

## **Frequently Asked Attendance Questions (FAAQ) For Parents**

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### **1. Q: How do I report absences?**

**A:** Each and every absence must be reported to the front office of your student's school. It is best if you call the school as soon as you know your child will be absent. You may have your child bring a note to give to the office, but in our experience children usually forget to hand in the note.

**Also** it is great when you communicate absences with your child's teacher, however in order for the absence to be reported you must communicate with the front office.

### **2. Q: What does truancy mean?**

**A:** Truancies are unexcused absences by law. State law defines a truant as a student who has had at least 3 full or partial days of unexcused absences, including tardys over 30 minutes, in one school year.

### **3. Q: Why is truancy such a big deal?**

**A:** Chronic absenteeism hurts your student. Students who are frequently absent fall behind in academics and miss important socialization concepts that enhance their ability to understand and follow directions or, ultimately, plan for the future.

- High school dropouts are 85 % *more likely* to be on welfare than high school graduates
- Studies show that truancy frequently leads to criminal activity, drug use and incarceration.
  - \* Nearly 80% of our prison population is comprised of dropouts.
  - \* Juvenile crime is directly linked to children who are truant.
  - \* Students who are truant are more likely to be involved in gang activity.
- Research has found a clear link between academic failure in the early grades and delinquent behavior in adolescence (Howell 1995 as stated in the Sacramento County PACT brochure)
  - \* 70% of suspended youth are chronically truant in the previous 6 months
  - \* 97% of expelled youth are chronically truant in the previous year.
  - \* 90 % of youth in detention for delinquent acts were truant.
  - \* 25% of all expelled youth will be in youth corrections within 1 year.

### **4. Q: How long do I have to clear my child's absence?**

**A:** It is preferred that parents call the school as soon as they know their child will be absent, but parents have **5 school days** to clear absences before it is recorded as a truancy.

### **4. Q: I thought I cleared my child's absences with the school, why am I getting these letters?**

**A:** There can be several answers to this question

- All absences must be reported to the front office, if you reported the absence to a teacher or staff member, the absence is unlikely to be officially documented.
- If you gave your child notes to hand-in, it is likely that they forgot about the notes, we see this all the time. It is best for you to call the office as soon as you know your child will be absent.
- If you reported the absence, but gave a reason that is unexcused by law, you may receive a letter depending upon the total of unexcused full or partial days. It is great that you communicated with the

school and it will be considered as a reported absence. However, if the reason is unexcused by law we must document it as such.

**5. Q: What is the difference between an excused and an unexcused absence?**

**A:** Under state law, an absence is considered “excused” only for these reasons:

- **Student Illness**
- **Death in the student’s immediate family member** (immediate family as defined in parent handbook) One day is excused if funeral is conducted in California and three days are excused if service is conducted outside California.
- **For purpose of having a medical, dental, optometrical, or chiropractic services rendered.**
- **Observation of a religious holiday or ceremony**
- **Court appearance** (documentation must be provided and have the student’s name on it.)

**All other reasons for absences are considered inexcusable by California State Law.**

\* If you have a special circumstance and are unsure if it will be considered excusable, please talk with your school’s Vice Principal/Principal for further guidance.\*

**6. Q: If we have a family emergency will it be excused? Ex. car broke down, family member in hospital.**

**A:** Family emergencies are not considered as an excusable absence according to California State Law.

**7. Q: I received a Truancy Letter in the mail, am I going to get in trouble, what is going to happen?**

**A:** State law requires the school district to mail out notices of truanies and excessive absences. You are not in trouble, but it is important to call the Attendance Improvement Program/SARB Office (979-8604). We will help explain why you received the truancy letters which will help prevent you from receiving additional letters.

\*\*\*If your child continues to receive truancy letters your family may be referred to the Attendance Improvement Program/SARB or asked to attend a truancy conference with the school’s Vice Principal/Principal or Counselor.\*\*\*

**8. Q: Can I get these truancy codes removed after 5 days?**

**A:** Absences after the **5 school day limit** has passed cannot be corrected.

**9. Q: Why did I get a CWA letter?**

**A:** CWA letters are courtesy letters that the district mails out to notify you of illness parent-verified days used. You will receive CWA 1 letter when you have used up 5 of your 10 illness parent-verified days, and you will receive CWA 2 letters when you have used up all 10 of your parent-verified days. It is important that we notify you because once you use up all of your 10 illness parent-verified days any further absences for illness, without a doctor’s note, will be considered unexcused, a truancy.

**10. Q: I have a Chronic Absence Form on file with the school, but I am still receiving letters for my child?**

**A:** There could be couple reasons for this.

- At the start of each school year a new Chronic Illness Form must be completed.
- Schools will only code absences **V** (doctor-verified) when the parent provides a **written** note including reasons in compliance with the physician's guidelines outlined on the form. If you communicate the absence over the phone with the school, it will be documented as an **E**, illness parent-verified day and this can generate letters (please see #9).

**11. Q: If my child's absences are excused does the school still receive reimbursement (A.D.A.)?**

**A:** Whether the absence is excusable or not, no reimbursement is received.

**12. Q: What do I do if my child is refusing to go to school or is cutting class?**

**A:** There are a few things you can do:

- Call the non-emergency sheriff department to report your child is refusing to go to school.
- Attend school with your child (usually just the mention of this will resolve the issue)
- Contact your school for support from a Vice Principal/Principal or Counselor. They may provide information and referrals to resources within or outside of the SJUSD.

**13. Q: Is there a way to access my child's attendance and grades?**

**A:** Yes, the program is called *Parent Portal*. You can gain access in one of two ways:

- If you have a valid email address on file and are listed as the mother, father, or guardian for your student(s) without directory restriction, you should receive an email containing instructions on how to access the Parent Portal, including PIN and Password.
- If you are listed as the mother, father, or guardian for your student(s) and do not have any directory restriction, but have not received an email, please visit your school site or the Technology Services HelpDesk, which is located at 5133 Engle Road, Carmichael, CA 95608 for assistance.

**14. Q: My child is too sick to come to school, what do I do?**

**A:** The school district considers a child is too sick to come to school if they have temperature over 100, symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea. As a parent you are allowed to excuse up to **10 days** without verification of illness from a medical professional. If you bring your child to see a doctor, make sure to obtain a doctor's note stating the date seen, any additional days they recommend your child to stay home and the symptoms. Upon your child's return to school, provide the documentation to the front office and these absences will be recorded as verified and will not take away from the 10 parent-verified days.

**15. Q: Are tardys considered truancies?**

**A:** There are two different kinds of tardys. The first type of tardy is coded, **T** on your child's attendance, it means that you are *less than 30 mins late*. T-tardys are not considered a truancy. The second type is a **B**-tardy, it means that your child was *more than 30 mins late*. A B-tardy is considered a truancy.

**16. Q: What is the School Attendance Review Board and why was I referred to them?**

**A:** SARB is the last step in providing legal notice to students and parents regarding attendance requirements. Your family is being referred to SARB because despite school intervention and support your child attendance did not improve. The conference is a formal proceeding where District officials present

evidence to substantiate truancy and identify the issues impeding student attendance. Family members are interviewed by the facilitators and other panel members. A series of directives will be established and set that require immediate action by the parents, students, and school to meet attendance requirements.

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