

# ARMSTRONG SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD POLICY

Section: PUPILS  
Date Adopted: June 28, 2004  
Last Revision: May 13, 2019

Policy No.: 204  
Title: Attendance

## Purpose

The Armstrong Board of School Directors has a desire to establish a policy regarding attendance; therefore the Board requires that school age students enrolled in District schools attend school regularly, in accordance with state laws. Regular attendance is a prerequisite for educating the students of our District. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress. The Board recognizes that attendance is an important factor in educational success and supports a comprehensive approach to identify and address attendance issues. (SC 1301, 1326, 1327; Title 22 Sec. 11.12, 11.13, 11.41, 12.1; Policy 200)

## Authority

The Board deems that attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in District schools during the days and hours that school is in session, except that authorized District staff may excuse a student for temporary absences upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance. (SC 1327, 1329, 1330; Title 22 Sec. 11.23, 11.25, 12.1)

The Board shall establish and enforce attendance requirements, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, Board policy and administrative regulations.

## Definitions

Compulsory school age shall mean the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents/guardians elect to have the child enter school, and which shall be no later than eight (8) years of age until the child reaches seventeen (17) years of age. The term does not include a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school. (22 PA Code 11.13; 22 P.S. 1326)

**REFERENCES:** School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA

Habitually truant shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance. (24 P.S. 1326)

Truant shall mean having incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to a compulsory school attendance. (24 P.S. 1326)

Person in parental relation shall mean a:

Custodial biological or adoptive parent.

Noncustodial biological or adoptive parent.

Guardian of the person of a child.

Person with whom a child lives and who is acting in a parental role of a child. This definition shall not include any county agency or person acting as an agent of the county agency in the jurisdiction of a dependent child as defined by law. (42 Pa. C.S.A. 630)

School-based or community-based attendance improvement program shall mean a program designed to improve school attendance by seeking to identify and address the underlying reasons for a child's absences. The term may include an educational assignment in an alternative education program, provided the program does not include a program for disruptive youth established pursuant to Article XIX-C of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

### **Guidelines**

#### *Compulsory School Attendance Requirements –*

All students of compulsory school age who reside in the District shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements. (24 P.S. 1327)

For purposes of this policy, the Board considers the following conditions or situations to constitute reasonable causes for absence from school:

- Illness, including if a student is dismissed by designated District staff during school hours for health-related reasons (Title 22 Sec. 11.25)
- Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory (24 P.S. 1329)
- Quarantine
- Family emergency
- Recovery from accident
- Required court attendance
- Death in family
- Family education trips, with prior approval
- Educational tours and trips, with prior approval (SC 1329; Title 22 Sec. 11.26)

**REFERENCES: School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA**

Attendance need not always be within school facilities. A student shall be considered in attendance if: (SC 1327, Title 22 Sec. 11.22, 11.23, 11.28; Policies 115, 116, 117, 146)

- The student is present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board.
- The student is receiving approved tutorial instruction, or health or therapeutic services.
- The student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program.
- The student is receiving approved homebound instruction.

### **Excuses from Attendance**

1. The Board shall excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance at District schools, upon request and with the required approval:

- On certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Department of Education, children who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance. (SC 1329, 1330; Title 22 Sec. 11.34)
- Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught. (SC 1327; Title 22 Sec. 11.32)
- Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in District schools shall be counted as being considered part-time attendance in this District. (Title 22 Sec. 11.5)
- Students attending a home education program or private tutoring in accordance with law. (24 P.S. 1327; Policy 116; 22 PA Code 11.31, 11.31a; 24 P.S. 1327.1, Pol. 137)
- Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved. (SC 1327)
- Students fifteen (15) years of age, and fourteen (14) years of age who have completed the highest elementary grade, who are engaged in farm work or private domestic service under duly assigned permits. (SC 1330)
- Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly employed on a full-time basis during the school session and holding a lawfully issued employment certificate. (SC 1330; Title 22, Sec. 11.28)

**REFERENCES: School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA**

2. The Board may temporarily excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance at District schools:
  - Students receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the District’s curricula from a properly qualified tutor approved by the Superintendent, when the excuse does not interfere with the student’s regular program of studies. (SC 1327; Title 22 Sec. 11.22; Policy 116)
  - School age children unable to attend school on the recommendation of an attending physician, the school physician and the school psychologist or a psychiatrist and approval of the Secretary of Education. (Title 22 Sec. 11.34)
  - Students enrolled in special schools conducted by the ARIN Intermediate Unit #28 or the Department of Education. (SC 1327)
3. The Board will recognize other justifiable absences for part of the school day. These shall include, but not limited to, the following: (Title 22 Sec. 11.23, 11.25)
  - medical or dental appointments,
  - court appearance (student involved),
  - family emergency, and
  - other urgent reasons.

