

No. 5150
SECTION: STUDENTS
TITLE: ATTENDANCE: EXCUSES FOR ABSENCE

ADOPTED: 3/15/71
READOPTED: 6/18/07;6/21/11;1/29/14;
11/15/16;9/17/19
REVISED: 6/22/99;5/16/05;10/17/17

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

- A. It shall be the duty of each school principal to vigorously enforce and strictly interpret the compulsory attendance laws as stated in the Pennsylvania School Code.
- B. Every day of student absence shall be explained by a written note from the student's parent or guardian. Principals have the authority to require a written excuse from a physician in such cases as they deem necessary.
- C. Failure to produce a required excuse within three (3) school days from the student's return to school may cause an absence to be considered "illegal."
- D. If a student is denied school furnished transportation for disciplinary reasons, the compulsory attendance laws still apply and students who are absent because transportation is not furnished shall be considered illegally absent.
- E. Attendance need not always be within the school facilities, but a student will be considered to be in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board, or the place where the student is receiving approved tutorial instruction or health care, or at a place where the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised work-student or career education program or at home when the student is receiving approved homebound instruction.
- F. Tardy shall be defined as not being present for less than one-third (1/3) of the instructional time. Absent shall be defined as not being present for more than one-third (1/3) of the instructional time.
- G. Students in their senior year who are in good standing academically, have excellent attendance, and have no discipline referrals may be granted permission to arrive late or leave early from school. This would only apply if they have a first or last period study hall.
- H. The Superintendent or designee shall develop procedure for the implementation of this policy. These procedures shall be made part of the building handbooks.

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
NO. 5150 ATTENDANCE: EXCUSES FOR ABSENCES

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

I. EXCUSES FOR ABSENCES

- A. School principals shall establish procedures within their buildings to insure that students clearly understand when, where, how and to whom written excuses are to be submitted. Should there be good reason for a principal to doubt the accuracy of an excuse that states that a child was/is "sick" he may require a physician's statement before judging the absence to be excused.
- B. All excused (lawful) absences for temporary periods can be classified under the following reasons.
 - 1. Recognized religious holiday.
 - 2. Tutorial work in a field not offered in the district's curricula.
 - 3. To obtain non-school professional health care.
 - 4. Illnesses or other urgent reasons such as funerals, impassable roads, quarantine. The term urgent reason shall be strictly construed and shall not permit irregular attendance.
 - 5. Educational activity (See also policy 5160).
 - 6. Graduation preparations of not more than three days.
 - 7. Work study programs.
 - 8. Students receiving homebound instruction are counted as present.
- C. Excuses for tardiness are also required.
- D. If students fail to attend school and their absence is determined to be unexcused (unlawful), the following procedure will be followed.
 - 1. Compulsory School Age Students - students below 17 years of age:
 - a. First (1st) day of unlawful absence. Parent notification. This may be in the form of letter, email, and/or phone notification.
 - b. Second (2nd) day of unlawful absence. This may be in the form of letter, email, and/or phone notification. Parents/guardians will also receive an invitation to discuss and create a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) for their student.
 - c. Third (3rd) day of unlawful absence. The law expressly requires schools to notify parents or guardians in writing within ten (10) school days of the child's third unexcused absence that the child has been "truant." This will be accomplished through a certified letter sent to the parent. In addition, a doctor's note will be required for any further absences. Parent conference is requested. If it has not already been completed, a SAIP will be created at this time. The school will hold the conference even if the parent declines to participate or fails to attend.

2. "Habitual truancy" is defined as "Six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law." If it is determined that the student is habitually truant, the following actions will be taken.

- a. Under fifteen (15) years of age. The school must refer the child to either: (1) a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the county children and youth agency (CYF) for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act. Additionally, the school may file a citation against the parent of a habitually truant child under fifteen (15) in a magisterial district court.
- b. Fifteen (15) years of age and older. The school must either: (1) refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) file a citation against the student or parent in a magisterial district court.
- c. If the child incurs additional absences after a school refers that child to an attendance improvement program or refuses to participate in an attendance improvement program, the school may refer the child to the local CYF agency for possible disposition as a dependent child.

E. Students shall be permitted to make up work missed when absent from school. It is the responsibility of the student to see that missed work is made up within a reasonable period of time.

