



POLICY 203 -- ATTENDANCE

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote regular school attendance and to improve the academic achievement of students in the West Jefferson Hills School District.

Regular school attendance is a prerequisite for school success. School success correlates highly with regular school attendance. A student's absence from class disrupts the continuity of the learning process; and the benefits of regular classroom instruction, once lost, can never be regained.

Supervised classroom learning experiences, continuity of instruction, and personal interaction are essential ingredients in the education process. Participation in planned learning activities under the supervision of school personnel provides valuable important personal interactions between students and teachers. Such activities are a vital part of the learning process in any public school.

2. Authority

The provisions of this policy shall govern all students enrolled in the public schools of the West Jefferson Hills School District.

A. **COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LAW**

The compulsory school attendance law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires every child of compulsory school age to be in school attendance unless absent for an approved reason and charges the parents of the child with the responsibility for the child's school attendance.

B. **EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR TEMPORARY PERIODS**

The following are reasons for excused absence for temporary periods of time from school:

1. **Religious holidays** -- a student may be excused from school for the observance of bonafide religious holidays of particular religious groups

A student's absence from school for religious holidays will be recorded as an excused absence, and there will be no penalty attached to such an absence.

Requests for excusal from school for religious holidays shall be made to the building principal prior to absence from school.

2. **Health care** -- A student may be excused during school hours for the purpose of obtaining health care under the following circumstances:

- a. The health care services are rendered by state licensed practitioners.
- b. The time of necessary absence from school involves a minimum of interference with school work.

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- c. Every principal shall require a written statement signed by the practitioner stating the time of the student’s appointment.
3. Illness or other urgent reasons -- Upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons, every principal may excuse a student from nonattendance from school during a temporary period.

However, the term “urgent reasons” will be strictly construed and will not be used to permit irregular attendance.

4. Educational vacations -- Student absences from school resulting from family vacations with educational may be considered excused, but may not exceed ten (10) school days in one school year. Educational vacations will be ruled excused if, in the opinion of the building administrator, a vacation does have educational value and the following procedure is adhered to:
- a. The parent or guardian provides a written request to the building administrator on a form provided by the school district which will indicate the school days to be missed, the destination of the trip, and the educational value of the trip.
 - b. The student will obtain a form from the building administrator to present to teachers in order to obtain assignments.
 - c. The student will give completed assignments to his/her teachers and arrange for the completion of other academic work missed.
 - d. All academic work will be completed within a time period not exceeding the number of days absent as a result of the trip.

C. WRITTEN STATEMENT REQUIRED FOR ALL ABSENCES

Upon return from an absence from school for any reason, the student will present to the appropriate attendance personnel a written statement which is signed by the student’s parent or guardian giving the date and reason for the absence. If the written statement is not presented within three (3) days of the student’s return to school, the absence will be considered as an unexcused absence. If a student is under age 17, then an absence that is not excused pursuant to this policy will be considered unexcused and unlawful.

An unlawful absence constitutes a summary offense under the Public School Code for which penalties may be imposed against the parent, guardian and/or student. The West Jefferson Hills School District has the authority to file charges with the district magistrate in cases were a student has accumulated three or more days of unlawful absences.

If a student has a record of excessive absenteeism (10 or more days in one school year as recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education) he/she is required to present a written statement from a licensed health practitioner stating the reason for the absence from school. A student who is required to present such proof must do so for every absence from school or illness. Failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as unexcused and unlawful under the compulsory attendance laws of Pennsylvania.

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- D. **POLICY REGARDING UNEXCUSED ABSENCES AND MAKE-UP PRIVILEGES**
While all unexcused student absences are subject to the provisions of the Pennsylvania School Code, certain such absences carry make-up privileges and others do not.

The following unexcused absences carry make-up privileges:

1. **Emergency at home** -- One or more days of absence can carry make-up privileges depending upon the nature of the emergency.
2. **Runaways** -- Each case must be dealt with on its own individual merit. A decision to grant make-up privileges must rest with the administrator involved.
3. **Weddings and Graduations** -- Make-up work will be granted for the day and reasonable travel time.

The following unexcused absences from school do not carry make-up privileges:

1. Truancy
2. Unexcused absence during semester or final examinations
3. Recreational purposes: baseball games, fishing, hunting, etc.
4. Draft registration (Time is given during the school day to register at the Draft Board.)
5. Failure to bring excuse within the three (3)-day period immediately following the student's return to school
6. Driver examinations (An early dismissal may be permitted to take the driver's examination.)
7. Non-educational vacations -- When, in the judgment of the building administrator, a vacation is considered to be one of convenience and has no documented educational value to the child, no make-up privileges will be granted.

- E. **TARDINESS TO SCHOOL**

Students who are tardy to school will report to the appropriate school office. The student will be issued a pass to report to class. Failure to report to the school office may result in disciplinary action.

- F. **WRITTEN STATEMENT REQUIRED FOR ALL TARDIES**

Upon return from a tardy, the student will present to the appropriate attendance personnel a written statement by the student's parent/guardian or a licensed practitioner giving the date and reason for the tardy.

Valid reasons for an excused tardy include personal illness, a medical/dental appointment, or a family emergency verified by a school administrator. All other reasons will be deemed unexcused.

If a written statement is not presented within three (3) days of the student's tardy day, the tardy will be deemed unexcused.

If a student has a record of excessive tardiness (10 or more days in one school year) he/she may be required to present a written statement from a licensed health practitioner stating the reason for the tardy. A student who is required to present such proof must do so for every tardy from school. Failure to do so will result in the tardy being recorded as unexcused.

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In the event of four (4) or more unexcused tardies, disciplinary action will result. The disciplinary actions include but are not limited to: verbal or written warning, student conference, detention, revoking driving privileges (high school), in-school suspension, parent conference, Saturday detention, or out-of-school suspension.

Specific consequences for accumulated tardies will be referenced in the middle school and high school handbooks.

Each student's unexcused tardy total will be reduced by one (1) for every two (2) months without a tardy.

3. Delegation of Responsibility

A. SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY

Student attendance and tardiness will be recorded and monitored by a method appropriate to each school building.

A report listing those students who are absent for the day will be made available to all faculty members as early in the day as possible in the secondary schools.

All faculty members will maintain an accurate daily record of absences and tardiness of all students in classes assigned to them.

The district will seek to assist the parent/guardian and the students to resolve chronic attendance problems through counseling, appropriate referrals and implementation of administrative guidelines.

B. PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Commonwealth's compulsory school attendance law charges the student's parent/guardian with the responsibility for the student's school attendance. Therefore, all parents should encourage their children to be in regular and continuous attendance in school during the school year.

The only school holidays which are sanctioned by the school district are those listed in the official school calendar adopted by the Board.

Parents should direct their children to report to school even when it appears the child may be late to school.

C. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Students are responsible for regular school attendance. They are expected to report to school and all classes each day on time.

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