



## Understanding Attendance

**Q: What time does the school day start?**

A: The regular school day begins at 7:35am. If the student is not in their assigned room by 7:35am, 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 in reporting an absence from school?**

A: All absences are treated as unexcused/illegal 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 high school?**

A: Yes, an email can be sent to [HSattendance@portageareasd.org](mailto:HSattendance@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, the school does not have to accept it.

**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 unexcused/unlawful.

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

A: 10 days. After 10 parental excused absences, the student must have an excuse (medical evidence) from a health care provider. School approved educational field trips count towards these 10 days.

**Q: What is an unlawful absence?**

A: An absence in which the student is less than seventeen (17) years of age fails to provide school officials with the proper documentation/excuse regarding his or her absences within 3 days after returning from an absence or has accumulated 10 parental excused absences and does not provided medical documentation for the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 may result in a referral to Truancy Court or the Dept. of Human Services for prevention services.

**Q: Can a student participate and/or attend extracurricular activities when absent from school?**

A: No, a student must be present at school by 9:15am to participate or attend extracurricular events that day or evening. The student may be able participate or attend activities if he/she has a medical excuse or an excused absence approved by the principal (or his/her designee).

**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 7:35am through 1:00pm. A student is tardy when entering the school from 7:35am through 10:11am, and half day present when entering after 10:11am or leaving before 1pm.

**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, but do count toward the 10 allowed parental excused absences per school year. A 6<sup>th</sup> educational field trip day or an educational field trip day that causes the student to go beyond the 10 day parental excused absence threshold, will result in the absence to be unexcused or unlawful.

Elena Bandzuh  
Attendance Secretary  
(814)736-9636 x 1580

Jeremy A Burkett  
Dean of Students  
(814) 736-9636 x 1280