

## ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR ATTENDANCE & TRUANCY

### I. Purpose:

To provide procedures and general guidelines for the attendance and truancy process for the School District of Philadelphia.

### II. Responsibility:

Attendance and Truancy, under the supervision of the Office of Student Rights and Responsibility, is responsible for reviewing and submitting truancy referrals for students with 10 or more unexcused absences. The referral will either be sent to Philadelphia Family Court or Department of Human Services (DHS) for interventions and services. The interventions and services are designed to help remove barriers to truancy.

### III. Criteria:

The Pennsylvania School Compulsory Law requires students from the ages of 8-17 to attend school on a daily basis. The Philadelphia School District is designated as a district of the first class and as such the requirement for compulsory school attendance is between the ages of 6-17. Once a student is enrolled in school, this includes children in kindergarten; they are subject to compulsory school laws until the student reaches age 17. The student can only be withdrawn if he/she transfers out of the District. The student will remain on the District's roll and the child/family is subjected to Truancy Court if they do not attend school.

### IV. Process for Attendance:

#### School Process:

- Parents **must submit** an absence note to the school **within three (3) days** of the child's unexcused absence. After 3 days, the school Principal/Designee will make a determination if the note will be accepted. If the note has been accepted it should be submitted to the main office and the absence must be changed in the SIS (Student Information System) to an excused absence using the appropriate code.
- At the 3rd unexcused absence the Three Day Legal Notice (C-31) should be sent to the Parent/Guardian to make them aware that the child has missed 3 days (consecutive/non consecutive) of school.
- No later than the 6<sup>th</sup> unexcused absence an attendance improvement conference must be held to address the student's absences and reasons for the truancy. The purpose of the conference is to identify motivations for and barriers to attendance and develop an action plan to improve attendance. This Student Attendance Improvement Plan (previously referred to as a MTSS plan) will be documented at the conclusion of the conference. Copies will be provided to the student, parent/caregiver and any other entity identified who can support the student with this plan.
- At the 10th unexcused absence, the truancy referral should be submitted to the Office of Attendance & Truancy.

- Once the referral has been submitted to the Office of Attendance & Truancy, it may take up to 6 weeks for the student/family to receive a citation for Truancy Court. Schools can check the Truancy Court tab in the SIS (Student Information System), once a student has a court date to view dispositions and status updates. Grades K-3rd must be submitted on the DHS referral sheet, which is available on the office web site. Grades 4th-11th must be submitted on the Family Court referral sheet, which is available on the office's web site
- Siblings from the same school should be submitted together on the referral sheets.

V. Who is invited to attend the Attendance Improvement Conference?

The following people should be invited to the attendance improvement conference:

- The School Counselor should be invited and take the leadership role. Because of the broad, community-based needs to attendance concerns, school counselors are in a unique position to lead with the plan development and implementation oversight.
- The student and the guardian.
- Other people whom the guardian may believe can be helpful resource (like a grandparent, sibling, family friend, advocate, community member, etc.).
- Appropriate school personnel. This should include members of the child's IEP or 504 Team members, if the child is a student with disability.
- Recommended service providers (like case managers, behavioral health providers, probation officers, children and youth practitioners, etc.).

The guardian is encouraged to attend the meeting to address the needs of the student. However, if the parent/guardian is not in attendance the school will still conduct the meeting in their absence. Please be aware that all efforts to invite parents must be documented. The conference itself must be documented as well, as the plan is likely to be asked for if the case is referred to truancy court.

A. Submitting a Truancy Referral:

Schools are required to submit truancy referrals to the Office of Attendance and Truancy at 440 North Broad Street on the 25th of every month. The referrals can be submitted via email at [attendanceandtruancy@philasd.org](mailto:attendanceandtruancy@philasd.org), fax at 215-400-4223, or hand delivered to the Office of Attendance & Truancy, here at 440 (Education Center).

The counselor must review and ensure that every student referred to regional truancy court has been offered evidence based interventions implemented with fidelity. These efforts to eliminate truancy must include all appropriate internal district staff and external partners including but not limited to DHS, CUA, special education director or the SEL.

