

UNDERSTANDING ATTENDANCE

Q: What time does the school day start?

A: The regular school day begins at 8:20am. If the student is not **in their assigned room** by 8:20am, the student will be considered tardy or absent.

Q: Does a parent or guardian have the right to keep their child from attending school?

A: No. In Pennsylvania, all children of “compulsory school age” must attend school. The parents/guardians are legally responsible for making sure that their child attends school.

Q: What are the responsibilities of parents/guardians reporting an absence from school?

A: All absences are treated as unlawful until the school receives a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for an absence. Parents/guardians and students must submit the written explanation within three (3) days of the student's return from the absence.

Q: Can parents/guardians email an excuse to the elementary school?

A: Yes, an email can be sent to ESattendance@portageareasd.org. The email must be sent by a parent/guardian, not from a student. Please list a phone number and name in the email so we can contact you if we have questions.

Q: Does the school have to accept a parent's note for an absence?

A: No. If there are reasons to suspect that the parent's note may not be legitimate, or do not fall within the lawful excuse guidelines, the school does not have to accept it. **See page 6 in your child's agenda for examples of lawful excuses.*

Q: What happens if a parent/guardian does not provide a written excuse within three (3) days of the student's return from the absence?

A: If a parent/guardian fails to provide a written excuse within three (3) days of the student's return from the absence, the absence will be counted as unlawful.

Q: How many days of school can a parent/guardian excuse their child from school?

A: An absence in which the student is absent 3 or more consecutive days, a medical excuse is required. However, parents/guardians may present excuses for the first 10 days of absence that are not consecutive.

Q: What is an unlawful absence?

A: An absence in which the student is less than seventeen (17) years of age and the parent/guardians fail to provide school officials with the proper documentation/excuse regarding his or her absences. This excuse must be submitted within 3 days after returning from an absence, **OR** the student has accumulated 10 excused absences and does not provide medical documentation for the 11th absence and beyond.

Q: What is habitual truancy?

A: Habitual truancy is four (4) unlawful absences from compulsory school attendance.

Q: What is the penalty for habitual truancy?

A: Habitual truancy will result in a referral to Truancy Court or to the Department of Human Services for prevention services.

Q: What is considered a full day of school?

A: On a regular school day, a student is considered present for a full day when he/she attends school from 8:20am through 1:15pm. A student is tardy when entering the school from 8:20am through 10:32am, and half day present when entering after 10:32am or leaving before 1:15pm.

Q: Does the school allow educational field trips?

A: Yes, the school allows up to 5 days for educational field trips per school year. Parents/guardians must complete the educational field trip form, present it to the office, and receive approval from the principal before the trip. Approved educational field trips are considered excused absences, and do count toward the 10 allowed parental excused absences per school year.

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