Date:

To the Parent/Guardian of:

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Student attendance and achievement are directly related. There is no substitute for student attendance and participation in class. A student returning to school after any absence must have a note from his/her parent/guardian specifying the date(s) of absence and reason for the absence. The excuse is to be turned into the main office **WITHIN THREE (3) DAYS** of his/her return to school. **A note sent after 3 school days of an absence will not change the status; it will remain an unlawful absence.**

Please be advised that <student> has been unlawfully absent from school <number> day(s) this academic school year: <insert dates> In compliance with the policies of the Oxford Area School District, the following attendance procedures apply:

♦ "Truancy" is defined as "Three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law." (Compulsory age - students below the age of 17).

- a. First (1st) day of unlawful absence. Parent notification. This may be in the form of letter, email, and/or phone notification.
- b. Second (2nd) day of unlawful absence. This may be in the form of letter, email, and/or phone notification. Parents/guardians will also receive an invitation to discuss and create a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) for their student.
- c. Third (3rd) day of unlawful absence. The law expressly requires schools to notify parents or guardians in writing within ten (10) school days of the child's third unexcused absence that the child has been "truant." This will be accomplished through a certified letter sent to the parent. In addition, a doctor's note will be required for any further absences. Parent conference is requested. If it has not already been completed, a SAIP will be created at this time. The school will hold the conference even if the parent declines to participate or fails to attend.

♦ "Habitual truancy" is defined as "Six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law."

- **Under fifteen (15) years of age.** The school must refer the child to either: (1) a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) the county children and youth agency (CYF) for services or possible disposition as a dependent child under the Juvenile Act. Additionally, the school may file a citation against the parent of a habitually truant child under fifteen (15) in a magisterial district court.

- **Fifteen (15) years of age and older.** The school must either: (1) refer the child to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program or (2) file a citation against the student or parent in a magisterial district court.
- If the child incurs additional absences after a school refers that child to an attendance improvement program or refuses to participate in an attendance improvement program, the school may refer the child to the local CYF agency for possible disposition as a dependent child.

Any actions you can take to improve student attendance will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Principal

APPENDIX B

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Oxford, Pennsylvania 19363

NOTICE OF VIOLATION OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Date: _____

Re: _____

You are advised:

1. That the above named child was absent from school on
_____.
2. That the absence was an unexcused absence.
3. That the unexcused absence constitutes a violation of the compulsory attendance provision of the Public School Code (Section 1333).
4. That the law requires that the parent or guardian of the student be notified of this fact.
5. That an unexcused absence constitutes a summary offense under the Public School Code for which penalties may be imposed against the parent or guardian.
6. That if the student is unlawfully absent again, the parent or guardian will be charged before a district justice without further notice from the school authorities.

School Official

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
Oxford, Pennsylvania 19363

REFERRAL FOR VIOLATION OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Date: _____

Parent or Guardian:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Student:

Name: _____

School: _____

Birth Date: _____

Dates of first THREE unlawful absences:

Notice:

Date served: _____

Date of additional unlawful absence: _____

School Official

Letter to Truant Student Over the Age of 13

Student Name
Address
City, State, Zip Code

CERTIFIED AND RETURN SERVICE FIRST CLASS MAIL

Dear:

Based upon your attendance history while a student in the Oxford Area School District, it has become necessary to formally notify you of key components of the PA School Code and Oxford Area School District policies dealing with attendance. As a student over the age of 13 this letter shall serve as official notification that you are aware of the following:

- You are required by School Code and District Policy to attend school every day it is in session, unless illness or injury prevents you from attendance. Signed notice that you were absent with parental permission is submitted to the school within three (3) days of the absence. If you are absent three or more consecutive days, a note that you were seen by a physician must be submitted to the school, also within the three day time period.
- Should you acquire too many unlawful/unexcused absences you may be denied credit for courses, regardless of your current grade in class.
- Failure to attend school each day it is in session can result in:
 - o Revocation of any work permits (working papers) issued to you by the district
 - o Prosecution before a District Judge. Such prosecution may result in you, as the student, not your parent/guardian, being fined up to \$300 per day that you fail to attend school
- Additionally, the District Judge may:
 - o Assign you to an alternative adjudication program
 - o Suspend your privilege to possess or apply for a PA driver's license
- Continued failure to attend school may result in a referral to other County agencies for additional actions and/or placements.

Leaving campus prior to dismissal time is considered truancy and subject to prosecution.

I certainly hope that your attendance record improves and you have a successful school year. It is my desire that we do not need to resort to any of the above actions.

Respectfully,

(Principal, Assistant Principal or Attendance Officer)

Cc: Student Assistance Team
Attendance Officer/Home School Visitor
Guidance Counselor
Student File