The family will receive a subpoena/citation from Philadelphia Family Court to appear in Truancy Court. The subpoena will have the date, time and location of where the family should appear. In addition, a DHS contracted truancy provider will make contact with the family to arrange a meeting. The meeting is to extend services to help reduce/remove any barriers that are contributing to the truancy. The provider will work with the family until

the case is discharged from truancy court. The truancy court process can last up to 120 days depending on the severity of the case. Each case is handled individually and different factors are taken into account.

- B. Support from DHS (Dept. of Human Service Providers)  
For grades K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade, DHS contracts with *Family Empowerment Services* (FES) providers that will support students and engage with families and students once the referral has been submitted to the Office of Attendance & Truancy. They provide intensive supports for families inside of the home prior to the case being sent to truancy court. The provider will ask for demographic and attendance information on each student that they serve from the school on record or in attendance. Information can be provided if the case manager provides the school with a FERPA consent form. In order for DHS or CUA to receive records with a FERPA form, the guardian or parent has to sign the consent form or the DHS or CUA worker must present evidence of two unsuccessful attempts to have the consent form signed. The case manager must have their work ID and the FERPA consent form in order to receive the requested information.

For grades 4<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup>, DHS contracts with *Truancy Providers* that will support schools. For Tier 1 supports (serving students with 3-5 unexcused absences) the school will need to furnish the truancy provider with a list of students that have between 3-5 unexcused absences. Once this list is given to the provider they can begin conducting out-reach to the families in order to identify and remove any barriers to attendance. At Tier 3 (serving students with 10 or more unexcused absences) the provider will ask for demographic and attendance information from the school to support the family in truancy court. The provider will work with the family to help identify and remove barriers to regular attendance. There are 10 truancy providers that support SDP schools. The case manager must have their work ID and the FERPA consent form to receive the requested information. DHS has temporarily suspended Tier 1 services until Jan 2, 2018. We will keep schools updated as we learn more information.

- C. Corrections to a student's attendance record:  
If a parent or guardian feels that there is an error/discrepancy on their student's attendance record, they have the right to address it with the school. They must provide proper documentation in order for a change to be made. This documentation should consist of a handwritten note from the parent if it is less than 3 days from the date of absence. A doctor's note is required if the absence totals 3 consecutive days or more. Once the information is given to the school, either the principal or their designee will approve the change. If the change is approved, the change should be reflected in the SIS. Changes for the current school year can be done at the school level, changes from the prior school year must be submitted to Office of Attendance & Truancy for correction. The school can forward all information pertaining to the case to following email address [attendanceandtruancy@philasd.org](mailto:attendanceandtruancy@philasd.org), for changes.
- D. Coding students that on Homebound Instruction:

Any student receiving Homebound Instruction will stay in their regular homeroom and marked excused with proper documentation from a doctor. The student should be marked with the absence code 1 while on Homebound Instruction.

E. Excused Absence Policy:

Pursuant to SDP's attendance policy, all absences resulting in a total of 3 or more consecutive days absent require a doctor's note. For absences that do not total 3 consecutive days, parents may submit a handwritten note stating the reason for the absence. Notes must be given to the school within **3 (three) days** of the absence for credit. If the note is not turned in within the required time frame that day may not be excused. When a student has been absent, excused with a parent note, totaling 8 days (cumulative), all subsequent absences require a doctor's note.

F. Half-Day Absence Procedure: (K-8 Schools Only):

Any student coming to school two (2) hours after the start of the school day or leaving two (2) hours before the end of the school day will be marked as half-day absent. If the child has a note from a medical provider (Doctor, Dentist, Psychologist, Psychiatrist etc.) they will be marked as half-day excused (Absence code 1 in AM or PM box in the SIS). The note must be given to the school upon return from the medical provider, within **24 hours** of the visit. If the student does not have a note, the day will remain unexcused (absence code 2 in AM or PM box in the SIS), two (2) half day unexcused absences will equal 1 full day unexcused absence.

