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# Student Attendance Manual

WARWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT

301 West Orange Street  
Lancaster, PA 17543

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## Overview

The Warwick School District is committed to working with students and parents/guardians to provide a framework that supports consistent and regular attendance for all children. We value the education of our students, recognizing the relationship between regular attendance and student achievement. We work with our families to ensure that whenever possible, their children are in attendance at school.

The purpose of this attendance manual is to provide information about the laws and regulations governing school attendance, and the procedures followed by the District to maintain compliance with these mandated policies. Through utilization of the guidelines and forms provided in this manual, the District reinforces consistent implementation of attendance procedures across all K-12 schools. These procedures help ensure students attend school on a regular basis.

## Pennsylvania Compulsory Education Laws

The term *compulsory school age* in Pennsylvania refers to the period of a child's life from the time the child enters school as a beginner (kindergarten or first grade), which may be no later than eight years of age, until the age of seventeen or graduation from a high school, whichever occurs first. It is mandatory for all children of compulsory school age having a legal residence in Pennsylvania to attend a day school in which the subjects and activities prescribed by the Standards of the State Board of Education are taught in the English language, except in certain situations found in sections 1327, 1327.1, 1329, and 1330 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

All students from age 8 until age 17 are required to participate in an approved educational program. Parents or guardians are required by law to ensure that their children attend an approved educational program.

The following chart provides a quick overview of Pennsylvania’s educational laws regarding compulsory school attendance.

Code Section	Tit. 24 §§13-1326, et seq.
Age at Which School Attendance is Required	Between 8 and 17 or at the time of the child’s life that they have entered school
Exceptions to Attendance Requirements	Graduated high school; 15 and with approval, child may enroll in private trade school; enrolled in home education program pursuant to Tit. 24 §13-1327.1 or private school; physical/mental defects rendering education impracticable; 16 and lawfully employed; 15 and engaged in farming or domestic service or 14 if engaged in same having achieved highest elementary grade; resides over 2 miles from nearest public highway, school or free public transportation is not furnished
Home School Provisions	File annual notice with a notarized affidavit of various information including proposed education objectives and immunization record; evaluation by teacher or administrator; minimum course requirements at each educational level; portfolio of records and materials
Penalties on Parents for Noncompliance	Up to \$300, together with costs and upon default of payment subjected to county jail up to 5 days

Source: <http://law.findlaw.com/state-laws/compulsory-education/pennsylvania/>

Although the compulsory education law defines the starting age as 8 years, the Warwick School District implements these regulations as soon as a student enrolls in the school system. For example, if a student is enrolled in kindergarten at the age of 5 or 6 years old, the district will implement the attendance laws for that child. All students enrolled in the district prior to the age of 8 must abide by the attendance laws.

## **Absence from School**

Absence is defined as the nonattendance of a student on a day that school is in session. It is expected that a parent/guardian notify the school about the student's illness or family emergency on the day of the absence.

### **Unlawful Absence (under 17 years of age)/Unexcused Absence (17 years of age or older)**

Parents/guardians must provide a written explanation for the absence of their student. All absences should be treated as unlawful until the school district receives a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for an absence. Parents/guardians and students should submit the written explanation within three (3) school days of the absence. If no written explanation is provided, the absence is recorded as unexcused/unlawful. Likewise, if a written explanation offers an excuse for absence that is not allowable (as outlined in Board policy no. 204 of this attendance manual), the absence will be recorded as unexcused/unlawful. If a written explanation is questionable in nature, the absence will be investigated. An absence only becomes excused when the school codes it accordingly.

When students under the age of 17 have an unexcused absence, the absence will be counted as unlawful. As per the Pennsylvania Department of Education, all unlawful absences are considered truant.

Unexcused absences include absence from school due to parental neglect, parental consent for reasons other than those specifically excused, illegal employment, and truancy.

