



Harambee Institute of Science & Technology Charter School

Section	Students
Title	Student Attendance
Date Issued	
Policy Number	
Date Revised	September 25, 2019

Overview

School attendance is required for all children aged 8 to 17. "Attend school" means that a child must be enrolled and attend a public school, a charter school, a cyber charter school, or a private or religious-based school, or else participate in an approved home schooling program. Pennsylvania Department of Education's regulations state that children are considered school age from the time they are admitted to the public school educational program until graduation from high school or reach the age of 21. Students who turn 21 during the school term are entitled to finish out the school year.

The Board of Directors requires that school age students enrolled in Harambee Institute of Science and Technology attend school regularly, in accordance with state laws. The educational program offered by Harambee is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in Harambee Institute of Science and Technology during the days and hours that school is in session, except that a principal may excuse a student for temporary absences upon receipt of satisfactory evidence of mental, physical, or other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause the student's absence. Urgent reasons shall be strictly construed and does not permit irregular attendance.

Definitions

"Attendance Improvement Conference" shall mean a conference where the child's absences and reasons for the absences are examined in an effort to improve attendance, with or without additional services.

"Attendance Improvement Plan" shall mean an individualized plan to address and reduce a student's truancy prior to referring the matter to law enforcement or the courts. This plan is also referred to as a Truancy Elimination Plan.

"Citation" shall mean a non-traffic citation or private criminal complaint.

"Compulsory School Age" shall mean the period of a child's life from the time the child's parents elect to have the child enter school and which shall be no later than eight (8) years of age until the child reaches seventeen (17) years of age. The term does not include a child who holds a certificate of graduation from a regularly accredited, licensed, registered or approved high school.

"Conviction" shall mean a conviction under Section 1333.2 for violation of the requirement for compulsory attendance.

“Habitual Truancy” shall mean six (6) or more school days of unexcused absences during the current school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law. These absences do not need to run consecutively.

“Offense” shall mean each citation filed under Section 1333.1 for a violation of the requirement for compulsory attendance, regardless of the number of unexcused absences averred in the citation.

“Truancy” shall mean three (3) or more school days of unexcused absence during the current school year by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law.

Absences

1. The Board considers the following conditions to constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:
 - a. Illness, injury, or teen parent leave (delivery only)
 - b. Recovery from an accident
 - c. Required court attendance
 - d. Death in the family
 - e. Educational tours or trips (Administrator approval is required prior to the absence)
 - f. Religious holidays
2. All absences shall be treated as unlawful/unexcused until the school receives a written excuse explaining the reason(s) for the absence, to be submitted within three (3) calendar days of the absence. Failure to provide a written excuse within three (3) days will result in the absence being counted permanently as unlawful/unexcused.
3. All absences of three (3) or more consecutive school days shall be supported by a physician's statement verifying the illness.
4. All absences of nine (9) or more cumulative school days shall be supported by a physician's statement verifying the illness

Lawful Absences

1. Attendance need not always be within school buildings. A student shall be considered in attendance if present at any place where school is in session by authority of the principal; the student is receiving approved tutorial instruction; the student is engaged in an approved and properly supervised independent study, work-study or career education program; the student is receiving approved homebound instruction.
2. The absence and/or early dismissal of students shall not be granted for private instruction in activities such as music, dancing, etc.
3. The principal shall permit a student to be excused for participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or countywide 4-H, FFA or combined 4-H and FFA group upon written request prior to the event.
4. The principal will recognize other justifiable absences for part of the school day. These shall include medical or dental appointments, court appearances, family emergencies, authorized school activities, and other legitimate reasons determined by the building principal.



5. The principal shall excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance at Harambee Institute of Science and Technology, upon request and with the required approval:
 - a. On certification by a physician or submission of other satisfactory evidence and on approval of the Department of Education, children who are unable to attend school or apply themselves to study for mental, physical or other reasons that preclude regular attendance.
 - b. Students enrolled in nonpublic or private schools in which the subjects and activities prescribed by law are taught.
 - c. Students attending college who are also enrolled part-time in Harambee Institute of Science and Technology.
 - d. Students attending a home education program in accordance with law.
 - e. Students fifteen (15) or sixteen (16) years of age whose enrollment in private trade or a business school has been approved.
 - f. Students fifteen (15) years of age, and fourteen (14) years of age who have completed the highest elementary grade, engaged in farm work or private domestic service under duly issued permits.
 - g. Students sixteen (16) years of age regularly employed during the school session and holding a lawfully issued employment certificate.
6. The principal may excuse the following students from the requirements of attendance at the charter school:
 - a. Students receiving tutorial instruction in a field not offered in the Harambee Institute of Science and Technology curricula from a properly qualified tutor approved by the CEO, when the excusal does not interfere with the student's regular program of studies.
 - b. Homebound children unable to attend school on the recommendation of the school physician and the school psychologist or a psychiatrist and approval of the Secretary of Education.
 - c. Students enrolled in special schools conducted by the Philadelphia Intermediate Unit No. 26 or the Department of Education.

