



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP

Administration Building

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Damian B. Johnston, Ed.D.
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
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Dr. Nancy M. Hacker
SUPERINTENDENT

September 5, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In February 2017, all public school districts in Pennsylvania were notified that Act 138 of 2016 regarding changes to School Truancy had been signed into law. As a result, the School District of Springfield Township (SDST) is in the process of updating our procedures for attendance, excusal of absences, and School Board Policy to be compliant with these new regulations. As such, it is important that all parents/guardians of students in grades K-12 are aware of these mandates for the 2017-2018 school year. The goal is to improve school attendance for all our students and deter truancy through a comprehensive approach.

Definitions:

- The new law defines truancy as 3 or more unexcused absences **within a school year**.
- Habitual truancy is defined as 6 or more unexcused absences **within a school year**.

In addition, the new law mandates a process school districts **must** follow for reporting truancy:

- Notifying parents/guardians in writing within 10 school days of the child's third (3rd) unexcused absence. The district must indicate that the child has been truant and include a description of the consequences if the child becomes habitually truant. The district may offer an attendance improvement plan meeting up and including the 3rd unexcused absence. If the child accrues additional absences, an attendance improvement meeting must be held.
- If a child *under* 15 years of age becomes habitually truant, the school **is required to** refer the child to a school or community-based attendance improvement program or the county Children and Youth agency. In addition, a citation may be filed against a parent of a habitually truant child in magisterial district court.
- If a child is *over* 15 years of age and becomes habitually truant, the school **is required to** refer the student to a school or community-based attendance improvement program or file a citation against the student or parent in magisterial district court.
- In addition, this law provides local judges with considerable discretion to provide appropriate penalties in individual cases which may include increased fines and/or suspension of a student's driving license, as examples.

It is the goal of SDST to avoid these additional consequences by creating systems to improve attendance, ease parental reporting of absences, and to provide clarity on excused/unexcused absence regulations.

The following are School Board approved conditions for an excused absence to be granted based on Pennsylvania School Code:

- Illness
- Quarantine
- Family Emergency including a death in the family
- Family Educational Travel, Tours, and Trips (with prior approval by SDST administration)

- Impassable Roads
- Recovery from Accident
- Required Court Appearance

Per School Board policy, all absences exceeding 5 days for the same illness and/or beyond 10 cumulative days, for any reason, shall require an excuse note from a licensed physician.

Students may be excused for part of a school day for the following conditions:

- Medical or Dental Appointments
- Court Appearances
- Family Emergencies

In all cases, *parents must provide their child's school with a written notice*, even if they have called in, within 3 days, of their child's absence and on the day of for any excused lateness or early dismissal. ***SDST will accept emailed excusal notes from parents beginning in the 2017-2018 school year*** as well as continue to accept written notes.

- Subject: [Child's full name and grade]
- Enfield: en_attendance@sdst.org
- Erdenheim: er_attendance@sdst.org
- Middle School: ms_attendance@sdst.org
- High School: hs_attendance@sdst.org
- Please be sure to include the reason for your child's absence, citing one of the above approved conditions for the absence to be excused.

In an effort to ease the burden on parents for reporting, if you email on the day of your child's absence prior to 8:30am for secondary students and prior to 9:30am for elementary students, a phone call is not necessary. If an email indicating your child's absence is not received in time, an automatic call will be generated to inform you of your child's absence from school. This is a precautionary safety measure offered by SDST to ensure parents are aware of their child's absence from school. Parents should also be aware that you may monitor your child's attendance, including whether an absence has been marked excused or unexcused, through your Home Access Center (HAC) portal, which you can access through our district website, www.sdst.org.

It is our goal to improve school attendance for all students to improve their achievement, connection to the community, and excitement for school! We also know parents/guardians are busy, so we aim to make this process as easy as possible.

Please contact us with any questions or concerns.

Thank you,



Charles E. Rittenhouse, Ed. D.
Principal
High School



Jason Pane
Interim Principal
Middle School



Andre McLaurin
Principal
Erdenheim Elementary



Catherine VanVooren
Principal
Enfield Elementary