### **Lawful Absence**

A lawful absence from school is broadly defined by the state. Excused absences from school at the Warwick School District include the following:

- ◆ Illness
- ◆ Prearranged medical, dental, clinic, or hospital appointment
- ◆ Court appearances
- ◆ Funeral of relative
- ◆ Educational trips preapproved by the appropriate administrator - limit of two (2) annually, not to exceed a total of (5) school days *(see additional areas listed on the next page)*

- ◆ Pre-approved annual visits to post-secondary options:
  - Colleges, trade schools or job sites-with a maximum (non-cumulative) of:
    - 9<sup>th</sup> – 1 day
    - 10<sup>th</sup> – 1 day
    - 11<sup>th</sup> – 3 days
    - 12<sup>th</sup> – 3 days
- ◆ Authorized school activities
- ◆ Family emergencies
- ◆ Observance of student’s religious holiday
- ◆ Participation in religious instruction program - maximum of 36 hours annually
- ◆ Attendance at PA State Farm Show - one (1) day only
- ◆ Participation in a 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA project - upon written request
- ◆ Hunting - maximum of three (3) days annually

The building administrator may require a doctor’s certificate in situations where frequent absences are occurring and/or it appears absences are unexcused and/or unlawful. This requirement may remain in effect for the remainder of the school year.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification are permitted during a school year. All cumulative lawful absences verified by parent note beyond ten (10) days will require an excuse from a physician. Students who are legally absent have the opportunity to make up any work missed. It is expected that students complete the work within the time frame allotted by school staff.

## **Educational Trips**

A student may be permitted to take a limit of two (2) educational trips per school year, with his/her parents/guardians, not to exceed a total of five (5) school days. These trips are to be preapproved and comply with program requirements as described in the *Student Handbook*. When an educational trip requires an absence of one day from school, an *Educational Trip Request Form* must be completed and given to the building administrator for prior approval. When an educational trip requires an absence of two or more consecutive days, the *Educational Trip Request Form* must be completed and returned to the Superintendent’s Office at least one (1) week prior to the trip. See the Appendices section for a copy of this form. The form is also located on the district and school websites.

Educational trips for the first and last ten (10) days of school and during scheduled testing times (for state-mandated assessments – PSSA, Keystone Exams; final exams) are strongly discouraged and may not be approved during these windows. The testing calendar is available in your student's school office.

Educational trips will not be approved for students who are failing their subjects or have unexcused absences. Shopping trips and similar activities will not be approved as educational trips. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the student's building administrator for details relating to excused absences for educational trips.

### **Medical Appointments**

Students with an appointment to visit a doctor or dentist during school hours may be excused for the absence if a signed written request is provided by the parent/guardian prior to the event. The written request should include the name of the physician and appointment time. A note from the doctor/dentist must be given to the office upon the student's return to school. If a student does not bring a note to school before leaving for an appointment, the absence will be marked unexcused.

If an appointment becomes necessary at the last minute, the parent/guardian should contact the building to provide authorization for the student to leave school. A note from the doctor/dentist should follow the student's return to school, recognizing the three-day grace period.

Student athletes are strongly encouraged to make appointments after school hours. If students in extracurricular activities have a doctor's appointment prior to 1:00 p.m., they must return to school before the end of the school day with a note from the doctor/dentist in order to participate in the after school events.

## **Tardiness**

Tardiness is defined as arriving late to a student's homeroom or class. Tardiness can have a significant negative impact on the learning process. Students must be in their homeroom classes by the starting time of the school. Below are the starting and ending times for the elementary schools, middle school, and high school.

- Elementary (Grades K - 6): 8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- Middle School (Grades 7 - 8): 7:49 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
- High School (Grades 9 -12): 8:00 a.m. - 3:01 p.m.

## **District Accountability for Absences**

It is the responsibility of each school to maintain accountability for student attendance. Building administrators are responsible for assuring that all regulations are followed. If there are situations that cannot be addressed at the building level, and/or issues that directly relate to district policy regarding attendance, the District Office will provide guidance.

As per Board policy no. 204, the Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians and staff about the district's attendance policy by publishing it in the student handbook, parent newsletters, district web site and other efficient methods. School rules and procedures governing student attendance, absences and excusals will be shared annually with these stakeholders.

### **Written Notification for Absences**

The Warwick School District has implemented the following guidelines for monitoring attendance and providing written notification to parents/guardians about their student's absences.

### **Lawful Absences**

- After a student has seven (7) lawful absences (excuses consist of approved lawful absences), a Doctor's Excuse Warning Letter is issued to the parent/guardian.



- After a student has ten (10) lawful absences (excuses consist of approved lawful absences), a Doctor's Excuse Required Letter is sent to the parent/guardian. Subsequent absences that do not have an accompanying doctor's note will be considered unlawful.
- The written excuse is to be submitted within three (3) days of the absence.

