

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND INFORMATION

PHILOSOPHY

The success of our schools in achieving the mandated standards and performance levels of education set forth by the PA Department of Education and the Wilkes-Barre Area School District is predicated on daily attendance by the students, continuity of instruction, and classroom participation.

It is the school's responsibility to develop, within the students, a sense of responsibility, discipline, and good work habits. These goals can be reached by maintaining close communication between the home and school and by encouraging, sustaining, and enforcing regular school attendance. Daily school attendance, including arriving to school on time, is necessary for the student's academic and social success.

It is expected that all parents will assist the school in ensuring that their child attends school on a daily basis. Frequent absences result in poor schoolwork and may contribute to the eventuality of a school dropout. Many times, the attendance patterns that a child develops in the elementary grades are carried over into the secondary level, and in some instances, become the foundation of his/her job absentee rate.

PENNSYLVANIA COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW

Compulsory school age begins when a parent/legal guardian enrolls a child in school, but no later than the age of eight (8). Compulsory school attendance is required until the age of seventeen (17), or unless legitimately excused from attending as outlined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and existing school laws.

Once a student is enrolled in kindergarten, attendance is mandatory, and the school attendance laws apply to that student.

Students who are seventeen (17) years of age or older, and have not graduated, may not be asked to leave school merely because they have reached their seventeenth birthday, provided they are fulfilling their responsibilities as students.

Students who are sixteen (16) years of age or older and are employed full-time (35-40 hours a week) during school hours and hold a lawfully issued employment certificate may be excused from the requirements of attendance.

Pennsylvania Compulsory Attendance Law mandates that school districts are responsible for a student's attendance. Consequently, school administrators will determine the validity of a student's absence.

Not every case can be covered in this policy. Administrators will interpret the policy with common sense and exercise good judgment in unusual cases. With this in mind, the following rules are provided as a guide in dealing with student absenteeism and tardiness:

ABSENCES

Absence from school is defined as the non-attendance by a student on a day when school is scheduled.

A student who is absent from school must present a note written and signed by his/her parent/legal guardian explaining why the student was absent. Absences shall be treated as unexcused until the written excuse is submitted to the homeroom teacher upon entering school. If a student fails to produce such a note within three school days, the day(s) missed will remain "illegal/unexcused".

Excused/legal absences: The following is a list of, but not all inclusive, of excused/legal absences:

1. Illness/Medical
2. Death in the student's immediate family
 - a. Parent/Legal Guardian
 - b. Sibling
 - c. Grandparent
 - d. Aunt/Uncle
3. Legal and exceptionally urgent reasons that may affect the child
 - a. Unsafe and hazardous road conditions
 - b. Quarantine of the home
 - c. Death in the family other than an immediate family member such as a close friend or relative
 - d. Suspension from school
4. Educational trips (see below requirements)

Request for excused absence for educational trips: The Wilkes-Barre Area School District recognizes that, from time to time, students may have the opportunity to participate in a pre-planned, educational trip during the regular school year. In order for your child to be legally excused and attend the educational trip, the following steps need to be taken and prerequisites met:

1. Parent/legal guardian must get the approval of the administrator by submitting, to the administrator, an official educational trip request form at least two weeks prior to the departure date of the trip. The administrator will evaluate the child's academic standing, discipline history, attendance record, and the educational value of the trip. The form can be obtained in the main office.
2. If the educational trip is during the first semester of the school year, the child cannot miss five days or more of school. If the child's absences exceed the five days, the request will be denied.
3. If the educational trip is during the second semester of the school year, the child cannot miss ten days or more of school. If the child's absences exceed the ten days, the request will be denied.
4. The parent and student shall agree that all class work that is missed during the period of absence will be made up within a time frame established by the administrator.
5. No more than five excused absences for educational trips will be granted per school year.