Properly coding this policy in the Student Information System (SIS)

For students arriving two (2) hours after the start of the school day:

- To record this in the SIS for an excused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 1 in the AM box.
- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 2 in the AM box.

For Students leaving two (2) hours before the end of the school day:

- To record this in the SIS for an excused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 1 in the PM box.
- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused absence, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 2 in the PM box.

G. Lateness (Tardy) Procedure: (K-8 Schools)

Any student that comes to school after the start of the school day, but less than two (2) hours after school starts will be considered late. If the student has a doctor's note it will count as an excused lateness (Absence code 13 in AM box in the SIS). If no note is provided to the school, it will count as an unexcused lateness (Absence code 14 in AM box in the SIS) and the student will be marked accordingly.

Properly coding this policy in the Student Information System (SIS)

For students that comes to school after the start of the school day, but less than two (2) hours after school starts:

- To record this in the SIS for an excused lateness, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 13 in the AM box.
- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused lateness, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 14 in the AM box.

#### Early Dismissal Procedure:

Any student that leaves school at any other time during the day, outside the parameters set up above in the half-day absence/lateness procedure will be marked as unexcused early dismissal (Absence code 3 in PM box in the SIS). If the student has a doctor's note, they will be marked as excused early dismissal (Absence code 4 in PM box in the SIS). The note must be turned in within **24 hours** of the student leaving school for it to be excused.

#### Properly coding this policy in the Student Information System (SIS)

- To record this in the SIS for an unexcused early dismissal, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 3 in the PM box.
- To record this in the SIS for an excused early dismissal, in *Daily Attendance* choose absence code 4 in the PM box.

#### H. AM/PM Attendance: (K-8 Schools)

Attendance will be taken daily at the school. If a student arrives late or leaves early for any reason after attendance has been taken, the student should be marked accordingly with the proper attendance code.

#### I. Taking Attendance in ScholarChip & The SIS:

##### **K-8 Schools**

- **Teachers are expected to record attendance** within the first 10 minutes of the start of school in the new SIS. **Roll sheets will no longer be used.**
- Any student late to school must report to the office for the secretary to mark them late (follow the policies outlined in Sections F and G above for entering late arrivals). Since the teacher may have already marked the absent for the day, attendance must be updated for both the AM and PM.
- Students will report to the office for early dismissals and the secretary will enter the appropriate coding of these students. Schools can then go to the Ad Hoc Letters Tab in SIS and print out an early dismissal pass to give to the student to leave the building.
- Schools will use the new SIS to resolve attendance events, such as entering an excused absence, lateness, and entering suspensions.
- Suspensions must be recorded in the SIS, using the suspension tab. Staff must also enter the out-of-school suspension absence code in the attendance module.
- Secretaries will have access to the Attendance Wizard. This feature is used for resolving attendance for groups of students.
- If students report to an elective class for the start of the day, schools can print the sub-attendance roster for the specialist teacher to take attendance on paper and send to the office for the secretary to enter. Or the homeroom teacher can take attendance within the first 10 minutes of second period.

### **Middle Schools with ScholarChip Attendance**

Most middle schools use the AM/PM schedule. Any student late to school must scan in. Because the teacher may have already marked the student absent for the day, the secretary must then update the SIS attendance record to indicate that the student is tardy. Follow the policies outlined in Sections F and G above for entering late arrivals. We strongly encourage all students to scan in at the ScholarChip Kiosk when they arrive at school. In addition, ScholarChip middle schools that follow an AM/PM schedule should follow the K-8 procedures above.

