

Middlesex County Vocational and Technical
High School



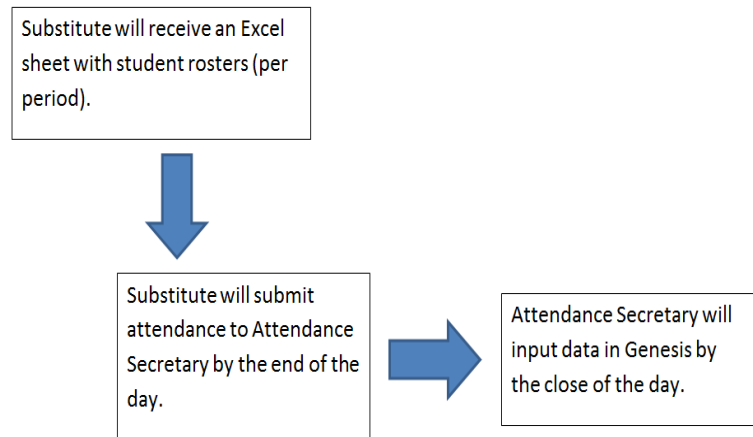
PISCATAWAY CAMPUS

**ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM
2013- 2014**

In order for the Board of Education to fulfill its responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient education, the district provides a minimum of 180 days in the school calendar. In order to get credit for attending, students must be in school 90% of those days, which is 160 days. Thus, 20 days absent from school equals a loss of credits. The cooperation of parents/guardians, faculty, and students is required to maintain a high level of school attendance. Homeroom teachers will take attendance daily in the Student Information System (Genesis). Teachers will forward Attendance Discrepancy Forms to the attendance office daily. Information from Attendance Discrepancy Forms will be entered into Genesis by the Attendance Secretary upon receipt. The information in Genesis will be the official attendance/tardy data; therefore, teachers' records shall be maintained accurately. Students enrolled in programs that require a specific number of hours must meet the higher standard established for each program. The educational program offered by this district reflects **Industrial Standards**, predicated on the presence of the student, and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. Regular contact of students with one another in the classroom and participation in well-planned instructional activity under the direction of a certified teacher, are vital to this purpose.

Attendance Policy Flow Chart

Teacher Absences: Procedure for Substitutes



The frequent absence of students from class/career major learning experiences disrupts the continuity of the instructional process and limits students' ability to complete the prescribed curriculum requirements. Students absent from school for

any reason are responsible for the completion of assignments missed due to their absence. No student excused for a religious holiday shall be deprived of an award, eligibility to compete for an award, or the opportunity to make up a test given on the religious holiday. Prolonged or repeated absences, excused or unexcused, from school, or from a class, deprive the student of the classroom experience deemed essential to learning. This may result in retention at grade level or loss of credit toward the high school diploma in accordance with policies of this Board.

Philosophy

The Piscataway Campus believes that student attendance and student achievement are closely intertwined. Students who develop patterns of good attendance are much more likely to be successful, academically and socially, than students who develop patterns of poor attendance. If a child's chronic absenteeism is not addressed in its early stages, the odds are greatly increased that he or she will 1) need costly instructional remediation and/or special services, 2) develop a negative self-concept, experience academic failure, drop out of school, engage in antisocial behavior, and 3) fail to contribute positively to the local community as an adult.

The Law

Every child between the ages of 6 and 18 has the right and the obligation to attend school. Piscataway Campus is committed to the development of programs and practices that foster and encourage both the enrollment and the regular, daily attendance of all students who are subject to the State's compulsory school attendance laws. The parents or guardians of each student have the responsibility to enroll their child (ren) in school and to send them to school on a daily basis on time.

Statement of Policy

Acknowledging that there is a direct correlation between student achievement and student attendance, the Piscataway Campus affirms its commitment to improving student attendance. **This is a top priority.**

School Climate

Piscataway Campus shall work collaboratively with the entire school community to create and maintain a school culture and climate where students feel welcome and safe. A positive school environment, conducive to regular daily attendance and learning will result in increased attendance and improved academic achievement.

Attendance Plan

Piscataway Campus has developed this comprehensive, written, attendance-improvement plan. This plan was developed with the participation of school staff, parents, and other community members. The plan clearly indicates the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, and staff in recording, monitoring, and improving and/or maintaining student attendance.