Responses to Non-Attendance (Truancy)

1. A student who is absent without a valid excuse is considered “truant” from school.
2. The school shall report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of seventeen (17).
3. The school shall notify in writing the parent/guardian within ten (10) school days of the child’s third unexcused absence that the child has been “truant.” This notice:
 - a. Shall include a description of the consequences that will follow if the child becomes habitually truant in the future;
 - b. Shall be in the mode and language of communication preferred by the parent/guardian; and
 - c. Shall include the offer of an Attendance Improvement Conference.



4. If the child continues to be truant and incurs additional unexcused absences after the third unexcused absence, the school shall offer the student and parent/guardian an Attendance Improvement Conference.
 - a. The following individuals shall be invited to the conference:
 - i. The child
 - ii. The person in parental relation to the child.
 - iii. Other individuals identified by the person in parental relation who may be a resource (e.g., grandparent, sibling, family friend, advocate, community members)
 - iv. Appropriate school personnel
 - v. Recommended service providers (e.g., case manager, behavioral health provider, probation officer, children and youth practitioners)
 - b. The school shall hold the conference even if the parent declines to participate or fails to attend after the school provides advance written notice and makes attempts to communicate via telephone.
 - c. The purpose of the conference shall be to identify the barriers to regular school attendance and developing interventions that will eliminate or reduce the barriers.
 - d. The school shall document the outcome of any attendance conference in a written attendance improvement plan (Truancy Elimination Plan).
5. The school shall not impose discipline for truant behavior that excludes the student from the school or classroom. Specifically, the school shall not expel or impose out-of-school suspension for truant behavior.
6. The school shall report the unexcused absences by a child subject to the compulsory school attendance law to the Department of Education.

Responses to Non-Attendance (Habitual Truancy)

The school shall report to appropriate authorities infractions of the law regarding the attendance of students below the age of seventeen (17). The school shall issue notice to those parents/guardians who fail to comply with the requirements of compulsory attendance that such infractions will be prosecuted according to law.

Religious Holidays and Religious Instruction

1. Upon written request by a parent/guardian, an absence for observance of a student's religion on a day approved by Harambee as a religious holiday shall be excused.
2. The school shall, upon written request of the parents/guardians, release from attendance a student participating in a religious instruction program acknowledged by the Harambee. Such instruction shall not require the child's absence from school for more than thirty-six (36) hours per school year, and its organizers must inform the school of the child's attendance record. The school shall not provide transportation to religious instruction.



3. No student so excused shall be deprived of an award, eligibility to compete for an award, the opportunity to make up a test or work missed, or penalized in any way due to an absence for a religious holiday or religious instruction.

Educational Tours/Trips

1. The school may excuse a student from school attendance to participate in an educational tour or trip not sponsored by Harambee Institute of Science and Technology if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The parent/guardian submits a written request for excusal prior to the absence.
 - b. The student's participation has been approved by the principal.
 - c. The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the parents/guardians and the principal.
2. The principal may limit the number and duration of tours or trips for which excused absences may be granted to a student during the school term.

Delegation of Responsibility

1. The principal shall annually notify students, parents/guardians and staff about Harambee Institute of Science and Technology attendance policy by publishing such policy in student/parent handbooks, Harambee Institute of Science and Technology web site and other efficient methods.
2. The principal or designee shall develop administrative procedures necessary for the implementation of this policy which:
 - a. Ensure a school session that conforms with requirements of state law and regulations.
 - b. Govern the keeping of attendance records in accordance with law.
 - c. Distribute annually to staff, students, and parents/guardians Board policies and school rules and regulations governing student attendance, absences and excusals.
 - d. Identify the habitual truant, investigate the causes of truant behavior, and consider modification of the student's educational program to meet particular needs and interests. Habitually truant refers to absences for more than three (3) school days or their equivalent following the first notice of truancy given after a student has been absent three (3) days without lawful excuse.
 - e. Ensure that students legally absent have an opportunity to make up work.
 - f. Issue written notice to any parent/guardian who fails to comply with the compulsory attendance law, within three (3) days of any proceeding brought under that law. Such notice shall inform the parent/guardian of the date(s) the absence occurred; that the absence was unexcused and in violation of law; that the parent/guardian is being notified and informed of his/her liability under law for the absence of the student; and that further violations during the school term will be prosecuted without notice.
3. Repeated infractions of Board policy requiring the attendance of enrolled students may constitute misconduct and disobedience that warrant the student's referral to the student assistance program, suspension or expulsion from the regular school program, or provision of alternative education



services. However, students may not be removed from Harambee Institute of Science and Technology enrollment solely because of excessive absences.

References

School Code - 24 P.S. Sec. 510, 1301, 1318, 1326, 1327, 1327.1, 1329, 1330, 1332, 1333, 1338, 1339, 1354, 1501, 1504, 1546, 2103

Home Rule Charter - 12-300

State Board of Education Regulations - 22 PA Code Sec. 4.4, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.8, 11.12, 11.13, 11.21, 11.22, 11.23, 11.24, 11.25, 11.26, 11.28, 11.32, 11.34, 11.41, 12.1

