



Truancy and Absenteeism Policy

Beyond good study habits and hard work, one of the most important areas for students to focus on during their time at NativityMiguel School of Scranton is attendance. Any time a pupil has frequent absences from classroom learning experiences, the continuity of the instructional process is interrupted, and therefore the amount and quality of learning can be greatly diminished.

The Scranton School District has a comprehensive attendance and truancy policy that clearly outlines what is expected of students and their parents/guardians. The policy at NativityMiguel School of Scranton also works hand in hand with the Scranton School District and programs created by local social service agencies and the local magistrate's office. The S.T.A.R.S program (Stop Truancy and Really Succeed) involves local magistrates, school districts, county judges, parents, and students in program that is designed to help curb chronic truancy.

Frequently Asked Questions about Truancy and Absenteeism

If a student is absent, what do they have to do?

Students are allowed three days following an absence to present a written excuse to their homeroom teacher. Excuses must be written and signed by a student's parent or guardian. Students can use an excuse blank provided by the school or a handwritten note from the parent or guardian. Students should never write their own excuses.

What information should be included on an excuse blank?

Full name of the student

Date(s) of absence

Reason for absence

Signature of parent or guardian

What is an excused absence?

Excused absences are those accepted by the school as legal absences. They are limited to illness, quarantine, death in the immediate family, impassable roads, and inclement weather. The last two reasons for absence are determined by the school bus' inability to operate. Absences due to illness that combine to 10 or more days (excused or unexcused) for one school year will require that the student obtain a written excuse from a doctor. Each absence after 10 will also require an individual excuse from a doctor.

What is considered to be an illegal or unexcused absence?

Illegal absences are those that are acceptable according to the reasons listed above or have not been accepted by the school administration. Examples of illegal or unexcused absences include but are not limited to missing the bus, shopping, baby-sitting, visiting relatives, hunting, fishing, and personal business, working at home, and remaining at home to complete school work.

What will happen if a student has illegal or unexcused absences?

After three unexcused absences, the parent or guardian will be notified by mail of the absences, given an explanation of the PA Laws concerning truancy, and given a list of dates for all recorded student absences.

After five unexcused absences, the parent or guardian will be notified by mail for the second time. A second explanation of the PA Laws concerning truancy will be included as well as a listing of dates.

After 10 unexcused absences, the parent or guardian will be notified for the third and final time via mail. After 10 illegal absences, the school district may decide to pursue the matter in magisterial court. If a parent/guardian and student are found guilty at the magisterial level and truancy continues, they will then be referred to the Lackawanna County S.T.A.R.S. program.

Either the 5 day or 10 day notice will be sent certified mail to the parent or guardian depending on the student's grade level.

What are the possible penalties associated with continued truancy?

Penalties for truancy and illegal absences can take place both in school and out of school. Building level administrators will work with students to change truant behavior in their individual buildings. However, there will be cases where the problem is chronic and will be dealt with using the local magistrate and/or the county S.T.A.R.S. program.

- Detentions or Suspensions for student in school
- A fine of up to \$300 for each offense and court costs
- Mandatory completion of a parenting education class
- Required community service within the school district
- Suspension of the student's automobile license from 90 days to six months
- Sentencing to the county jail for continued offenses where involved parties do not pay fines or complete mandatory parenting classes

What about vacations during the school year?

Parents need to contact the school in writing if a student is to accompany a family on a vacation during the school year. Any absence from school whether excused or unexcused will be reported as an absence. All assignments and tests must be made up on a day to day basis. School administrators do retain the right to refuse approval of a vacation trip based on the attendance history of the student. A trip that is not approved will be considered an illegal absence and subject to the previously mentioned consequences.

What should a parent or guardian do if there is a discrepancy in records or uncertainty as to status of a student's absenteeism?

Parents and guardians are encouraged to contact the main office of the school. If there is a question or concern, please do not hesitate to contact the office to resolve the issue.

What is the S.T.A.R.S. program?

S.T.A.R.S. (Stop Truancy and Really Succeed) is a community based cross-systems collaborative created to address, reduce, and prevent truancy in Lackawanna County. The initial program took input from local schools, community human service providers, the Lackawanna County Court System, The Department of Human Services, the Department of Children & Youth Services, and the Department of Juvenile Probation. The program puts a protocol in place that allows schools to deal with chronic truancy using procedures and consequences beyond school policy.