

Attendance @ Tech High

One of the hardest policies to explain is the attendance policy. Students and parents...and sometimes staff...get confused at what counts; what doesn't count; is it five or four absences...etc. **Attendance in high school counts more and has higher consequences.**

truancy

Let's first discuss truancy. Truancy is when a student is absent and a parent hasn't contacted the school. As the system sees it, without a parent contact, the student is skipping school. Officially, parents have 48 hours from the actual absence to notify the school. I'm not a stickler for this rule; however, your contact must be timely. You may call the office at (727) 545-6405 x2007, email me at howardd@pcsb.org or send in a note with your child upon return to school to authenticate the absence as being excused.

The State of Florida has mandated that students have good regular attendance. If the student is habitually truant, the state will revoke the student's driving privilege (or the ability to get a license). Once a driving privilege is revoked (suspended), it takes 30 days of nearly perfect attendance to have the privilege returned. For Tech High School, habitual truants will be referred to our Child Study Team who looks at problematic students and work together to support the students' successes in school. At Tech High, we place students with poor attendance habits on probation and work at supporting punctuality.

5 times

Parents may excuse five (5) absences during the **semester** without any further documentation (such as a doctor's note). These five days can be whole days or partial (arriving late or leaving early) days. Once the parent exceeds the five excused absences, I am not permitted to excuse any further absences. Please contact me with the absence as I'll write in the notation, "Sick, parent exceeded 5" and code it MDU. The intention of the five absences a parent may excuse are for legitimate absences. The school board has officially stated in policy that being out of school for family vacations or trips; power outages at home; car troubles or missing the school bus are not legitimate reasons for missing school.

In the same policy, the school board has established that legitimate absences for going to the doctor, dentist, or eye doctor and appointments with the courts or attorneys (along with supporting documentation) are not limited. Students attending religious services or religious conferences (along with supporting documentation) are also excusable.



tardy

Students are considered tardy to class if they are not in the classroom before the final bell for that class. It may sound finicky, but their body...their person...the physical being must be in the classroom—not the hallway, not at the vending machine—no their books and book bag don't count either. I hear so many wonderful reasons why THIS tardy is not the same as being *really* tardy. "My books were there," sounds like the student was in the classroom at some point; however, it just doesn't count.

The only way I can write a pass to class to excuse a tardy for a student arriving late to school is with documentation of the legitimate appointment that happened that morning. Same rules apply for tardiness as they do for absences, car issues and power outages are not legitimate reasons for being late to school. Please don't drag mom into the office straight from her warm bed (actually happened) to say, "It's my fault my child is late to school." I can empathize, but can't excuse the tardiness.



errors

Parents and students should periodically check Portal for errors in attendance. If you find an error in a single class period, the student should go to the teacher who reported the absence.

Most frequently the teacher "clicked" the wrong student absent in the system. By notifying the teacher, adjustments can be made to correct any errors. We also run reports on attendance on a weekly basis looking for irregularities.

All corrections should be made within a few days of detecting the error. I am not comfortable about challenging an absence that goes back weeks or months later—especially when the student is in jeopardy of losing a driving privilege. A couple of years ago I had a parent come with a printout of her child's attendance. She felt that many of the absences were in error or she wanted to go back weeks later to excuse multiple days of absenteeism. What the parent was trying to do was stop the suspension of the driving privilege—unfortunately, she was too late.



Finally, exams and exempting final tests. Students must have a "B" or better to exempt and have less than five absences in any **ONE** class (no more than four days). If a student should accumulate a fifth absence in **ANY** class then the student is **unable to exempt ALL exams** for that semester.

If you have any questions, please give me a call. ☺ Deb Howard

727-545-6405 x2007

howardd@pcsb.org