

# WALLINGFORD- SWARTHMORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: STUDENTS

TITLE: ATTENDANCE

ADOPTED: July 17, 2006

REVISED: February 9, 2015  
June 24, 2019

	<p style="text-align: center;">204. ATTENDANCE</p> <p><b>Purpose</b></p> <p>The Board requires that compulsory school-age students enrolled in District schools attend school regularly, in accordance with state law. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.</p> <p><b>Definitions</b></p> <p>For purposes of this Board Policy, the following definitions shall apply:</p> <p><b>Absence</b> – the nonattendance of a student on those days and half days when school is in session.</p> <p><b>Excused Absence</b> – includes the absence of a student for any of the reasons listed in the section below titled “Excused Absences.”</p> <p><b>Unexcused Absence</b> – the absence of a student for any reason that does not qualify as an “Excused Absence.”</p> <p><b>Tardiness</b> – absence of a student at the beginning of any morning or afternoon session, provided the student is in attendance before the close of that session.</p> <p><b>Excused Tardiness</b> – absence of a student at the beginning of any morning or afternoon session that is due to any of the reasons that may be excused for full day absence.</p> <p><b>Unexcused Tardiness</b> – lateness for any reason that does not qualify as “Excused Tardiness.”</p> <p><b>Compulsory school age</b> shall mean the period of a child’s life from the time the child’s parents elect to have the child enter school, which shall not be later than the age of eight (8) years, until the age of seventeen (17) years. The term shall not include any child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited senior high school.</p>
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**Truant** shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.

**Habitually truant** shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance.

**Person in parental relation** shall mean (1) a custodial biological or adoptive parent; (2) a noncustodial biological or adoptive parent; (3) guardian of the person of a child; or (4) a person with whom a child lives and who is acting in a parental role of a child.

**School attendance improvement conference** shall mean a conference where the child'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: (1) the child; (2) the child's person in parental relation; (3) other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource; (4) appropriate school personnel; and (5) recommended service providers.

**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 child's absences. The term may include an educational assessment in an alternative education program, provided the program does not include a program for disruptive youth.

**Tracking Attendance**

School principals, including assistant principals, or their designee(s), shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

1. Tracking student attendance, including for online programs.
2. Communicating with parents/guardians regarding truancy.
3. Coordinating, attending and participating in school attendance improvement conferences and documenting the outcome of the conference in a written school attendance improvement plan in accordance with the guidelines contained herein.
4. Filing truancy citations in the Magisterial District Court when deemed necessary.

5. Attending court procedures related to truancy and presenting truancy cases in court.
6. Requesting the Magisterial District Court to subpoena any school staff member as a witness in order to prove the District's truancy case.
7. Referring habitually truant children to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or to the Delaware County Office of Children and Youth for services when appropriate and/or required or permitted by law.

**Unexcused Absences**

All absences are considered unexcused until the District receives a written note or District approved electronic/digital notification for the absence. If written verification of the reason for absence is not received within three (3) school days of the student's return to school, the absence will automatically be recorded as unexcused in the student's record. The mere fact that a parent/guardian has written an excuse note does not mean the absence is excused. Reasons for absence of a doubtful nature are subject to administrative review.

**General Attendance Guidelines / Exemptions from School Attendance**

Attendance need not always be within school facilities. A student will 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, career education or District-sponsored cyber program; or the student is receiving approved homebound instruction.

The following students shall be excused from the requirements the District's attendance requirements, upon request and with the required approval:

- On certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Department of Education, children who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance.
- Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught.
- Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in District schools.

- Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law.
- Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved.
- 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 service under duly issued permits.
- Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly employed during the school session and holding a lawfully issued employment certificate.

**Excused Absences**

A student absence is considered excused under the following circumstances:

1. When the student is prevented from attendance for mental, physical, or other urgent reasons such as:

- Illness (Absences of 3 or more consecutive school days require a doctor's note.)
- Family Emergency
- Quarantine
- Recovery from Accident
- Death of a Family Member
- Participation in a musical performance in conjunction with a national veterans' organization or incorporated unit for an event or funeral. The national veterans' organization or incorporated unit must provide the student with note in advance of the absence indicating the date, location and time of the event or funeral.
- Medical and Dental Appointments
- Authorized School Activities
- Pre-Approved Educational Tours/ Educational Family Trips (Maximum 10 days per school year) (See Attachment C). In order for educational tours/educational trips to be recognized as excused absences, the following conditions must be met:
  - The student must be in good academic, disciplinary, and attendance standing; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The parent/guardian must submit the Trip Preapproval Request Form (Attachment C) at least one week prior to the absence; the request must be approved by the building principal or designee prior to the tour/trip.</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre-Approved College Visitations</li><li>• Pre-Approved Religious Instruction (limit 36 hours per year)</li><li>• Bona Fide Religious Holiday</li><li>• For purposes of receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the District's curricula when the excusal does not interfere with the student's regular program of studies, the qualifications of the tutor or instructor are satisfactory to the Superintendent or designee, and permission for such excusal is sought in writing by the parent/guardian of the child in advance of the commencement of such tutoring</li></ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. When the student is required to leave school for the purposes of attending court hearings related to their involvement with the county children and youth agency or juvenile probation office.</li><li>3. If the student is absent due to participation in a project sponsored by an organization that is eligible to apply for a grant under the Pennsylvania Agricultural Fair Act.</li><li>4. If a student is dismissed from school during school hours for health-related reasons by a certified school nurse, registered nurse, licensed practical nurse or a school administrator or designee employed by the District.</li><li>5. For the purpose of obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.</li><li>6. If a student whose parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or is immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, with regard to school attendance, tests and extra-curricular or co-curricular activities, at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee, no penalties shall be imposed for absences of up to five (5) days. Teachers shall assist students in making up work caused by such absences.</li><li>7. For other strictly construed, urgent reasons, as determined by the Superintendent.</li></ol> <p>Teachers shall assist students in making up work caused by excused absences, including, where applicable, providing work prior to the absence, rescheduling assessments, deferral of assignment deadlines, and other reasonable accommodations.</p>
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**Tardiness to School**

Tardiness to school shall be handled according to administrative procedures or administrative determination. An accumulation of time missed from school due to unexcused tardiness can equate to full days of truancy and may be handled in the same manner as other unlawful absences. (Attachment F – Notification of School Tardiness)

**Ten Consecutive Absences**

The building principal will be notified when a student misses ten (10) consecutive school days to consider, in consultation with the Director of Student Services or designee, whether the student shall be dropped from the active membership rolls. (Attachments D and E) Students may not be dropped from the active membership rolls if the school is provided with evidence that the excuse is legal or the District is pursuing compulsory attendance prosecution. Should the student subsequently return to school, they will not be guaranteed placement in the same classroom as the one left before the withdrawal from attendance.

**Policy Notification**

Parents/guardians shall be given copies of the District’s attendance Policy at the time of enrollment for new students, upon request.

This Board Policy will be posted on the District’s publicly accessible website for review at any time.

**School Responses and Procedures for Unexcused Absences**

Parents/guardians and students shall submit the required excuse note within three (3) school days of the child’s return to school. If written verification of the reason for absence is not received within three (3) school days of the child’s return to school, the absence will be counted towards the calculation of unexcused absences for purposes of reporting truancy. The accumulation of tardiness to school may be included in the calculation of a student’s total number of unexcused absences for purposes of responding to and reporting unexcused absence, as detailed below.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative absences for illness verified by parental notification may be permitted during a school year. All absences for illness beyond ten (10) cumulative days per school year shall require an excuse from the child’s primary care or treating physician, who may not be the child’s parent/guardian.

**Third Unexcused Absence**

Within ten (10) school days of a child’s third unexcused absence, the principal or designee shall send an Official Notice of Truancy. (See Attachment A). Included in this notice shall be a description of the consequences if the child becomes habitually truant. This notice may include an invitation to schedule a school attendance improvement conference, and shall be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation to the child. When transmitted to a person who is not the biological or adoptive parent, such notice shall also be provided to the child’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.

**Continued Absenteeism**

If a child of compulsory school age continues to incur unexcused absences after the issuance of the Official Notice of Truancy, the school shall then schedule a school attendance improvement conference, unless a conference was previously held following the Official Notice of Truancy. (See Attachment B).

The following shall apply with respect to a school attendance improvement conference:

- There is no legal requirement that the child or person in parental relation attend the conference, and the conference shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference after advance written notice and attempts to communicate via telephone.
- The outcome of the conference shall be documented in a written school attendance improvement plan, on the template provided by the Department of Education for this purpose.
- Further legal action may not be taken to address unexcused absences by the child until after the date for the scheduled school attendance improvement conference has passed.

