

## **Attendance Procedures to Reflect Pennsylvania State Law**

August 2011

Dear Parent/Legal Guardian:

The start of school provides an opportunity to explain attendance procedures. The purpose of this letter is to promote positive attendance as required by Pennsylvania state laws and the No Child Left Behind federal law. Please take a few moments to read through this information as it pertains to Pennsylvania laws and regulations and QCSD policies.

### **Absences**

- **All absences require that a written excuse be submitted to the school within three (3) days of the student's return to school.** If a written excuse is not submitted to the classroom teacher (elementary level) or school secretary (secondary level) within that time period, the absence is recorded as unexcused and is deemed by the state to be an illegal absence. Phone calls, faxes, and/or emails notifying the school that a child is absent are appreciated, but these forms of communication **do not** replace a written excuse. A written excuse documenting an absence is required under the state's compulsory attendance laws.
  - A written excuse must contain the following information: *(1) name of the student; (2) student grade level; (3) the date(s) of the absence; (4) the reason for the absence; and (5) a parent or legal guardian's signature.*
  - Parents/guardians are not required to use the district's official excuse form, which is a small form titled "Legal Form for Absence or Tardiness – Quakertown Community School District." It is only required that the excuse be written and includes the information listed above.

### **Excessive Absences**

- In cases where a student has accumulated ten (10) or more days of absences (including educational trip requests), parents/legal guardians will be notified that future absences will require an excuse signed by a doctor.

### **Tardiness**

- **Students must be in the classroom by the defined start of the school day.** If not, they are considered tardy to school. Once again, a written excuse, which contains the same information as an absence excuse and signed by a parent, is required. Minutes of unexcused tardy time will accumulate and can be compiled as unexcused absences.
  - Senior High School and Freshman Center: 8:00 AM
  - Middle Schools: 7:15 AM
  - Elementary Schools: 9:10 AM
- Students entering the building after the defined start of the school day must enter through the main entrance and stop at the main office (elementary) or attendance office (secondary) for a pass before being admitted to the classroom. Parents of elementary students must enter with the student to sign excuse forms.

### **Family Trip Leave**

- In order for days out of school to be approved for family trips, the “Educational Trip Request Form” must be submitted to the building principal a minimum of 10 days prior to the trip. Please note that trips will not be approved during the first two weeks of school, during standardized testing windows, in cases of excessive absences, or if the child is in academic jeopardy. Please refer to the reverse-side of the request form for additional guidelines.

### **State Compulsory Attendance Laws**

- The state’s compulsory attendance laws provide consequences for failure to submit written excuses. When a student accumulates a minimum of three (3) unexcused absences, parents/legal guardians will be notified by a document known as a “**First Legal Notice.**” This document lists the dates of unexcused absences and serves to remind parents/legal guardians that written excuses must be submitted for all future absences. Once an absence is determined to be unexcused, it cannot be changed to an excused absence.
- If a student accumulates an additional unexcused absence after a First Legal Notice has been served, the parent/legal guardian will be cited for a violation of the compulsory attendance laws of Pennsylvania. A citation is issued through the office of a District Court Justice. A parent/legal guardian has fifteen (15) days in which to respond to the citation. Responses include (1) paying the fine or (2) requesting a hearing before the District Justice. Failure to do either within 15 days results in the issuance of a bench warrant against the parent/legal guardian.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this information. If you have any questions, please ask. We want to maximize your student’s education through attendance.

Sincerely,

Quakertown Community School District Principals