Positive Incentives

Piscataway Campus' school-wide Positive Behavior Support in Schools 'PBSIS' program includes relevant educational activities for motivating students to improve and/or maintain good attendance and positive behavior in school. The incentive program clearly defines expectations of positive student behavior and provides consistent positive feedback for students displaying these expectations. Positive Behavior Support in Schools 'PBSIS' creates a positive learning environment employing methods developed using current research and practices. One of the objectives of PBSIS is to make students, staff and parents feel welcomed and valued at Piscataway Campus. PBSIS creates an encouraging atmosphere at Piscataway Campus by providing support to overcome academic, social, and behavioral challenges. The PBSIS Team has many events planned to encourage positive behavior and to instill a cooperative attitude within students, parents, and staff. By establishing and teaching behavioral expectations and by recognizing our children's appropriate social behavior, we will provide common language for everyone in our building: students, teachers, secretaries, custodial staff, paraprofessionals and parents. We believe that by helping children practice good behavior, we will build a productive school community where all children can learn and grow.

Parent Notification

Piscataway Campus communicates to parents/guardians, in their own language (wherever possible), of the State's compulsory school attendance laws and of the school's attendance policies. Parents are directly notified when their child(ren) is absent or tardy from school, and of the resources available to assist parents and students in addressing or resolving attendance problems. Parent notification of a child who is truant is made in writing at 5, 10, 15 and 21+ days. Daily notifications are made through automated emails, texts, and/or phone calls from Piscataway Campus' Honeywell system.

Attendance Intervention

Piscataway Campus will make every effort to follow the District's Mandated Attendance Intervention Protocol. School administration will ensure that Attendance Office staff is provided with in-service training on the parameters of the protocol and on a systematic plan to implement the protocol.

Accountability

Piscataway Campus Attendance Office staff shall be accountable for monitoring and improving student attendance. **The Attendance Office is ultimately responsible for improving the school's attendance rates.**

Truancy

A student who is absent three full days without a valid excuse, or is tardy for more than thirty minutes on three occasions, or any combination thereof, is a truant. Truancy can lead to severe consequences, including fines and criminal prosecution of parents.

Compulsory Education Enforcement

Each school is responsible for developing all applicable intervention actions deemed necessary to enforce compulsory education and to address truancy. Habitual truants may be referred to Piscataway Campus' Attendance Review Committee (ARC).

Eighteen-Year-Old Students

School personnel shall not arbitrarily check any student out of school merely because he or she has reached 18 years of age. Schools shall make every reasonable effort to provide high school students with four full years of study.

Students who receive special education services, and who have not completed their prescribed courses of study, are eligible to maintain their enrollment until they are 22 years old; they may remain in school until the end of the semester in which they attain the age of 22. Emancipated minors are considered as adults for the purpose of enrolling in school, and may make educational decisions without the approval/agreement of their parent(s). However, until students reach the age of 18, they are still subject to the compulsory education laws.

Late Arrival and Early Dismissal

The Board recognizes that from time to time compelling circumstances will require that a student be late to school or dismissed before the end of the school day. As the agent responsible for the education of the students, the district shall require that the school be notified in advance of such absences by written request of the adult student or parent/guardian. Requests shall state the reason for the tardiness or early dismissal. Students who arrive to school late are required to bring a note from a parent/guardian or to be escorted into the building by a parent/guardian. Any student with an unexcused tardy will have 24 hours to bring in a parent's/guardian's note.

Sign-Out Policy

Piscataway Campus is legally responsible for every student from the time they depart home in the morning until they arrive home in the afternoon. Student sign-out procedures are in place to prevent classroom interruptions and to ensure that your student is in the office waiting for you on time.

Parents may request that their daughter/son sign out during the school day for a number of legitimate reasons. **A written note from the parent is required for anyone signing out** (with the exception of students involved in courses that require them to leave campus).

If your child is going to leave school early, please send a note and have your child bring it to the Attendance Office in the morning to get a pass. The pass will excuse the student from his/her class at the specified time. The teacher will send the student to the office to wait for you. **In order to leave school once the day has begun, a parent/guardian must sign the student(s) out through the Attendance Office on the official "sign-out sheet".**

If the student forgets the note from home, the parent/guardian or designated approved family member identified in Piscataway Campus' Student Information System (Genesis) must come to school to sign the student out. **Photo identification is required from any person who picks up any student. Call in permission from parents will not be allowed.**

In no case shall a person other than an authorized parent/guardian or designated approved family member identified in Student Information System (Genesis) be permitted to take a student from school until, or unless, the administration is satisfied that such person has the approval of the authorized parent/guardian. It shall be the responsibility of the administration, or his designee, to determine that any person appearing at a school and requesting permission to take a student from the school is properly authorized to do so.

