



Book	Policy Manual
Section	200 Pupils
Title	Attendance
Code	204
Status	Active
Adopted	May 3, 2010
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Purpose

The Board, consistent with law and regulations, shall not condone nor permit absences from school for an unlawful reason. The educational program offered by the district is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. Regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and participation in the planned instructional program under the tutelage of the teacher are vital to this program. [\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)[\[7\]](#)[\[8\]](#)

Authority

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in district schools during the days and hours that school is in session. [\[3\]](#)[\[9\]](#)[\[10\]](#)[\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)[\[7\]](#)

Therefore, it is the responsibility of every student enrolled in the schools of the Upper Merion Area School District to be in daily attendance except for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness. (A doctor's note is required for every absence after the 15th absence.) [\[12\]](#)
2. Quarantine of the individual or home. (A doctor's note is required.)
3. Recovery from an accident. (A doctor's note is required.)
4. Death in the immediate family. **Immediate family** is defined as parent/guardian, grandparent, sibling, child, or spouse.
5. Exceptionally urgent or safety reasons (must pertain to the individual student and requires principal approval).
6. All absences occasioned by observance of the student's recognized organized religion on a day approved by the Board as a religious holiday shall be excused, and no student excused shall be deprived of an award or eligibility to compete for an award or the opportunity to make up academic work and assessments given on the religious holiday. [\[13\]](#)
7. 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. Such instruction shall not require the child'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. The Board shall not provide transportation to religious instruction.[14][13]

8. Suspension from school.[38]

9. Required court appearance with proper documentation.

10. 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.[9][6]

Attendance need not always be within school facilities. A student will be considered in attendance if 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.[3][16][17][11][18][19][20][21][22]

The Board shall excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance at the schools of this district:

1. 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. [9][10][23]
2. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught, except that such students and students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in the district schools shall be counted as being in part-time attendance in this district.[3][24]
3. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business schools has been approved.[3]
4. Those students in an approved program of homebound instruction in accordance with conditions specified by Board policy.[21]

Guidelines

Dental and Medical Appointments

Attempts should be made to schedule medical and dental appointments at times other than during the school day. Students who wish to leave school for dental or medical appointments shall be required to bring a note from the parent/guardian prior to the appointment time.[11][12]

The district requires parents/guardians to obtain verification of dental and medical appointments from the medical provider. A doctor's note must be original, plainly showing the student has attended the appointment, with the date(s) and times the student was present in the office. Doctor's notes must contain the doctor's name and phone number for confirmation and cannot be on an appointment card.

The doctor's office must be able to officially confirm the attendance information, via phone call when contacted by the attendance office, and in writing upon request.

Students should not expect to be excused a full day for such appointments unless necessary because of travel time, other medical/dental appointments scheduled for the same day, or reasons that are medically excusable. A student who has an excused medical or dental appointment during school hours is to attend school until the time of dismissal and return to school after the appointment, unless medical reasons prevent the student from returning to school.

Nonimmunized Children

No child may be admitted or permitted to attend the public schools unless the child has received immunizations as required by the Department of Health or has received from the district's Superintendent a medical or religious exemption from immunization.[25]

A child who has not received all doses of the required immunizations or has not been exempted for immunizations may be provisionally admitted and may attend public school for a period of up to eight (8) months. Provisional admission or continued attendance shall be conditioned upon parents'/guardians' submission to the Superintendent of a plan for the student's completion of the required immunization doses. The plan shall be reviewed by the school district at least every sixty (60) calendar days.

If after eight (8) consecutive months the child has not received all immunizations, the child, thereafter, may not be further admitted to, or be permitted to attend, the public schools until all doses have been received.

Absences resulting from a parent's/guardian's failure to obtain proper immunization for their child will be deemed unlawful and subject to corresponding punitive measures.

Educational Trips and Family Travel

Upon receipt of a written request from the parents/guardians of the students involved, students may be excused from school attendance to participate in an educational tour or trip in accordance with state regulations. Such travel shall be at the expense of the parent/guardian and shall be subject to direction and supervision by a parent, grandparent or legal guardian. [26]

Approval for these trips shall be requested, in writing, on forms provided by the district. Requests must be submitted two (2) weeks before the date of departure and should be completed in detail. Forms shall not be accepted after the trip. If a student leaves for an unapproved trip and is absent for ten (10) days, the student will be considered illegally absent and will be dis-enrolled (on the last date of attendance) from the district and will need to re-enroll upon return.

Submission of the form does not constitute approval. Requests will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. Length of trip – number of school days the student will miss.
2. Only five (5) days per year shall be considered for educational trips. The Superintendent may approve extenuating circumstances.
3. The number of absences accumulated prior to the scheduled trip. Five (5) or more excused or unexcused absences of accumulated prior to the trip may result in denial of the trip.
4. Trips/Travel may not be approved if they conflict with finals, achievement tests, or other school events during which the superintendent deems attendance is necessary.
5. Only students in good academic and attendance standing will have trips/travel approved by the administration.

All school work and tests missed during an approved trip shall be made up at the initiation of the student and reasonable convenience of the teacher at the secondary level. Work that is not made up shall count as a failure.

School-Sponsored Activities

In order to participate in a school-sponsored activity, the student must be in attendance at school on the day of the activity or, if applicable, the day before a holiday (if the activity falls on the holiday). A student must attend seventy-five percent (75%) of the school day to be eligible to participate in an activity that day. Exceptions to this procedure may be presented to the building principal or designee for review on a case-by-case basis. Whenever possible, preapproval for an absence from school on a school-sponsored activity day should be requested.

