

A Few Things You Should Know

About the New

Baldwin-Whitehall School District Attendance and Truancy Policies

The Baldwin-Whitehall Board of School Directors adopted new attendance and truancy policies that will take effect beginning in the 2014-15 school year. While the policies should be read and understood by all parents and students, the following points can be used as a quick reference.

Students will have **3 days** to turn in an excuse or the absence will permanently count as **unexcused/unlawful**.

Medical excuses submitted to the school **will not** count toward excused or unexcused absences.

Absences:

- After **6 total absences or 5 total tardies** (excused or unexcused) an **Attendance Warning Letter** will be sent home.
- After **10 total (excused or unexcused) absences or tardies**, a **Medical Letter** will be sent home requiring a doctor's note for each additional absence or tardy.
- After **3 additional absences or tardies** and failure to provide medical excuses, an **Unlawful Absence Letter** will be sent home requesting a student-parent conference to develop a **Truancy Elimination Plan**.

Habitually Truant:

- After **3 unexcused absences**, an **Unlawful Absence Letter** will be sent home notifying the parent/guardian of the unlawful absences.
- After **3 additional unexcused absences**, a **Second Unlawful Absence Letter** will be sent home requesting a student-parent conference to develop a **Truancy Elimination Plan**.
- After **10 total (excused or unexcused) absences or tardies**, a **Medical Letter** will be sent home requiring a doctor's note for each additional absence or tardy.
- If a student continues to be habitually truant, **charges may be filed** with the local district justice.
- Students **will not** receive a grade or credit for any work missed for an unexcused/illegal absence.
- Educational trips must be **pre-approved two weeks** in advance of the trip. A **district form** must be completed and returned to the building principal for approval **2 weeks** in advance of the trip. The days granted **shall not exceed 5** for any school year. Educational trips shall not be approved during the **first two weeks** and the **last two weeks** of the school year or during **PA State Assessment testing** windows. All make-up work must be completed and returned within **one week** after the student's return from the trip.

Pay Attention to Attendance: Keep Your Child On Track in School

Showing up for school has a huge impact on a student's academic success starting in kindergarten and continuing through high school. Even as children grow older and more independent, families play a key role in making sure students get to school safely every day and understand why attendance is so important for success in school and on the job.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Students should miss no more than 9 days of school each year to stay engaged, successful and on track to graduation.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- Missing 10 percent, or about 18 days, of the school year can drastically affect a student's academic success.
- Students can be chronically absent even if they only miss a day or two every few weeks.
- Attendance is an important life skill that will help your child graduate from college and keep a job.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Make school attendance a priority

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school everyday, make that the expectation.
- Help your child maintain daily routines, such as finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Try not to schedule dental and medical appointments during the school day.
- Don't let your child stay home unless truly sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety.

Help your child stay engaged

- Find out if your child feels engaged by his classes and feels safe from bullies and other threats. Make sure he/she is not missing class because of behavioral issues and school discipline policies. If any of these are problems, work with your school.
- Stay on top of academic progress and seek help from teachers or tutors if necessary. Make sure teachers know how to contact you.
- Stay on top of your child's social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Communicate with the school

- Know the school's attendance policy – incentives and penalties.
- Talk to teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Check on your child's attendance to be sure absences are not piling up.
- Ask for help from school personnel if you're having trouble getting your child to school.