

COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND UNLAWFUL ABSENCES

The PA Department of Education (PDE) defines chronic absenteeism to include any student who is absent for eighteen (18) days or more in a school year, regardless of cause. PDE further defines a school day as one where the student receives four or more hours of classroom instruction. Both our school board and student handbook policies have been modified to prevent chronic absenteeism by any student.

A maximum of ten (10) excused absences, verified by parental/guardian notification, will be allowed during any school year. For all absences beyond those 10 days, and any absences of three (3) consecutive days or more, a written excuse from a treating physician may be mandated for an absence to be considered lawful. Physician excuses must include the date and time of the student's visit to their office. Parents/guardians of student(s) that have an existing, professionally diagnosed medical condition that has the potential to significantly impact a student's attendance shall contact school administration to make them aware of the condition and allow school officials to offer academic and medical support if necessary.

Parents/guardians shall submit the required written explanation or physician's note for any student absences within three (3) school days after the student's return to school. This can be done by the student delivering the excuse personally, or the parent sending the excuse electronically by eMail to the school's attendance secretary. If a written excuse is not provided within that time, the absence will be counted as unlawful. Students who are absent from school for ten (10) consecutive school days shall be dropped from the active membership roll unless the absence is partly or completely excused.

Central Columbia School District educates all students for success. Truancy is a major barrier to the achievement of that goal. Habitual truancy negatively impacts a child's school performance and statistically increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. The Pennsylvania School Code has recently been revised to define compulsory school age of a child (the age that mandates school attendance) to be from when the child turns six (6) years of age to when they turn eighteen (18) years old. A child of compulsory school age is defined a "truant" if they incur three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during a school year. A child is "habitually truant" if the child has incurred six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during a school year. Parents/guardians will be notified, in writing, within ten (10) school days after the child's third unexcused absence. If the child continues to incur additional unexcused absences after this written notice, a Student Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) will be scheduled with the student and parent/guardian. The outcome of the SAIC will be documented in a written school attendance improvement contract signed by all parties. Further unexcused or unlawful absences will result in a progression through the truancy elimination program defined by Pennsylvania School Law, up to and including a referral to County Children and Youth, and the issuance of a citation to the parent/guardian or student. A student convicted of a violation of compulsory attendance laws may be sentenced to pay a fine, to perform

community service, have their driver's license suspended or be required to complete an appropriate course or program designed to improve school attendance. Fines for citations filed against a parent/guardian or student increase per offense, starting at \$300 plus court costs with subsequent violations rising to a maximum of \$750.

Approval or family and educational trips is a privilege, not a right. It is expected that parents/guardians make every effort to schedule family vacations during summer, holiday breaks, and Bloomsburg Fair week to avoid their child missing school time and falling behind academically. Parents should also avoid scheduling any trips during state-mandated testing, which usually occurs in late April and May of each school year. Central Columbia uses a specific metric to approve students' family and educational trip requests during the school year and the student's inclusion on school-sponsored field trips. This metric is based on the student's academic standing, attendance record and disciplinary history at the time of the trip, and the actual trip justification. Family and/or education trip leave is strictly limited to a maximum of five (5) school days per student per school year. Absences resulting from unapproved trips, or exceeding the allowable trip leave limit will be classified as unlawful.

School administrators reserve the right to mandate a chronically absent or tardy student recover missed class time before receiving credit for any course or proceeding on to the next grade level, or deny them the opportunity to recover credit due to the student being defined as truant.

Our School Board policy and student handbooks can be found on our website. For more information regarding school attendance, please visit the following websites:

The Pennsylvania School Code Attendance Law can be found at:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/Public/index.cfm>

Pennsylvania Department of Education – Compulsory School Attendance, Unlawful Absences, and School Attendance Improvement Conferences can be found at:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/Purdons/Pages/CompulsorySchoolAttendance.aspx>

Parent/guardian generated excuses can be e-mailed directly to CCSD attendance secretaries at the following addresses:

High School: hsattendance@ccsd.cc

Middle School: msattendance@ccsd.cc

Elementary School: esattendance@ccsd.cc