Unexcused/illegal absences: The following is a list of, but not all inclusive, of unexcused/illegal absences:

1. Failure to wake up for school
2. Missing a scheduled school bus or not having a ride to school
3. Absence without a parent/legal guardian's knowledge
4. Caring for a sibling in a non-emergency situation/babysitting
5. Running errands and/or shopping
6. Pursuing a talent or skill without the administrator's prior approval
7. Temporary employment during school hours
8. Going on a vacation without the administrator's prior approval
9. Failure to provide a medical practitioner's excuse when requested or required
10. Failure to attend school either before or after a scheduled medical appointment. (For example: a dentist appointment, medicine check, court appearance, etc.)
11. School refusal
12. Failure to remedy head lice within three days

PROCEDURES FOR EXCUSED/LEGAL ABSENCES

Absences shall be treated as unexcused until a written excuse is submitted to the homeroom teacher upon entering school. The excuse must be written and signed by the parent/legal guardian, explain why the student was absent, and submitted within three days of the absence. Failure to comply will result in the absence remaining as an illegal or unexcused absence.

Three or more consecutive days: If a student is absent **three or more** consecutive days, the absence must be justified by a written excuse from a medical practitioner. The medical practitioner must have seen the student or the parent/legal guardian must have had communication with the medical practitioner in regards of medical advice or medication. If the student does not present a medical note, all consecutive absences will remain illegal/unexcused.

Ten cumulative days: If a student is absent **ten** cumulative days, a written notification will be issued to the parent/legal guardian stating the amount of total absences and that a medical practitioner's excuse will be required for each subsequent absence. Each absence will remain illegal/unexcused if there is failure to comply.

PENALTIES FOR UNEXCUSED/ILLEGAL ABSENCES

Three unexcused/illegal absences: The student is considered truant and a "Notice of Truancy" will be issued to the parent/legal guardian by the Home and School Visitor.

Six unexcused/illegal absences: The student is considered habitually truant. The parent/legal guardian and the student will be invited to participate in a School Attendance Improvement Plan meeting (SAIP) with Administration, Home and School Visitor, and a representative from The BRIDGE in attendance. Failure to attend this meeting will result in a plan being made without any parental input.

If there is no cooperation and/or the student continues to be absent without an excuse following the SAIP, a Summary Citation will be filed with the local magistrate's office where the proposed SAIP will become court ordered. Failure to comply with this court order may result in a maximum fine, approximately \$300.00 plus court costs, community service, and/or loss of driver's license. The case will also be sent to Luzerne County Truancy Court.

Please note: if the student has six or more unexcused/illegal absences, he/she will lose the privilege to participate in any and all events and extra-curricular activities such as performances, clubs, field trips, participation on any athletic team sponsored by their school, sixth grade trip, fun day, field day, class trips, the semi-formal, the prom, class day, senior tea, etc.

Ten unexcused/illegal absences: If a student has ten or more unexcused/illegal absences and is a senior student, he/she **will not** graduate on stage.

If it is determined that the student, 17 years old or older, has been absent for ten or more consecutive days without justification which includes, but not limited to: unable to locate family, unoccupied residence, student is beyond compulsory age of attendance, the student will be dropped from school roll.

HOMEWORK WHEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

If an absence is classified as “excused” or “legal”, the student will be permitted to make-up work when absent from school. Students will be afforded one (1) day for each day of excused absence for work to be completed and submitted. This applies to assignments, quizzes, tests, and/or major projects. There will be no reduction in grade for make-up work turned in following this procedure; however, the assignment/assessment format may be modified or altered.

If an absence is classified as “unexcused” or “illegal”, the student will not receive credit for assignments, tests, quizzes, projects, etc. For example, if a student misses a test due to an “unexcused” or “illegal” absence, the student shall receive a zero. In addition, the teacher is not required to provide the student the opportunity to make up missed work if the absence is deemed illegal.

It is the student's responsibility to obtain the assignments from his or her teachers prior to approved educational trips.

ACTIVITIES WHEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District maintains a policy that links consistently poor attendance with the loss of the privilege to participate in any extra-curricular activities. Therefore, any student absent from school, either excused or unexcused, may be prohibited from participating in any school activities during that same school day (during school hours and after school hours). Exceptions may be made by the discretion of the administration. Such events/activities include, but are not limited to: performances, clubs, field trips, participation on any athletic team sponsored by their school, sixth grade trip, fun day, field day, class night, class trips, school dances, the semi-formal, the prom, etc.