### **Religious Holidays**

Upon written request by a parent/guardian, an absence for observance of the student’s religion on a day approved by the Board as a religious holiday shall be excused. A penalty shall not be attached to an absence for a religious holiday. (Title 22 Sec. 11.21)

### **Religious Instruction**

The Board shall, upon written request of the parents/guardians, release from attendance a student participating in a religious instruction program acknowledged by the Board. The parent/guardian request shall identify and describe the instruction and the dates and hours of instruction. Such instruction shall not require the student’s absence from school for more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year, and its organizers must inform the Board of the child’s attendance record. Following each absence, the parent/guardian shall submit a statement attesting that the student attended the instruction and the dates and hours of attendance. The Board shall not provide transportation to religious instruction. A penalty shall not be attached to an absence for religious instruction. (SC 1546, Title 22 Sec. 11.21)

**REFERENCES:** School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA

**4-H and FFA Events**

The Board shall permit a student to be excused for participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group upon written request prior to the event. (SC 1329, Title 22 Sec. 11.41)

**Non-School Sponsored Educational Tours and Trips**

The Board may excuse a student from school attendance to participate in an educational tour or trip not sponsored by the District if the following conditions are met:  
(SC 1329; Title 22 Sec. 11.26)

1. The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal prior to the absence.
2. The student's participation has been approved by the Superintendent or designee.
3. The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the parents/guardians and the Superintendent
4. College or postsecondary institution visit, with prior approval.
5. Other urgent reasons. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and do not permit irregular attendance. (22 PA Code 11.25; 24 P.S. 1329)
6. Educational tours and trips should not exceed five (5) school days during a school year.

The Board may limit the number and duration of non-school sponsored educational tours or trips for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school term.

The Board may report to the appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of seventeen (17) years of age. The Board shall issue notice to those parents/guardians who fail to comply with the requirements of compulsory attendance that such infractions will be prosecuted according to law.  
(SC 1333, 1354, Title 22 Sec. 12.1)

**District Procedures**

The following procedures have been established for the handling of daily student absences in the Armstrong School District.

**REFERENCES:** School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA

1. Absences shall be treated as unlawful until the District receives a written excuse explaining the absence, to be submitted within three (3) school days of the absence. Upon returning from an absence, each student will present a valid excuse, containing the date(s) of absence and reason for absence, signed by a parent or guardian. Failure to do so within three (3) school days will result in the absence counted unexcused/illegal. In cases of extended absence (more than five (5) consecutive school days), a valid excuse must be presented to the District upon request. A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts. Any instruction or assignments missed during an unexcused/illegal absence will not be permitted to be made up.

2. Requests for absences from school:

2.1 Requests for special excuses for a day or any part of a day should be presented in writing, signed by a parent or guardian, to the principal/designee for approval prior to the absence, except in cases of emergency, which may be approved or disapproved after the fact. An excused absence for a medical or dental appointment is generally limited to one-half day. Special circumstances should be brought to the attention of the principal/designee prior to the appointment.

Students who have been granted an excuse for a medical or dental appointment should procure an excuse verification, have it authorized at the doctor or dentist's office and return it to the principal/designee upon returning to school.

2.2 A request for a family vacation or non-school sponsored educational tour and trip which would occur on a school day or days should be presented to the principal/designee for approval prior to the trip. Forms for these types of requests are available in the school office. Family vacations or non-school sponsored educational tours and trips should not exceed five (5) school days during a school year.

Eligibility criteria for requesting a family vacation or educational tour and trip:

- a. The student shall not have been absent or tardy from school for more than 10 days prior to the trip/tour.
- b. The student shall not have a failing grade in any subject for a nine week grading period in the current school year prior to the trip/tour.

The principal/designee may review and approve requests for family vacations or non-school sponsored educational tours and trips that do not comply with these criteria only under special, extenuating, circumstances.

3. Cases of excessive absenteeism will be handled in the following manner.

3.1 When a student accumulates six (6) or more illegal absences in one school year under Section 1333, amendment to the Public School Code, the school will hold an Attendance Improvement Conference. A letter will be sent from the school requesting parent/guardian attendance. In addition to this meeting at least one of the following will occur: 1) Referral to an attendance improvement program; 2) Referral to Armstrong County Children, Youth, and Family Services; 3) Citation filed in a magisterial district court.

*School Attendance Improvement Conference –*

District staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the School Attendance Improvement Conference. (24 P.S. 1333)

The purpose of the School Attendance Improvement Conference is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services. (24 P.S. 1326)

The following individuals shall be invited to the School Attendance Improvement Conference: (24 P.S. 1326)

The student

The student's person in parental relation

Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource

Appropriate school personnel

Recommended service providers

Neither the student nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate and the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference. (24 P.S. 1333)

The outcome of the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be retained in the student's file. A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the person in parental relation, the student and appropriate District staff. (24 P.S. 1333)

The District may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled School Attendance Improvement Conference has passed. (24 P.S. 1333)

**REFERENCES: School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA**

*Student is Habitually Truant –*

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, District staff: (24 P.S. 1333.1)

Shall refer the student to a school based or community-based attendance improvement program, or

The local children and youth agency.

May file a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student (24 P.S. 1333.1)

When a student fifteen (15) years of age or older is habitually truant, District staff shall: (24 P.S. 1333.1)

Refer the student to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or

File a citation in the office of the appropriate judge against the student or the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.