### **High Schools**

- The ScholarChip swipe **combined with teachers taking attendance in the SIS** will be used for building level attendance; every student must either scan in or type his/her ID number into the ScholarChip kiosk **everyday**.
- All students in ScholarChip schools are expected to have an ID card.
- **Teachers are expected to record period level attendance in the SIS.** When the teacher opens attendance for an instructional period, students will all display as 'present' in the SIS for the current day. Even if all students are present, the teacher must log in and hit save to document period attendance.
- Schools will use the new SIS to resolve attendance events, such as entering an excused absence, lateness, and entering suspensions. **No attendance events should be resolved in the ScholarChip system.**
- For early dismissals, first navigate to the attendance tab to enter the early dismissal code for the appropriate periods. Schools can then go to the Ad Hoc Letters Tab in SIS and print out an early dismissal pass to give to the student to leave the building.
- Suspensions must be recorded in the SIS using the suspension tab. Staff must also enter the out-of-school suspension absence code in the attendance module. The SIS will sync with ScholarChip to prevent those students from entering school.
- Any student late to school must scan in or go to the office for the secretary to enter them into the ScholarChip system. If a student brings in an excuse note, a secretary can mark the periods missed as excused.
- If a student arrives late and does not scan in and goes directly to the classroom, the teacher will mark the student Tardy for the period. The student will be recognized tardy for that period. **We strongly encourage all students to scan in when they arrive at school.**
- Teachers will have the ability to enter Code 12 when students are participating in an approved school event (i.e., meeting with the counselor/nurse, sporting events).
- Secretaries will have access to the Attendance Wizard. This feature is used for resolving attendance for groups of students. All reports will be generated in the SIS.
- If a student does not swipe in AND a teacher does not take period attendance, at the end of the day the SIS resolver will mark that student unexcused absence for that period. If a student does swipe in AND a teacher does not take period attendance, at the end of the day the SIS resolver will mark that student present for that period. The swipe does not override what a teacher enters into the system.

J. Absence Codes (effective Feb. 21, 2017)

Absence Code	Absence Reason	Excuse Code	Status Code
1	Excused Absence or Other Urgent Reasons (Principal's Approval)	Absent	Excused
2	Unexcused Absence	Absent	Unexcused
3	Unexcused Early Dismissal	Early Release	Unexcused
4	Excused Early Dismissal	Early Release	Excused
5	Illness	Absent	Excused
6	Quarantine	Absent	Excused
7	Recovery from Accident	Absent	Excused
8	Required Court Attendance	Absent	Excused
9	Death in Family	Absent	Excused
10	Educational Trip/Tour with Approval	Absent	Excused
11	Religious Holiday	Absent	Excused
12	Authorized School Activity	Absent (Class)	Exempt/Present
13	Excused Lateness	Tardy	Excused
14	Unexcused Lateness	Tardy	Unexcused
15	Out of School Suspension	Absent	Excused

### Important Information Regarding Attendance

When resolving student attendance, do so in the SIS. Please do not resolve attendance in ScholarChip retroactively. All resolution must be entered into the SIS. Steppers for [Simple Schedule](#) schools (K-8) and [Master Schedule](#) schools are linked here and can be found on the [sishelp.philasd.org](http://sishelp.philasd.org) website.

All ScholarChip kiosks must be connected to the network prior to the start of the last period of the day. This will enable data to come over to the SIS.

The Attendance Swipe Tab is available for all schools that use ScholarChip. It is in each student's SIS profile. It allows principals to see by day, the time and specific kiosk used to enter the building.

### Reports Available in the SIS

Click on the link the link below to see reports that are available in the SIS, including additional attendance reports. Report descriptions, steppers, and examples can always be found at <http://sishelp.philasd.org> and are linked to the report name. More reports forthcoming.

## **Long-Term Sub Teachers**

When a long-term substitute has been confirmed for an assignment, he/she will be entered into Advantage and should use the self-service setup or call the IT Help Desk to activate his/her account. Once a long-term substitute has activated his/her account, the principal will be able to assign them to sections in the SIS to enter attendance and grades for assigned classes. SIS Coaches can train new teachers on the system.

For Attendance Concerns or Questions:

Please reach out to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibility (Attendance & Truancy) via phone at 215-400-4220 or email at [attendanceandtruancy@philasd.org](mailto:attendanceandtruancy@philasd.org)

### **K. RELATED POLICIES**

- 118: Code of Student Conduct
- 206: Assignment within the District
- 248: Harassment
- 249: Bullying/Cyber bullying
- 251: Homeless Students

EFFECTIVE DATE February 21, 2017

REVISED DATE November 3, 2017