Lateness to School (Tardiness)

A student's late arrival to school will be excused, with a written note, for the following reasons only:

1. Personal illness.
2. Death in immediate family.
3. Exceptionally urgent or safety reasons; must pertain to the individual student as determined by the principal or designee.

4. Religious holiday/event.
5. Required court attendance.
6. In the case of a student with disabilities, where tardiness is caused by or directly related to a student's disability.
7. In the case of a doctor or dental appointment that is accompanied by a note from the doctor or dentist verifying the visit.[\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)

A request for excused lateness to school for a nonemancipated student requires a written note signed by a parent/guardian which must be presented on the day of the tardy or no later than the next school day attended. Consistent lateness to school may require disciplinary action be taken at the discretion of the building principal or designee. When student tardiness accumulates to 406 minutes, the student is charged with one (1) day of unlawful absence.

Truancy

Truancy is a violation of the compulsory attendance law. Chronic tardiness can be construed as a form of truancy. Tardiness is governed by the same rules as those for school absence. All other reasons are illegal.

The following procedure regarding unlawful absences apply:

1. Parents/Guardians have three (3) school days to turn in a note excusing an absence; after three (3) days, the absence will become unlawful.
2. Parents/Guardians will be sent a letter after each of the first three (3) unlawful absences.
3. After the third (3rd) letter, parents/guardians will be invited to attend a meeting to develop a Truancy Elimination Plan.
4. When a student of compulsory school age has accumulated four (4) unlawful absences, the building principal shall send a letter by registered mail and/or first class mail, as may be necessary, advising the parent or legal guardian that a criminal complaint will be lodged with a magistrate without further notice.
5. Following the District Court appearance, if truancy is not corrected, the district will initiate a referral to the Office of Child and Youth Truancy Unit.
6. When a student has been absent for a total of fifteen (15) days, the building principal shall send a letter by registered mail and/or first class mail, as may be necessary, to the parent or legal guardian requiring that a statement from a doctor be provided to the effect that the student has a medical problem which makes it necessary for the student to be absent more frequently than would normally be expected. A doctor's note will be required for each absence over fifteen (15) days.
7. In the event such a statement or note is not provided:
 - a. All future absences of a student under the compulsory school age shall be classified as unlawful.
 - b. All future absences of a student beyond the compulsory school age shall be classified as unexcused, with the exception of excused absences as classified.

Students shall be in physical attendance within the classes in which they are enrolled unless they have been excused for the conduct of school business within the immediate school setting.

Students shall be counted as absent on a period-by-period basis unless they are involved in the following:

1. Individual and group counseling activities within the immediate school setting.
2. Involvement in discipline proceedings, special needs conference, special education, or completing standardized tests.

3. Health-related activities within the immediate school setting such as health screening programs and emergency first aid.
Routine medical, dental, or health-related appointments which are scheduled with private practitioners constitute an absence for the period(s) in which the appointment was scheduled.

The official attendance record for the student will be maintained in the Student Information System.

Repeated infractions of Board policy requiring the attendance of enrolled students may constitute misconduct and disobedience and are subject to the school Code of Conduct.

Delegation of Responsibility

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

1. Shall be disseminated in student and faculty handouts.
2. Ensure a school session that conforms with requirements of state law and regulations. [\[27\]](#)
[\[28\]](#)[\[29\]](#)[\[30\]](#)[\[39\]](#)[\[40\]](#)
3. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with law. [\[32\]](#)[\[33\]](#)
4. Impose on truant students such incremental disciplinary measures for infractions of school rules according to the Code of Conduct. [\[34\]](#)[\[35\]](#)[\[36\]](#)[\[37\]](#)[\[38\]](#)
5. Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of his/her behavior, and consider modification of the student's educational program to meet particular needs and interests.
6. Issue written notice to any parent/guardian who fails to comply with the compulsory attendance law, prior to any proceeding brought under that law. Such notice shall inform the parent/guardian of 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. [\[34\]](#)[\[36\]](#)

Legal

- [1. 24 P.S. 1301](#)
- [2. 24 P.S. 1326](#)
- [3. 24 P.S. 1327](#)
- [4. 22 PA Code 11.12](#)
- [5. 22 PA Code 11.13](#)
- [6. 22 PA Code 11.41](#)
- [7. 22 PA Code 12.1](#)
8. Pol. 200
- [9. 24 P.S. 1329](#)
- [10. 24 P.S. 1330](#)
- [11. 22 PA Code 11.23](#)
- [12. 22 PA Code 11.25](#)
- [13. 22 PA Code 11.21](#)
- [14. 24 P.S. 1546](#)
- [16. 22 PA Code 11.8](#)
- [17. 22 PA Code 11.22](#)
- [18. 22 PA Code 11.28](#)
19. Pol. 115

20. Pol. 116
21. Pol. 117
22. Pol. 118
[23. 22 PA Code 11.34](#)
[24. 22 PA Code 11.32](#)
25. Pol. 203
[26. 22 PA Code 11.26](#)
[27. 24 P.S. 1501](#)
[28. 24 P.S. 1504](#)
[29. 22 PA Code 4.4](#)
[30. 22 PA Code 11.1](#)
[32. 24 P.S. 1332](#)
[33. 24 P.S. 1339](#)
[34. 24 P.S. 1333](#)
[35. 24 P.S. 1338](#)
[36. 24 P.S. 1354](#)
37. Pol. 218
38. Pol. 233
[39. 22 PA Code 11.2](#)
[40. 22 PA Code 11.3](#)
[24 P.S. 510](#)
[24 P.S. 1318](#)
[22 PA Code 11.24](#)
[22 PA Code 11.5](#)
Pol. 000