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

**Procedure for Addressing Habitually Truant Children**

When a child is habitually truant and under fifteen (15) years of age at the time of referral, the Director of Student Services or designee:

- a. Shall refer the child to either (1) a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the Delaware County Office of Children and Youth for services or possible disposition as a dependent child.
- b. May file a citation in the office of the magisterial district judge having jurisdiction in the region against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the child. The venue for the filing of such a citation shall be based on the location of the school in which the child is enrolled or shall be enrolled, unless the child is enrolled in a cyber charter school, in which case the proper venue shall be based on the residence of the child.

When a child is habitually truant and fifteen (15) years of age or older at the time of referral, the Director of Student Services or designee shall either:

- a. Refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or service; or
- b. File a citation in the office of the magisterial district judge having jurisdiction in the region against the child or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the child. The venue for the filing of such a citation shall be based on the location of the school in which the child is enrolled or shall be enrolled, unless the child is enrolled in a cyber charter school, in which case the proper venue shall be based on the residence of the child.

If a child who is fifteen (15) years of age or older continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or fails to participate in the such a program as recommended through the school attendance improvement conference, the school may refer the child to the Delaware County Office of Children and Youth for possible disposition as a dependent child.

When referring a habitually truant child to the Delaware County Office of Children and Youth or filing a citation with the magisterial district judge having jurisdiction over the region, the Director of Student Services or designee shall provide verification that a school attendance improvement conference was held.

No citation may be filed against a child or a person in parental relation with the child who resides in the same household as the child for a subsequent violation of school attendance if any of the following circumstances apply:



<p>Legal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A proceeding is already pending against the child or person in parental relation with the child who resides in the same household as the child and judgment in the first proceeding has not yet been entered, unless a warrant has been issued for failure of the child or person in parental relation to appear before the court and the warrant has not yet been served.</li> <li>• A referral for services has been made to the Delaware County Office of Children and Youth, the agency has not closed the case, and the District has not consulted with the Delaware County Office of Children and Youth prior to filing the petition.</li> <li>• A petition has been filed alleging the child is dependent due to being habitually truant and the case remains under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>24 P.S. 1301</u></li> <li>2. <u>24 P.S. 1326</u></li> <li>3. <u>24 P.S. 1327</u></li> <li>4. <u>22 PA Code 11.12</u></li> <li>5. <u>22 PA Code 11.13</u></li> <li>6. <u>22 PA Code 11.41</u></li> <li>7. <u>22 PA Code 12.1</u></li> <li>8. Pol. 200</li> <li>9. Pol. 113</li> <li>10. <u>24 P.S. 1302</u></li> <li>11. <u>24 P.S. 1329</u></li> <li>12. <u>24 P.S. 1330</u></li> <li>13. <u>22 PA Code 11.11</u></li> <li>14. <u>22 PA Code 11.23</u></li> <li>15. <u>22 PA Code 11.25</u></li> <li>17. <u>22 PA Code 11.26</u></li> <li>18. <u>22 PA Code 11.21</u></li> <li>19. <u>22 PA Code 11.22</u></li> <li>20. <u>22 PA Code 11.28</u></li> <li>21. Pol. 115</li> <li>22. Pol. 116</li> <li>23. Pol. 117</li> <li>24. Pol. 118</li> <li>25. <u>24 P.S. 1546</u></li> <li>26. <u>22 PA Code 11.34</u></li> <li>27. Pol. 113.3</li> <li>28. <u>22 PA Code 11.5</u></li> <li>29. <u>22 PA Code 11.32</u></li> <li>30. <u>24 P.S. 1327.1</u></li> <li>31. Pol. 137</li> </ol>
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	<p><u>32. 24 P.S. 1333</u> <u>33. 24 P.S. 1354</u> <u>34. 24 P.S. 1332</u> <u>36. 22 PA Code 11.24</u> <u>37. 24 P.S. 1501</u> <u>38. 24 P.S. 1504</u> <u>39. 22 PA Code 4.4</u> <u>40. 22 PA Code 11.1</u> <u>41. 24 P.S. 1339</u> <u>42. 24 P.S. 1338</u> 43. Pol. 218 44. Pol. 233 <u>45. 24 P.S. 1318</u> <u>46. 22 PA Code 11.2</u> <u>47. 22 PA Code 11.3</u> <u>22 PA Code 11.8</u> <u>24 P.S. 510</u></p>
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