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# Student Attendance Manual

Moshannon Valley School District

Board Approved: May 11, 2020

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Houtzdale, PA 16651

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**On Time, Every Day**

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## Overview

The Moshannon Valley School District is committed to working with students and parents/ guardians to provide a framework that supports consistent and regular attendance for all children. We value the education of our students, recognizing the relationship between regular attendance and student achievement. We work with our families to ensure that whenever possible, their children are in attendance at school.

The purpose of this attendance manual is to provide information about the laws and regulations governing school attendance and the procedures followed by the District to maintain compliance with these mandated policies. Through utilization of the guidelines and forms provided in this manual, the District reinforces consistent implementation of attendance procedures across all K-12 schools. These procedures help ensure students attend school on a regular basis.

## Pennsylvania Compulsory Education Laws

The term *compulsory school age* in Pennsylvania refers to the period of a child's life from the time the child enters school as a beginner (kindergarten or first grade), which may be no later than eight years of age, until the age of seventeen or graduation from a high school, whichever occurs first. Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, the compulsory age changes to no later than six years of age, until the age of eighteen, or graduation from a high school, whichever occurs first. It is mandatory for all children of compulsory school age having a legal residence in Pennsylvania to attend a day school in which the subjects and activities prescribed by the Standards of the State Board of Education are taught in the English language, except in certain situations found in sections 1327, 1327.1, 1329, and 1330 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

All students from age 6 until age 18 are required to participate in an approved educational program. Parents or guardians are required by law to ensure that their children attend an approved educational program.

The following chart provides a quick overview of Pennsylvania’s educational laws regarding compulsory school attendance.

Code Section	Tit. 24 §§13-1326, et seq.
Age at Which School Attendance is Required	Between 6 and 18 or at the time of the child’s life that they have entered school
Exceptions to Attendance Requirements	Graduated high school; 15 and with approval, child may enroll in private trade school; enrolled in home education program pursuant to Tit. 24 §13-1327.1 or private school; physical/mental defects rendering education impracticable; 16 and lawfully employed; 15 and engaged in farming or domestic service or 14 if engaged in same having achieved highest elementary grade; resides over 2 miles from nearest public highway, school or free public transportation is not furnished
Home School Provisions	File annual notice of various information including proposed education objectives and immunization record; evaluation by teacher or administrator; minimum course requirements at each educational level; portfolio of records and materials
Penalties on Parents for Noncompliance	Up to \$300, together with costs and upon default of payment subjected to county jail up to 5 days

Although the compulsory education law defines the starting age as 6 years, the Moshannon Valley School District implements these regulations as soon as a student enrolls in the school system. For example, if a student is enrolled in kindergarten at the age of 5 years old, the district will implement the attendance laws for that child. All students enrolled in the district prior to the age of six must abide by the attendance laws.

Upon twenty-five (25) days of unexcused/unlawful absences, the student may not be granted credits and may be retained in the current grade for the following school year.

## Absence from School

Absence is defined as the nonattendance of a student on a day that school is in session. It is expected that a parent/guardian notify the school about the student's illness or family emergency on the day of the student's return to school.

### **Unlawful Absence (under 18 years of age)/Unexcused Absence (18 years of age or older)**

Parents/guardians must provide a written explanation for the absence of their student. All absences shall be treated as unlawful until the school district receives a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for an absence. Parents/guardians and students should submit the written explanation within three (3) school days of the absence. If no written explanation is provided, the absence is recorded as unexcused/unlawful. Likewise, if a written explanation offers an excuse for absence that is not allowable (as outlined in Board policy no. 204), the absence will be recorded as unexcused/unlawful. If a written explanation is questionable in nature, the absence will be investigated. An absence only becomes excused when the school codes it accordingly.

When students under the age of 18 have an unexcused absence, the absence will be counted as unlawful. As per the Pennsylvania Department of Education, all unlawful absences are considered truant.

Unexcused absences include absence from school due to parental neglect, parental consent for reasons other than those specifically excused, illegal employment, and/or truancy.

Examples of **unlawful absences include, but are not limited to, *truancy, parental neglect, oversleeping, missing the bus, car trouble, running errands, shopping/preparing for a school event, babysitting, visiting relatives, hunting, fishing or stocking fish, working at home, remaining home to do homework, a doctor's appointment for a sibling, or a sporting event for a sibling.*** PA

Department of Education guidelines state that the absence of a teen parent is unexcused when that absence was a result of the teen's child.

