

## **Southwest Local School District Attendance Policy and Expectations**

Regular attendance by all students is very important. In many cases, irregular attendance is the major reason for poor schoolwork. This can have long-term, negative effects on students, such as lower achievement and graduation rates; therefore, all students are urged to make appointments, do personal errands, etc., outside of school hours.

The Ohio General Assembly passed House Bill 410 in December of 2016 to encourage and support a preventative approach to excessive absences and truancy. School districts are now required to develop intervention plans for students who miss too much school. The legislation emphasizes parent engagement and accountability as part of a student's absence intervention plan.

[Ohio Revised Code Section 3321.04](#) and [Ohio Administrative Code 3301-69-02](#) set forth the situations in which an absence can be excused, and Southwest Local School District Board of Education has adopted those in our attendance policy as reasons for which students may be excused from school:

1. personal illness of the student;
2. illness in the student's family necessitating the presence of the child;
3. needed at home to perform necessary work directly and exclusively for parents or legal guardians for a limited period of time when approved by the Superintendent (applies to students over 14 years of age only);
4. death in the family (applies to absences of up to 18 school hours unless a reasonable cause may be shown for a longer absence);
5. quarantine for contagious disease;
6. observance of religious holidays consistent with a student's truly held religious belief;
7. traveling out of state to attend a Board-approved enrichment activity or extracurricular activity (applies to absences of up to 24 school hours);
8. college visitation;
9. absences due to a student's placement in foster care or change in foster care placement or any court proceedings related to their foster care status;
10. absences due to a student being homeless or
11. as determined by the Superintendent.

**The Board does not believe that students should be excused from school for vacations or other non-emergency trips.** The responsibility for such absences resides with the parent(s), and they must not expect any work missed by their child to be retaught by the teacher. If the school is notified in advance of such a trip, reasonable efforts are made to prepare a general list of assignments for the student to do while he/she is absent.

## **Excessive Absenteeism and Truancy**

Student absences and tardies are recorded in HOURS, now, under HB410, as opposed to DAYS. Excessive absenteeism is described as:

1. A student is absent 38 or more hours in one school month with or without a legitimate excuse; or
2. A student is absent 65 or more hours in one school year with or without a legitimate excuse.

Habitual truancy is described as:

1. A student is absent 30 or more consecutive hours without a legitimate excuse;
2. A student is absent 42 or more hours in one school month without a legitimate excuse; or
3. A student is absent 72 or more hours in one school year without a legitimate excuse.

When the Board of Education determines that a student has been truant and that the parent, guardian or other person having care of a child has failed to ensure the child's attendance at school, State law authorizes the Board to require the parent to attend a specified educational program.

This program has been established according to the rules adopted by the State Board of Education for the purpose of encouraging parental involvement in compelling the child's attendance at school.

On the request of the Superintendent, or when it comes to the attention of the school attendance officer or other appropriate officer of the District, the designated officer must investigate any case of supposed truancy within the District and must warn the child, if found truant, and the child's parent in writing of the legal consequences of being a "habitual" truant.

The parent is required to have the child attend school immediately after notification. If the parent fails to get the child to attend school, the attendance officer or other appropriate officer, if directed by the Superintendent or the Board, must send notice requiring the child's parent to attend a parental education program.

Regarding "habitual truants," the Board must take as an intervention strategy any appropriate action contained in Board policy.

The Board directs the administration to develop intervention strategies that include all of the following actions if applicable:

1. providing a truancy intervention plan meeting State law requirements for any student who is excessively absent from school;
2. providing counseling for a habitual truant;
3. requesting or requiring a parent having control of a habitual truant to attend parental involvement programs;
4. requesting or requiring a parent of a habitual truant to attend truancy prevention mediation programs;
5. notification to the registrar of motor vehicles or
6. taking appropriate legal action.

The attendance officer provides notice to the parent of a student who is absent without excuse for 38 or more hours in one school month or 65 or more hours in a school year within seven days after the date of the absence triggering the notice. At the time of notice, the District may take any appropriate action as outlined in this policy as an intervention strategy.

Unless the absence intervention team determines the student has made substantial progress on their absence intervention plan, the attendance officer must file a complaint against the student in juvenile court if the student is absent without legitimate excuse for 30 or more consecutive hours or 42 or more hours during a school month at any time during the implementation phase of the intervention plan or other intervention strategy.