be expected to attend a conference with a School representative to discuss tardiness and unexcused early dismissals.

ATTENDANCE

All students are expected to report to school every day and on time. If a student will be absent, the parent/guardian should notify the student's teacher so that the parent/guardian can arrange to pick up assignments. If illness is the excuse for an absence, students should return to school from an absence with a parent/guardian's note or doctor's excuse. If a parent/guardian forgets to send or bring the required excuse note on the day that the student returns to school, the parent/guardian shall have five (5) days following the absence to send/bring the written note to School staff. Notes received from parents via email or classroom DoJo may be counted in the absence of handwritten note.

Any absence that is not verified with a written excuse note from the parent/guardian or a doctor, within five (5) days, shall be recorded as an "unexcused absence."

A written medical excuse is required for an absence for more than three (3) consecutive days and for any absence after ten (10) cumulative total absences per school year.

Unexcused Absences

Absences that do not meet the criteria outlined in this policy to amount to excused absences shall be permanently considered unexcused.

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

Parental Notification –

Parents will be notified daily if their student is not in school that day.

Enforcement of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

Student is Truant –

When a student has been absent for three (3) days during the current school year without lawful excuse, School 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.

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.

The notice may include the offer of a School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC). If the student incurs additional unexcused absences after issuance of the notice and SAIC was not previously held, School staff shall offer a SAIC.

SAIC –

School staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the SAIC.

The purpose of the SAIC is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.

The following individuals shall be invited to the SAIC:

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 SAIC shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference.

The outcome of the SAIC shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan (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 the appropriate School staff.

The School may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until the schedule SAIC has been held and the student has incurred six (6) or more days of unexcused absences.

Student is Habitually Truant –

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, School staff:

1. Shall refer the student to:
 - a. A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or
 - b. The local children and youth agency.
2. 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.

Regardless of age, when School staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate magisterial district judge, the School shall provide verification that it held a SAIC.

Filing a Citation –

A citation shall be filed in the office of the magisterial district judge assigned to oversee the property on which the Sylvan Heights Science Charter School is located.

Additional citations for subsequent violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements may only be filed against a personal in parental relation in accordance with specific provisions of the law.

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.

Discipline

The School shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment, or transfer for truant behavior.

References:

24 P.S. § 5-510,
24 P.S. § 5-510.2
24 P.S. § 13-1301
24 P.S. § 13-1318
24 P.S. § 13-1326
24 P.S. § 13-1327
24 P.S. § 13-1327.1
24 P.S. § 13-1329
24 P.S. § 13-1330
24 P.S. § 13-1332
24 P.S. § 13-1333
24 P.S. § 13-1333.1
24 P.S. § 13-1333.2
24 P.S. § 13-1333.3
24 P.S. § 13-1338
24 P.S. § 13-1339
24 P.S. § 13-1354
24 P.S. § 15-1501
24 P.S. § 15-1504
24 P.S. § 15-1546

42 Pa. C.S.A. § 6302
22 PA Code § 4.4
22 PA Code § 11.1
22 PA Code § 11.2
22 PA Code § 11.3
22 PA Code § 11.5
22 PA Code § 11.8
22 PA Code § 11.12
22 PA Code § 11.13
22 PA Code § 11.21
22 PA Code § 11.22
22 PA Code § 11.23
22 PA Code § 11.24
22 PA Code § 11.25
22 PA Code § 11.26
22 PA Code § 11.28
22 PA Code § 11.31
22 PA Code § 11.32
22 PA Code § 11.34
22 PA Code § 11.41
22 PA Code § 12.1

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