### **Lawful Absence**

A lawful absence from school is broadly defined by the state. Excused absences from school at the Moshannon Valley School District include the following:

- ◆ Illness
- ◆ Quarantine

- ◆ Prearranged medical, dental, clinic, or hospital appointment *if reasonable time used for appointment.*
- ◆ Court appearances
- ◆ Funeral of relative
- ◆ Family Educational trips preapproved by the appropriate administrator - limit of two (2) annually, **not to exceed a total of (5) school days**
- ◆ Pre-approved annual visits to post-secondary and job shadowing options:
  - Colleges, trade schools or job sites-with a maximum (non-cumulative) of:
    - 10<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1 job shadow (counts like a School Related Field Trip), NO college visits. Any job shadow after one will be parental excused
    - 11<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1 job shadow, 1 college visit (both count like a School Related Field Trip). Additional job shadow or college visits will be parental excused
    - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade – 1 job shadow, 2 college visits (all count like a School Related Field Trip). Additional job shadow or college visits will be parental excused
    - Military business will always count as a School Related Field Trip when it is mandatory
- ◆ SERV (Student Emergency Response Volunteers) members/junior firemen will be excused for emergency calls as part of the ten (10) days of parental excused absences if:
  - Student has not exceeded the 10 days of absence
  - Student has not accumulated in excess of 15 discipline points
  - Student is not failing two or more subjects for the nine weeks
- ◆ Authorized School Activities and School Related Field Trips
- ◆ Out of school suspension
- ◆ Impassible roads or inclement weather (as deemed by school administrator)
- ◆ Family emergency day upon approval by principal

- ◆ Observance of student's religious holiday upon approval by principal
- ◆ Participation in religious instruction program upon approval by principal - maximum of 36 hours annually
- ◆ Permit test- ½ day; Driver test- up to ½ day if needed

The building administrator may require a doctor's excuse in situations where frequent

absences are occurring and/or it appears absences are unexcused and/or unlawful. This requirement may remain in effect for the remainder of the school year.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative lawful absences\* verified by parental notification are permitted during a school year for students in grades K-12. All cumulative lawful absences verified by parent note beyond this number will require an excuse from a physician. Students who are legally absent have the opportunity to make up any work missed. It is expected that students complete the work within the time frame allotted by school staff.

**NOTE:**\* in addition to parental excuses, all absences accumulated by student as noted in the previous lawful absences section are calculated as cumulative lawful absences.

## **Family Educational Trips**

A student may be permitted to take a ***limit of two (2) family educational trips per school year*** with his/her parents/guardians, ***not to exceed a total of five (5) school days***. These trips are to be preapproved and comply with program requirements as described in the Student Handbook. The Family Educational Trip Request Form must be completed and given to the building administrator for prior approval at least one (1) week prior to the trip. See the Appendices section for a copy of this form. The form is also located on the district and school websites.

Family Educational trips for the first and last ten (10) days of school and during scheduled testing times (for state-mandated assessments – PSSA, Keystone Exams; final exams) are strongly discouraged and may not be approved during these windows. The testing calendar is available in your student's school office and on the school website.

Family Educational trips may not be approved for students who are failing their core subjects [Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies] or

have unexcused absences. Shopping trips and similar activities will not be approved as family educational trips. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the student's building principal for details relating to excused absences for family educational trips.

## **Medical Appointments**

Students with an appointment to visit a doctor or dentist during school hours may be excused for the absence if the parent/guardian provides a signed written request prior to the event. The written request should include the name of the physician and appointment time. A note from the doctor/dentist must be given to the office upon the student's return to school.

Students are expected to only be absent ***for a reasonable time before and after a medical/dental appointment.*** For example, if the appointment is at a time when the student is able to come to school before and/or return after, he or she should certainly do so. However, if the appointment requires extensive travel time, that is taken into consideration. Most appointments should require no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a day's absence. A note from the doctor/dentist should follow the student's return to school, recognizing the three-day grace period.

Student athletes are strongly encouraged to make appointments outside of school hours.

Students are not permitted to call home to have someone come get them unless the nurse authorizes the call. Any student leaving school without authorization from the nurse will be counted as unexcused.

## **Tardiness**

Tardiness is defined as arriving late to a student's homeroom or class. Tardiness can have a significant negative impact on the learning process. Students must be in their homeroom or first period classes by the starting time of the school. Tardy minutes may be added together daily to equal half or full days of absence. Below are the starting and ending times for the elementary school and high school.

### **Elementary (Grades K - 6): 8:10 a.m. - 3:05 p.m.**

- A. All students must have an excuse prior to or the day of the late arrival/early dismissal, stating the reason for the late arrival/early dismissal. Elementary Students **MUST**



be signed in and out by an adult.

- B. All students must remain in scheduled classes until called to the office for the early dismissal. All persons, adults and students, must report to the office for late arrivals/early dismissals and must sign in/out.
- C. The following reasons constitute excused late arrival/early dismissals: Doctor and dentist appointments. Late arrival/early dismissal for any other reason will be considered as unexcused.
- D. If students arrive at school after 8:10 a.m. but before 9:30 a.m., they are considered tardy, but present all day.
- E. If school students arrive at school after 9:30 a.m. but before 12:00 p.m., they are considered absent for 1/2 day.
- F. If students leave school between 12:00 p.m. and 2:55 p.m., they are considered absent 1/2 day.
- G. Absence for students leaving and returning within one school day shall be determined by hours attended.

**Jr/Sr High School (Grades 7 - 12): 8:10 a.m. - 3:05 p.m.**

- A. If students arrive at school after 8:10 a.m. but before 9:30 a.m. they are considered a.m. tardy but present all day.
- B. If students arrive at school after 9:30 a.m. but before 12:00 p.m., they are considered absent for ½ day a.m.
- C. If students leave school between 12:00 a.m. and 2:55 p.m., they are considered absent for ½ day p.m.
- D. Absences for students leaving and returning within one school day shall be determined by hours attended.
- E. If a student is tardy 3 times, a written warning will be given. The fourth tardy will result in a detention. Further discipline continues for additional tardies.

**District Accountability for Absences**

It is the responsibility of each school to maintain accountability for student attendance. Building administrators are responsible for assuring that all regulations are followed. If there are situations that cannot be addressed at the building level, and/or issues that directly relate to district policy regarding attendance, the District Office will provide guidance.

As per Board policy no. 204, the Superintendent, or designee, shall annually notify students, parents/guardians and staff about the district's attendance policy by publishing it in the student handbook, parent newsletters, district web site and other efficient methods. School rules and procedures governing student attendance, absences, and excusals will be shared annually with these stakeholders.

## **Written Notification for Absences**

The Moshannon Valley School District has implemented the following guidelines for monitoring attendance and providing written notification to parents/guardians about their student's absences.

### **Lawful Absences**

- For students in grades 7-12, after a student has ten (10) lawful absences (excuses consist of approved lawful absences), a Doctor's Excuse Required Letter is sent to the parent/guardian. Subsequent absences that do not have an accompanying doctor's note will be considered unlawful.
- For students in grades K-6, after a student has ten (10) lawful absences (excuses consist of approved lawful absences), a Doctor's Excuse Required Letter is sent to the parent/guardian. Subsequent absences that do not have an accompanying doctor's note will be considered unlawful.
- The written excuse is to be submitted within three (3) days of the absence.

### **Unlawful Absences**

- Absences are treated as unlawful until the school receives a written excuse, to be submitted within three (3) days of the absence or the students return to school.
- After a student has three (3) unlawful absences, the school sends an Unlawful Absence Letter (the first official notice) which includes: (a) dates of the three (3) unlawful absences (or accumulated school time missed) and (b) legal penalties

resulting from additional unlawful absences.

- After the third unlawful absence, the school may coordinate a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) meeting to resolve the issue. All parties (student, parent/ guardian, school staff, and Children and Youth Services, if present) sign the SAIP at the conclusion of the meeting. SAIP meetings will be held even if parents/guardians elect not to participate and Children and Youth Services will be informed of the SAIP plan and notice of the plan will be sent to parents/guardians.
- Any additional unlawful absences (4 or more) that occur after the SAIP meeting may result in citations from the District Magistrate's office. Any future attendance issues should be referred to the District Magistrate.

### **School-Family Conference & School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP)**

Pursuant to the BEC 24 P.S. 13-1327, schools are required to notify the parent/guardian regarding the need for a joint conference upon the third unlawful student absence. The SAIP (Section IV (A)(3) BEC 24 P.S. 13-1327) is developed cooperatively with involved stakeholders through a school-family conference.

The school-family conference engages all participants involved in the student's life to explore possible solutions to increase the student's school attendance. Maintaining open communication between the student and adults will facilitate positive outcomes. The purpose of the school-family conference is to discuss the cause(s) of the truancy and to develop a mutually agreed upon plan to assure regular school attendance. The school-family conference provides all individuals the opportunity to identify, understand, and explore all issues contributing to the student's truant behavior.

The school will attempt to have the full team present for the SAIP development meeting. If the parent/guardian does not respond, or if the parent/ guardian refuse to attend the meeting, the school team will develop the SAIP and mail it home to the parent.

The SAIP should include, but not be limited to, the following components as appropriate:

- Identification and provision of appropriate academic supports by the school and/or community organization(s)
- Identification and provision of appropriate social, emotional,

physical, mental, and behavioral health support from the school and/or community organization(s)

- Identification of the school environment issues that affect the student's success and solutions to address these issues
- Explanation of the student's strengths and responsibilities related to the SAIP
- Explanation of the family's strengths and responsibilities related to the SAIP
- Clarification of method(s) used for monitoring the effectiveness of the SAIP
- Explanation of the consequences for each stakeholder if the SAIP is not fully implemented
- Discussion of the benefits for successfully implementing the SAIP
- Follow up and report the outcome of the SAIP

The SAIP substantiates efforts made by the school, family, and other vested third parties to assist the student in addressing and resolving school attendance issues. This comprehensive system of supports and services provides documentation of the "good faith" effort between the school and the student's family should future action be required (e.g., citation to the magisterial district judge. A referral to the county children and youth agency may occur anytime following these citations.).