### **Unlawful Absences**

- Absences are treated as unlawful until the school receives a written excuse, to be submitted within three (3) days of the absence.
- After a student has one (1) unlawful absence, the school will send an Unlawful Absence Warning Letter.
- After a student has three (3) unlawful absences, the school sends an Unlawful Absence Letter (the first official notice) via certified mail, which includes: (a) dates of the three (3) unlawful absences (or accumulated school time missed), and (b) legal penalties resulting from additional unlawful absences. If the letter is returned, the school will send another one using regular mail service.
- After the third unlawful absence, the school may coordinate a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meeting to resolve the issue. All parties (student, parent/guardian, school staff, etc.) sign the SAIP at the conclusion of the meeting.
- Any additional unlawful absences (4 or more) that occur after the SAIP meeting may result in citations from the District Magistrate's office. Any future attendance issues should be referred to the district magistrate.

### **School-Family Conference & Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP)**

Pursuant to the BEC 24 P.S. 13-1327, schools are required to notify the parent/guardian regarding the need for a joint conference upon the third unlawful student absence. The SAIP (Section IV(A)(3) BEC 24 P.S. 13-1327) is developed cooperatively with involved stakeholders through a school-family conference.

The school-family conference engages all participants involved in the student's life to explore possible solutions to increase the student's school attendance. Maintaining open communication between the student and adults will facilitate positive outcomes. The purpose of the school-family conference is to discuss the cause(s) of the truancy and to develop a mutually agreed upon plan to assure regular school attendance. The school-family conference provides all individuals

the opportunity to identify, understand, and explore all issues contributing to the student's truant behavior.

The school will make 3 attempts to have the full team present for the SAIP development meeting. If the parent/guardian does not respond to the attempts, or if the parent/guardian refuses to attend the meeting, the school team will develop the SAIP and mail it home to the parent.

The SAIP should include, but not be limited to, the following components as appropriate:

- Identification and provision of appropriate academic supports by the school and/or community organization(s)
- Identification and provision of appropriate social, emotional, physical, mental, and behavioral health support from the school and/or community organization(s)
- Identification of the school environment issues that affect the student's success and solutions to address these issues
- Explanation of the student's strengths and responsibilities related to the SAIP
- Explanation of the family's strengths and responsibilities related to the SAIP
- Clarification of method(s) used for monitoring the effectiveness of the SAIP
- Explanation of the consequences for each stakeholder if the SAIP is not fully implemented
- Discussion of the benefits for successfully implementing the SAIP
- Follow up and report the outcome of the SAIP

The SAIP substantiates efforts made by the school, family, and other vested third 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. A referral to the county children and youth agency may occur anytime following these citations.).

# Appendices

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## School Attendance Improvement Plan

Date:

Goal: Increase \_\_\_\_\_ school attendance by \_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Name Date

### Basic Student Information:

Name:  
DOB:  
Grade Level:  
Home Address:  
Phone Number:  
Medical/Health Needs  
Special Needs:  
Name of School:

### Basic School Information:

Name of School Building:  
Principal:  
Home and School Visitor:  
Guidance Counselor:  
School Phone Number:  
Schools Address:  
Attendance Secretary:

### Basic Parent Information

Name of Parent/Guardian:  
Home Address:  
Phone Number:  
Work Number:  
E-mail:

**List of those who attended the SAIP and role/relationship to student:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths of Student/Relevance to Plan:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths of Parent/Guardian:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**General Information Regarding Family Members and Routines:**

Who lives in the household? \_\_\_\_\_

With whom does child live with during the week: \_\_\_\_\_

What time does the student wake up on a school day? \_\_\_\_\_

Type of transportation/Who is providing transportation? \_\_\_\_\_

**Assessment/Areas of Need:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Solutions: Description</b>	<b>Responsible Party(ies)</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

**Specific Potential Benefits for Compliance with Plan:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Specific Potential Consequences for Non-Compliance with Plan**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**This SAIP was created collaboratively to:**

- Assist the student in improving attendance;
- Enlist my/our support as the parent(s)/guardian(s); and
- To document the schools attempts to provide resources to promote the educational success of the student.

As the parent(s)/guardian(s), I/we understand that while the school has demonstrated its support and assistance to this student through this process, by law, it is my/our responsibility to ensure that the student attends school.

**We agree with this Plan, including all requirements and consequences set forth herein, and we agree to comply with the terms set forth in the Plan. Parties in agreement with this plan will sign below:**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Should we have difficulty in implementing the plan or are not clear on the roles of each party, We can contact \_\_\_\_\_ with questions or concerns.

Please see attached attendance information:

**Attempts:**

<b>Phone call</b>	<b>Certified Mail</b>	<b>Home Visit</b>
Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date:
Date:	Date:	Date: