



Evergreen Community Charter School

Section: 200 Pupils

Policy #: 204

Title: Attendance

Revised: April, 2024

Purpose

The Board of Education requires that school-aged students enrolled at Evergreen Community Charter School attend school regularly, in accordance with the laws of the state. The educational program offered by Evergreen is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation.

Philosophy

To be successful in today's society, a person needs to be educated. Attendance at school is a prerequisite to a successful education. Class attendance has a stronger impact on the student's academic progress than any other factor. Therefore, Evergreen encourages all students to remain in school until graduation and urges students and parents/guardians to dedicate themselves to ensuring that students attend school.

Authority

Attendance shall be required of all students during the days and hours that school is in session, except that authorized staff may excuse a student for temporary absences in accordance with applicable laws and regulations upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence.

The Board shall establish and enforce attendance requirements, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, Board policy and administrative regulations.

Definitions

Absence - Nonattendance of a pupil on days and half days when school is in session. Students attending less than one-half (1/2) of the school day will be considered absent for the full day.

Compulsory School Age - The period of a child's life from the time the child enters school, which may be no later than at the age of eight (8) years, until the age of eighteen (18) years or graduation from a high school, whichever occurs first.

Truancy - The failure of a child of compulsory school age to attend school as required by law, excluding excused absences. Truancy is addressed under Policy 204.2.

Habitually Truant – shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a student subject to compulsory school attendance.

Chronic Absenteeism – Absence of a pupil for more than ten (10) percent of school days across the academic year (18 days). Chronically absent students include students who are absent regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Director or designee shall annually notify students, person in parental relation, and staff about Evergreen's attendance policy by publishing such policy on the school website, in the annual Responsibility Code and other efficient means of communication. The Director or designee shall be responsible for the implementation and enforcement of this policy.

Guidelines

Compulsory School Attendance Requirements

All students of compulsory school age who attend Evergreen Community CS shall be subject to the compulsory school attendance requirements.

A student shall be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the Board; the student is receiving approved tutorial instruction, or health or therapeutic services; the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program; or the student is receiving approved homebound instruction; or the student's placement is instruction in the home.

Excused Absences

The following are considered reasonable cause for excusal from school attendance:

1. Religious holidays observed by bona fide religious groups when requested in writing by the parents/guardians stating the name and date of the holiday; request made at least 2 weeks in advance. No student so excused shall be deprived of an award or the opportunity to make up a test or any other schoolwork given on that day. No more than five (5) such absences will be granted per year.
2. Religious instruction for a maximum of thirty-six (36) hours per year when requested in writing by the parents/guardians.
3. Medical, dental, or other health care appointments when requested in writing by the parents/guardians and/or verified by the practitioner. For this section such excuse shall be granted when:
 - a. The health or therapeutic services are to be rendered by licensed practitioners.
 - b. It is not practical or possible for the student to receive the services outside of school hours.
 - c. The time of necessary absence from school involves a minimum of interference with the student's regular program of studies.
4. Illness or recovery from an accident.
5. Quarantine of the student.
6. Death in the family, limited to five (5) days per occurrence. Exceptions may be granted by the Director.
7. Required court appearance.

8. Unavoidable family emergencies including such conditions as hazardous roads. Excuses for unavoidable family emergencies will be reviewed by the Director or designee who will make the decision whether the emergency is unavoidable.
9. Weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the student.
10. Excused pursuant to a farm or domestic service emergency permit issued by PA.
11. Out-of-school suspension.
12. Pre-approved education trips or tours in accordance with Policy 204.2.
13. Pre-approved college visits, for students in grades 11 and 12, limited to six (6) days per year, upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of such visit.
14. Participation in school sponsored activities.
15. The Board of Education shall permit a student to be excused for participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countrywide 4-H or FFA event upon written request prior to the event.
16. Exceptionally urgent reasons such that affect the student, as well as circumstances related to homelessness, foster care and other forms of educational instability, but which ordinarily would not include work at home.

EXCUSES –

Students are to turn in written excuses for all absences within three (3) days of their return to school or after ten (10) consecutive days of absence. The Director and attendance personnel will review the excuse to determine if the absence is excused or unexcused. If an excuse is not turned in within three (3) days return to school or after ten (10) consecutive days of absence, the absence will be declared unexcused and, when appropriate, unlawful. All unexcused absences will be recorded as unlawful for students of compulsory school age.

When a student has accrued eighteen (18) or more days of absences the student shall be required to submit a physician's note for each subsequent medical/health-related absence.

Evergreen reserves the right to impose additional requirements, such as a requirement that parents/guardians provide excuses directly to the school in person, mandatory documented physician verification of all health-related absences, in cases where administration knows or has reason to suspect that the excuses provided are fraudulent or where there is a history of misrepresentation within excuses previously provided for a student. Unlawful absences by students who are of mandatory attendance age shall be addressed through the District's Truancy Policy (Pol. 204.2). Unlawful absences by students who are age eighteen (18) or older shall be addressed through the Evergreen's Responsibility Code.

Make-Up Work – Students who are absent are responsible, upon returning to school, to see each of their teachers and make arrangements to make up missed work. Students are to complete all makeup work within the number of days commensurate with the number of days absent. Teachers may extend the limit to makeup work for extenuating circumstances.

Students who are temporarily unable to attend any part of the school day due to a medical or psychiatric condition may qualify for a temporary medical excusal.

Evergreen and or the Board may excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance for other than temporary reasons:

1. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught, except that such students and students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in the school shall be counted as being in attendance.
2. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or business school has been approved.
3. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age who have completed sixth grade, who are engaged in farm work or private domestic service under duly issued permits.
4. Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly employed during the school session and holding a lawfully-issued employment certificate.
5. Students receiving private instruction from a properly qualified tutor and who meet the requirements for such under the Pennsylvania School Code.
6. Children who have been deemed by the Secretary of Education of the Pennsylvania Department of Education to be unable to attend school, based upon the recommendation of a psychologist or a psychiatrist.
7. Students enrolled in special schools conducted by an Intermediate Unit or the Department of Education.

Student absences due to employment are subject to the rules governing such absence as prescribed by the Child Labor Laws and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In order for an eligible student to be released from attending school for reasons of full-time employments, he or she must show proof of having acquired a job and has continuous employment of not less than thirty-five (35) hours per week.

Unexcused Absences

Absences for temporary periods which may be declared unexcused and potentially unlawful include but are not limited to the following:

1. Oversleeping.
2. Missing the bus.
3. Routine babysitting and personal child care.
4. Failing to turn in an excuse within three (3) days or ten (10) consecutive days of absence.
5. Skipping a class or classes.
6. Leaving the school grounds after arriving.
7. Refusing to come to school.
8. Working at a part-time job.
9. Missing school in excess of eighteen (18) days without a doctor's excuse for each subsequent absence.
10. Hunting.
11. Fishing.
12. Taking an educational trip without following the educational trip guidelines.
13. Being absent for reasons other than those listed above under Excused Absences.

Enforcement of Compulsory Attendance Requirements

Student is Truant –

When a student has been absent for three (3) days during the current school year without a lawful excuse, school staff shall provide notice to a person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student within ten (10) school days of the student's third unexcused absence.

The notice shall:

1. Be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the person in parental relation;
2. Include a description of the consequences if the student becomes habitually truant; and
3. When transmitted to a person who is not the biological or adoptive parent, if the parent's mailing address is on file with the school and the parent is not precluded from receiving the information by court order.

The notice may include the offer of a School Attendance Improvement Conference. If the student incurs additional unexcused absences after issuance of the notice and a School Attendance Improvement Conference was not previously held, school staff shall offer a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

Student Attendance Improvement Conference –

Evergreen staff shall notify the person in parental relation in writing and by telephone of the date and time of the School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC). The purpose of the School Attendance Improvement Conference is to examine the student's absences and reasons for the absences in an effort to improve attendance with or without additional services.

The following individuals shall be invited to the School Attendance Improvement Conference:

1. The student.
2. The student's person in parental relation.
3. Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource.
4. Appropriate school personnel.
5. Recommended service providers.

Neither the student nor the person in parental relation shall be required to participate, and the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall occur even if the person in parental relation declines to participate or fails to attend the scheduled conference. The outcome of the School Attendance Improvement Conference shall be documented in a written School Attendance Improvement Plan. The Plan shall be retained in the student's file. A copy of the Plan shall be provided to the person in parental relation, the student and appropriate school staff.

Evergreen may not take further legal action to address unexcused absences until after the date of the scheduled School Attendance Improvement Conference has been held and the student has incurred six (6) or more days of unexcused absences.

Student is Habitually Truant –

When a student under fifteen (15) years of age is habitually truant, school staff:

1. Shall refer the student to:
 - a. A school-based or community-based attendance improvement program; or

b. The local children and youth agency.

2. May file a citation in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge against the person in parental relation who resides in the same household as the student.

Evergreen staff may refer a student who is fifteen (15) years of age or older to the local children and youth agency, if the student continues to incur additional unexcused absences after being referred to a school-based or community-based attendance improvement program, or if the student refuses to participate in such program.

Regardless of age, when Evergreen staff refer a habitually truant student to the local children and youth agency or file a citation with the appropriate magisterial district judge, school staff shall provide verification that the school held a School Attendance Improvement Conference.

Filing a Citation –

A citation shall be filed in the office of the appropriate magisterial district judge whose jurisdiction includes the school, against the student or person in parental relation to the student.

Additional citations for subsequent violations of the compulsory school attendance requirements may only be filed against a student or person in parental relation in accordance with the specific provisions of the law.