TARDINESS

Tardiness is defined as the absence of a student at the time school session begins, provided the student reports to school and is in attendance for any portion of the school day. The school sessions begin as follows:

Elementary School:	8:45 A.M.
Solomon Junior High School:	8:00 A.M.
High School:	8:20 A.M.

Daily attendance and being on time are necessary components for students to achieve academically and become productive and responsible citizens.

Legal tardiness: A student arriving late for school for any of the following reasons will be considered an excused late:

1. Doctor's appointment
2. Dentist's appointment
3. Mental health care appointment
4. Court appearance
5. Funeral involving immediate family members, relatives, and close friends
6. School related activities pre-approved by the administrator

Excuses must accompany the student when arriving tardy from these appointments. Any other tardy will be considered unexcused and will accumulate on the student's permanent record card. All tardies will be calculated and translated into equivalent illegal/unexcused absences. (see illegal absences)

Procedures for when a student is tardy: If a student reports to school tardy, the student must report directly to the main office and present a written excuse from a parent/legal guardian stating the reason for the tardiness. Elementary students must be accompanied by a parent/legal guardian. If the student does not have a written excuse or the reason is considered unexcused, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration. In addition, habitual tardiness will not be tolerated and will result in appropriate disciplinary/legal action.

Parents/legal guardians may not accompany their child to the classroom or pick up their child at the classroom. Violation of this procedure may result in legal action.

Cumulative tardiness: All unexcused/illegal tardies will be documented on skyward and will be calculated and translated into equivalent illegal/unexcused absences.

Illegal/unexcused absences may result in a summary citation for violation of the Pennsylvania Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Consequences for excessive tardiness: The following are consequences for excessive tardiness per semester:

Five illegal tardies: parent notification letter sent home by administration

Six to Nine illegal tardies: (elementary) loss of recess, lunch detention
(secondary) lunch detention/central detention

Ten illegal tardies: parental conference

Eleven and more illegal tardies: loss of privileges and the duration of the loss of privileges will be determined by the administrator (field trips, sporting events, club activities, dances, and all other extracurricular activities).

When a student reaches the tenth illegal late, a parental conference will be required to discuss the policy and devise a plan ensuring that the student arrives to school on time. Any absences that result from the failure of the parent to attend this conference may initiate a legal action for truancy. The minutes late will be calculated and translated into equivalent illegal/unexcused absences. This may result in a summary citation for violation of the Pennsylvania Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Consequences for illegal tardiness: If a student is tardy two hours or more, the student will not be able to participate in any extra-curricular activities for that day.

STUDENTS BEING RELEASED EARLY

Students will only be dismissed from school for professional appointments, court appearance, emergencies or illnesses. The following procedures must be followed:

1. Upon arrival to school, a written request must be submitted to the main office. The request must include the justification, date, time, telephone number and signature of the parent/legal guardian.
2. **The parent/legal guardian must report to the office** at the appointed time and present proper valid ID. If someone other than the parent/legal guardian is picking the student up, the person's name must be written on the request, must be on the emergency contact card, and must have proper valid ID. The student will then be called to the main office. All parents/legal guardians must remain in the main office. No one may enter into the building and go directly to a classroom.
3. Prior to leaving school, the student must report to the main office in order to be signed out.
4. If the student is being released early from school due to a court or medical appointment, the student must present proof of the appointment upon returning to school.

Students being released early for emergencies: Requests for a student to be released early from school due to an emergency must be made in person by the parent/legal guardian. The administrator will then determine if the emergency is valid or not and then either approve or deny the request.

Students being released early for illness/injury/medical reason: Only the school nurse or administrator can approve an early dismissal due to illness/injury/medical reason. The parent/legal guardian will be notified when a student needs to be sent home. Students will not be permitted to leave without parent's/legal guardian's permission, and the parent/legal guardian must report to the main office before the student will be dismissed.

Please note the following:

1. No student will be excused via a telephone call
2. No student will be sent home alone
3. No student will be excused within the last fifteen minutes of the school day
4. Students being excused from school may be prohibited in participating in any after school extra-curricular activities that day

LEAVING SCHOOL WITHOUT PERMISSION

If any student leaves the school without permission, by either the school nurse or the school administration, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.