District staff may refer a student who is fifteen (15) years of age or older to the local children and youth agency if the student continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or if the student refuses to participate in such a program.

Regardless of age, when District staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate judge, District staff shall provide verification that the school held a School Attendance Improvement Conference. (24 P.S. 1333.1)

*Filing a Citation –*

A citation shall be filed in the office of the appropriate judge whose jurisdiction includes the school in which the student is or should be enrolled. (24 P.S. 1333.2)

Additional citations for subsequent violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements may only be filed against a student or person in parental relation in accordance with the specific provisions of the law. (24 P.S. 1333.2)

- 3.2 When a student accumulates five (5) days of absence due to excused or unexcused reasons, other than extended periods of hospitalization or doctor verified illness, an Excessive Absence Letter will be sent to the parents or guardian of the offending student.



- 3.3 When a student accumulates ten (10) days of absence due to excused or unexcused reasons, other than extensive periods of hospitalization or doctor verified illness, a Physician’s Verification of Illness Letter will be sent to the parents or guardian of the offending student and school authorities will notify the Director of Child Accounting, Safe Schools and Transportation.
4. All illegal absences in the Armstrong School District will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Pennsylvania School Code.

*Unexcused/Unlawful Absence –*

*For purposes of this policy, absences which do not meet the criteria indicated in this policy shall be considered an unexcused/unlawful absence.*

*An out-of-school suspension may not be considered an unexcused absence. (24 P.S. 1326)*

*Parental Notification –* District staff shall provide notice to the person in parental relation upon each incident of unexcused absence.

- 4.1 When a student accumulates three (3) days of illegal absences, a First Notice Letter will be sent by certified mail to the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student within ten (10) school days of the student’s third unexcused absence and school authorities will notify the Director of Child Accounting, Safe Schools and Transportation. The First Notice shall inform the parents/guardians:

- The date(s) the absence occurred,
- That the absence was unexcused and in violation of law,
- That the parent/guardian is being notified and informed of his/her liability under law for the absence of the student, and
- That further violation during the school term will be prosecuted without notice.

The notice shall also: (24 P.S. 1333)

Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation;

Include a description of the consequences if the student becomes habitually truant; and

When transmitted to a person who is not the biological or adoptive parent, also be provided to the child's biological or adoptive parent, if the parent's mailing address is on file with the school and the parent is not precluded from receiving the information by court order.

The notice may include the offer of a School Attendance Improvement Conference. (24 P.S. 1333)

If the student incurs additional unexcused absences after issuance of the notice and a School Attendance Improvement Conference was not previously held, District staff shall offer a School Attendance Improvement Conference. (24 P.S. 1333)

- 4.2 Unexcused instances of tardiness will be counted as illegal absences after the total accumulated minutes of unexcused tardiness equal one-half day of instructional time.
- 4.3 When it is necessary to file charges for violation of compulsory attendance requirements, school authorities will notify the Director of Child Accounting, Safe Schools and Transportation.
5. Morning, afternoon, and period by period attendance checks are highly recommended as part of the daily routine for each building. This will help curb unauthorized absence by students during the school day.
6. The Director of Child Accounting, Safe Schools and Transportation, after receiving notification of attendance problems with a student, will investigate; and refer to the Armstrong County Children, Youth and Family Services Agency when necessary.

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The Superintendent or designee shall annually notify students, parents/guardians and staff about the District's attendance policy by publishing such policy in the student handbooks, parent newsletters, District website and other efficient communication methods. (Title 22 Sec. 11.41; 24 P.S. 510.2)

The Superintendent or designee, in coordination with the building principal, shall be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop procedures for the attendance of students which:

- Ensure a school session that conforms with requirements of state law and regulations (SC 1501, 1504; Title 22 Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3).

**REFERENCES:** School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA

- Govern the maintenance of attendance records in accordance with law. (SC 1332, 1339)
- Detail the process for submission of requests and excuses for student absences.
- Detail the process for written notices, School Attendance Improvement Conferences, School Attendance Improvement Plans, and referrals to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, the local children and youth agency, or the appropriate judge.
- Distribute annually to staff, students and parents/guardians Board policies, school rules and regulations governing student attendance, absences and excusals. (Title 22 Sec. 11.41)
- Impose on truant students appropriate incremental disciplinary measures for infractions of school rules, but no penalty may have an irredeemably negative effect on the student's record beyond that which naturally follows absence from classroom learning experiences. (SC 1333, 1338, 1354; Policy 218, 233)
- Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of truant behavior, and consider modification of the student's educational program to meet particular needs and interests.
- Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.

### **Special Needs and Accommodations**

If a truant or habitually truant student may qualify as a student with a disability and require special education services or accommodations, the Special Education Department shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy. (Policies 103.1, 113, 113.3, 114)

For students with disabilities who are truant or habitually truant, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy. (Policies 103.1, 113, 114)

### **Discipline**

The District shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior. (24 P.S. 1333)

**REFERENCES:** School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546; State Board of Education Regulations - Title 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1; Board Policies 115, 116, 117, 146, 137, 200, 218, 233, 913; Policy Source - PSBA