Special Needs and Accommodations

If a truant or habitually truant student may qualify as a student with a disability, and require special education services or accommodations, the Special Education Representative shall be notified and shall take action to address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

For students with disabilities who are truant or habitually truant, the appropriate team shall be notified and shall address the student's needs in accordance with applicable law, regulations and Board policy.

Discipline

Evergreen shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension, disciplinary reassignment or transfer for truant behavior. Student absences due to employment are subject to the rules governing such absence as prescribed by the Child Labor Laws and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In order for an eligible student to be released from attending school for reasons of full-time employment, s/he must show proof of having acquired a job of not less than thirty-five (35) hours per week. Evergreen shall develop administrative regulations to enforce this policy and all applicable laws governing student attendance.

Educational Trips

Evergreen recognizes that students may have the opportunity to participate in a trip or educational experience outside of school during the regular day. Students may be excused from school attendance to participate in non-school sponsored educational trips.

The Board requires that requests by parents/guardians to have their children excused from school for educational vacation trips or tours must therefore be evaluated under the authority of the law.

1. To be eligible under this section, the student's parent/guardian must notify the school office at least five (5) days prior to the trip.

4. The student is expected to make arrangements with his/her teacher to obtain and complete work missed. Work is to be presented to the appropriate teacher within five (5) days of the student's return.

Failure to obtain written administrative approval for an educational trip or tour, as outlined in this policy, shall result in the absences recorded declared unexcused and, where appropriate, unlawful.

College Visitations

Students will be allowed to complete college visitation while in the 11th and 12th grades, with the following expectations:

1. To be eligible under this section, the student's parent/guardian must make a written application at least ten (10) days prior to the visitation. It is recommended that approval for college visitation during the school year be obtained prior to finalizing travel plans (i.e. plane tickets, hotel reservations, etc.). Failure to submit the request prior to ten (10) days in advance may result in denial of the trip by administration.

2. The Principal will review college visitation requests pertinent to the approval of subsequent student absences. Failure to get prior approval for college visitation will result in unexcused absences.

3. 11th grade students will be permitted a total of two (2) absences during the school year for college visitations. 12th grade students will be permitted a total of four (4) absences during the school year for college visitations. Parents/Guardians must provide verification by the college of such visitations to the principal. Students are responsible to make up all school work missed during such absences.

Attendance at Postsecondary Schools

Students may attend postsecondary schools full time prior to graduation. Such attendance will be in lieu of regular school attendance as described in the Evergreen's early admissions policy. Such students will be dropped from the membership rolls.

Part-Time Attendance For Potential Graduates

A senior who can complete graduation requirements by attending school part-time may be excused part-time from school attendance for the purpose of attending a postsecondary school or for being lawfully employed. The student's membership will be calculated by dividing the student's daily number of instructional minutes by the 330 minutes of required daily instruction. The purpose of this policy is to excuse students only when the times for postsecondary school attendance or lawful employment directly conflict with school attendance. The Principal may approve or disapprove such requests.

Excusal From Instruction for Religious Objections

Parents/Guardians may request that their child be excused from specific lessons or units of instruction such as sex education, AIDS education, evolution, or other topics for religious reasons. Students will be excused upon completion of the following:

1. A parental letter requesting student dismissal from instruction which explains the reason for the request.

2. A parental meeting with the teacher to review the unit to which s/he objected and to determine appropriate alternative assignments.
3. Completion of an agreement between the parent/guardian and teacher which specifies the requirements of the alternative unit.
4. The Director will be responsible for approving the excusal.

Release of Students During School Hours

Teachers are not to release students from school without the prior approval of the principal. No student will be released from school to go with any adult other than the mother or father of the child without the principal first obtaining the following information:

1. Proper identification may be required.
2. The reason for requesting the release. (The principal may ascertain the validity of the excuse.)

Student Excusal and Early Dismissals

Students may not leave the school before dismissal time unless the Office Manager has received a written or oral parental/guardian request that they be allowed to do so or a parent/guardian and/or parent's/guardian's designee comes to the school to pick up the child at the requested time of release.

The request must include the student's name, date, time, reason for request, parental/guardian signature, and a telephone number at which the parent/guardian can be reached.

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to return the student to school after a regular appointment and prior to regularly scheduled student dismissal. Established sign in/out procedures should be followed at this time.

NOTE: When parents are separated and a court order regarding custody exists, considerable caution should be taken in excusing students. Custody orders of the court must be on file in the school office. It is the responsibility of the custodial parent to have the most current court order on file.

In order to participate in an after-school sponsored event, students must be in attendance at least one-half (1/2) of the school day unless approved by the Director.

Chronic Absenteeism

The Director or designee shall report chronic absenteeism data to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), in accordance with procedures provided by PDE. Enrollment of fewer than sixty (60) days of school will exclude a student from the calculation.