## Appendices

1. School Attendance Improvement Plan [pg. 13]
2. Educational Trip Request Form – Request for Pre-approval [pg. 17]



**MOSHANNON VALLEY JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL**  
**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**  
**(SAIP)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Goal: Increase \_\_\_\_\_ school attendance ending \_\_\_\_\_

**Basic Student Information:**

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Medical/Health Concerns:**

None
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**Parent/Guardian Information:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Information:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**List of Participants who Attended or were Invited to the SAIP Meeting:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths of the Student, Family, and/or School:**

Description	Relevance to Plan
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1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**General Information Regarding Family Habits/Routines:**

1. Does the student have younger siblings living in the household? \_\_\_\_\_
2. With whom does the student live during the week? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What time does the student wake up in the morning? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Typically, what time does the student go to bed at night? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How does the student get to school? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many times has the student been tardy to school? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Was the student truant the previous school year or have a history of truancy? \_\_\_\_\_

**School Records of Absence:**

<b><u>Date of Absence</u></b>	<b><u>Written Excuse Provided (Y/N)</u></b>	<b><u>Reason for Absence</u></b>	<b><u>Action Taken (Letters Sent)</u></b>

**Areas of Need:**

**Describe:**

Provide Documentation for all absences effective immediately  
Improve attendance overall  
Parent ensure documentation received

**Solutions:**

<b><u>Description:</u></b>	<b><u>Responsible Party</u></b>	<b><u>Completion Date</u></b>

**Benefits of Compliance with Plan:** Attendance not reported to District Magistrate for truancy

**Consequences for Non-Compliance with Plan:** CYS notified as required by law and Citations filed with the District Magistrate

**\*\*We agree with this plan, including all requirements and consequences. Individuals in agreement with this plan, sign below.**

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Representative** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_



## Family Education Trip Guidelines

In accordance with School Board policy, family educational trips for educational purposes will be considered within the context of school purpose and school law.

Parents who plan to take their children on an educational trip when school is in session may request an absence for the student(s). Such requests are dependent on these conditions:

1. **No more than 5 school days** in one (1) school year or 10 days within 2 years will be approved, on a case by case basis, for any student.
2. It is recommended that family educational field trips not be scheduled during the first 10 or last 10 days of school, or during mandatory state testing [PSSA, Keystone] periods.
3. An educational trip will not be granted for the same student if the student experienced the same trip during a previous school year.
4. The purpose, itinerary, and relationship to our educational purpose must be clearly explained as justification for the trip (to be noted on the request form).
5. **Student will be required to submit a one (1) page written reflection of their trip to the building principal within five (5) days of their return or the absences will be marked unexcused.**
6. Requests for family educational field trips shall be made 5 school days prior to the student's planned absence using the proper form available in the school principal's office.

The school principal shall review requests for compliance with the stated conditions before submitting requests to the Superintendent for approval.

When prior approval is granted for an educational trip, the student must meet the following obligations:

- a. The student is expected to complete all missed school work.
- b. The student should request assignments immediately prior to his/her absence.
- c. It is the student's responsibility to obtain assignments, complete the work, and present completed assignments shortly after his/her return from the trip.

***Note: In accordance with Pennsylvania State Law, educational trip absences count toward the 10 cumulative lawful absences during a school year, which are permitted, all absences beyond the 10-day limit require a physician's excuse.***





In accordance with the policy established by the Moshannon Valley Board of Education, I am requesting an educational field trip for:

**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Trip Date(s):** The trip will begin on \_\_\_\_\_ and end on \_\_\_\_\_.

**Itinerary:** The following places/activities will be experienced by my child/children:


**Educational Value:** Describe the educational value of this trip for your child/children:


**Parent Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Office Use only

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

**Disapproved:** \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

**Approved:** \_\_\_\_\_ Superintendent

**Disapproved:** \_\_\_\_\_ Superintendent

**Students exceeding state-mandated absence requirements will be subject to truancy requirements if applicable.**

**Approval Status will be emailed to teacher and parent.**

Student(s) will be required to submit a one (1) page written reflection of their trip to the building principal within five (5) days of their return or the absences will be marked unexcused.

Student Written Reflection: provide a detailed **description** of one encounter on the trip and **analysis** of what you learned from it
