



Student Attendance

Purpose

The Board of Trustees (“Board”) recognizes that attendance is an important factor in the educational success of students. The Board supports a comprehensive approach to identifying and addressing student attendance issues.

Authority

The Board requires attendance of all students enrolled at Young Scholars Charter School (“School”) during the days and hours that school is in session, except that authorized School staff may excuse a student for temporary absences in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, Board Policy, and any related administrative procedures.

Definitions

Compulsory school age shall mean the period of a student’s life from the time the student’s person in parental relation elects to have the student enter school, which shall be no later than six (6) years of age, until the student reaches eighteen (18) years of age. The term does not include a student who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.

Tuant shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences (or the equivalent thereof) during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.

Habitually truant shall mean having incurred six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences (or the equivalent thereof) during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.

Person in parental relation shall mean any one of the following:

1. Custodial biological or adoptive parent.
2. Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent.
3. Guardian of the person of a child.

4. Person with whom a child lives and who is acting in a parental role of a child.

This term does 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 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: (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; 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 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 the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer or designee shall ensure students enrolled in the School comply with state attendance laws and regulations, and shall be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this Policy.

School staff shall communicate attendance information to students' school district of residence, in accordance with law.

Students are responsible for all assignments missed during absences from school, unless other arrangements have been approved by the Chief Executive Officer or designee.

The Chief Executive Officer or designee shall annually notify staff, students and persons in parental relation about the School's attendance policy and school rules and procedures governing student attendance, absences, and excusals by publishing such information in the student handbook.

The Chief Executive Officer or designee is authorized to develop, communicate, and implement additional procedures related to student attendance not inconsistent with the guidelines outlined below, in accordance with applicable law.

Guidelines

If a student will be absent from school for the day, the parent/guardian is asked to contact the School by the time designated by the Chief Executive Officer or designee to explain the reason for the absence. The School will send home and automated call notifying parents/guardians of any absence of their child from school.

Unexcused Absences

All absences are considered unexcused until the School receives a written note or email documenting a valid reason for the absence, as detailed below. The mere fact that a parent/guardian has written or

submitted an excuse note does not mean the absence is excused. Reasons for absence of a doubtful nature are subject to administrative review. A written excuse explaining a student's absence shall be submitted within three (3) days of the absence.

General Attendance Guidelines

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; the student is receiving approved homebound instruction, or the student's placement is instruction in the home.

Excused Absences

The following types of / reasons for absence shall be considered excused by the 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. This category shall include medical and dental appointments.
3. Pre-approved attendance in authorized School activities.
4. Quarantine.
5. Family emergency.
6. Recovery from accident.
7. Required court attendance.
8. Death in family.
9. Receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the School'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 Chief Executive Officer 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.
10. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group, upon prior written request.
11. Participation in a musical performance in conjunction with a national veterans' organization or incorporated unit for an event or funeral, provided the organization or unit provides the student with a signed excuse, including the date, location and time of the event or funeral. The student must provide the signed excuse to the School prior to excusal.

12. Observance of a religious holiday observed by a bona fide religious group, upon prior written request from the parent/guardian.
13. Nonschool-sponsored educational tours or trips, if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The parent/guardian submits the required documentation for excusal prior to the absence, within the designated timeframe specified by the School.
 - b. The student's participation has been approved by the Chief Executive Officer or designee
14. Participating in a religious instruction program, if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The parent/guardian 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.
15. College or postsecondary institution visit, with prior approval.
16. 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 cocurricular activities, at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer or designee, no penalties shall be imposed for absences of up to five (5) days.
17. Circumstances related to homelessness and foster care.
18. Other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause a student's absence, as determined by the Chief Executive Officer or designee. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance.

The Board may limit the number and duration of (1) non-school-sponsored educational tours or trips; and (2) college or postsecondary institution visits for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school year.

A maximum of five (5) days of cumulative excused absences due to illness, as verified by parent/guardian notification, is permitted during one school year. All absences due to illness beyond the 5-day limit will require a written note from the child's healthcare provider, who may not be the parent/guardian. Additionally, for any absence from school due to illness that is three (3) or more consecutive school days in duration, then an excuse note from the student's healthcare provider, who may not be the parent/guardian, shall be required in order for the absences to be considered excused.

School Responses and Procedures for Unexcused Absences

Students who are enrolled in the School but, who are at any time during the school term absent for 10 consecutive school days, shall be removed from the School's membership roll unless the School has been provided with evidence that the absence may be legally excused or compulsory attendance prosecution has been or is being initiated.

Third Unlawful Absence

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

Continued Absenteeism

If the student continues to incur unexcused absences after the issuance of the Official Notice of Truancy, the School shall then schedule by advance written notice a school attendance improvement conference to the student and the person in parental relation to the student, unless a conference was previously held following the Official Notice of Truancy. The following shall apply with respect to a school attendance improvement conference:

1. There is no legal requirement that the student 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.
2. 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.
3. Further legal action may not be taken to address unlawful absences by the child until after the date for the scheduled school attendance improvement conference has passed.

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

Procedure for Addressing Habitually Truant Children

When a student is habitually truant and under fifteen (15) years of age at the time of referral, the School:

1. Shall refer the child to either (1) a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the Office of Children and Youth for services or possible disposition as a

dependent child.

2. 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 student. 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.

When a student is habitually truant and fifteen (15) years of age or older at the time of referral, the School shall either:

1. Refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or service.
2. File a citation in the office of the magisterial district judge having jurisdiction in the region against the student or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student. 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.

If a student 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 such a program as recommended through the school attendance improvement conference, the School may refer the child to the Office of Children and Youth for possible disposition as a dependent child.

When referring a habitually truant student to the Office of Children and Youth or filing a citation with the magisterial district judge having jurisdiction over the region, the School shall provide verification that a school attendance improvement conference was held.

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

1. A proceeding is already pending against the student or person in parental relation with the student who resides in the same household as the student and judgment in the first proceeding has not yet been entered, unless a warrant has been issued for failure of the student or person in parental relation to appear before the court and the warrant has not yet been served.
2. A referral for services has been made to the Office of Children and Youth, the agency has not closed the case, and the School has not consulted with the Office of Children and Youth prior to filing the petition.
3. A petition has been filed alleging the student is dependent due to being habitually truant and the case remains under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court.

Exemption From Compulsory Attendance

The following students shall be excused from the requirements of compulsory school attendance, upon request and with the required approval:

1. 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.
2. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught.
3. Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in the School.
4. Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law.
5. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved.
6. Students fifteen (15) years of age, as well as students fourteen (14) years of age who have completed the highest elementary grade, engaged in farm work or private domestic service under duly issued permits.
7. Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly engaged in useful and lawful employment during the school session and holding a valid employment certificate. Regularly engaged means thirty-five (35) or more hours per week of employment.