Students permitted to drive to school must report to an Attendance Office administrator prior to departure, even in the case of an emergency or extenuating circumstance. The administrator will confer with the student and contact a parent or guardian if the student needs to sign out. **All telephone contact with parents should be made on the office phones, not classroom phones or cell phones.**

Late Arrival to Class or school (HALL SWEEPS)

Lateness to class is defined as unexcused if the student enters the classroom without a pass or without their student planner after the bell. Students who are in the hall without a pass or signed student planner will be required to have a conference with their grade level administrator. Students are required to be in their designated class **before** the late bell rings. *Note: Students in the hallway, i.e.*

outside of their classroom door after the late bell are deemed late.

Excused Absences:

- a. * Serious illness verified by a physician in writing (original signature only).
- b. * Death in the family.
- c. Religious holidays as prescribed by the State Department of Education.
- d. * College visitations approved through the Guidance Department.
- e. Administrative suspension.
- f. Approved field trips and school sanctioned programs.
- g. Other reasons deemed appropriate by school administration.

Note: Prior administrative approval necessary.

*** WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION FOR THE ABOVE REASONS MUST BE PRESENTED TO THE ATTENDANCE OFFICE WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE FINAL DAY OF ABSENCE(S) IN QUESTION. DOCUMENTATION RELATIVE TO THE ABSENCES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THAT TIME.**

Tardiness: Defined as not being seated in the assigned room when the bell has rung. Tardiness will NOT penalize attendance; however chronic tardiness will be treated as a discipline matter.

Unexcused Absences or Tardies

The Piscataway Campus has developed a system of progressive consequences for students who are excessively absent or tardy without valid excuses. This system of consequences is part of the overall school's student attendance improvement plan and shall include provisions for student due process, such as appeal procedures. The system affords safeguards and/or programs to prevent increases in school dropout rates and/or decreases in school enrollment or graduation rates. While attendance in class may be used as a factor in determining a student's overall performance, it may not be used as part of a rigid or automatic formula for issuing a failing grade or denying credits.

Tardies to Homeroom

Attendance	#	Criteria/Consequence
Tardy* unexcused	5	Any amount of time / In-School Detention
Tardy* unexcused	10	Any amount of time/ In School Suspension/ Loss of driving privileges. (10 days)
Tardy* unexcused	15	Any amount of time/ Saturday Suspension/ Loss of driving privileges. (15 days)
Tardy* unexcused	20	Any amount of time/ 2 Saturday Suspensions/ Loss of driving privileges. (20 days)

Period-By-Period Attendance Accounting

The period-by-period reporting is intended to improve accountability for each student's attendance, as well as to ensure that the teacher's attendance records are accurate. Period-by-period attendance reporting is required for all teachers using the Student Information System (Genesis) for recording attendance. Approved field trips and school sanctioned programs are not considered absences. Students will receive credit for participation in these types of activities. *Please Note: Students with an unexcused absence in class will receive a zero for the assignments missed that day.*

Cutting

Cutting is defined as unexcused or unexplained absence from school, class(s), or assigned location(s). It generally takes the form of selectively missing one or more assigned class(es) or assigned location(s) while being present for the school day. *Please Note: Students will be denied the opportunity to make-up the class work for periods missed due to cutting.*

Attendance	#	Criteria/Consequence
Cut	1-4	1 cut = 1 ISS + phone conference with parent & counselor
Cut	5+	5 or more cuts = Saturday In School Suspension + mandatory parent conference <i>If a student cuts Saturday In-School Suspension the student will be assigned 1 day of Out-of-School Suspension and an alternate date for Saturday In-School Suspension.</i>

Absenteeism and Make-Up Work

A student's absence must be recorded as "excused" or "unexcused." A student returning to school from an "excused" absence shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed (that can be reasonably provided) during the absence period. Students will receive 1 day to make up work for each excused day of absence. The student shall be given full credit therefore. The teacher of any class from which a pupil is absent shall determine the tests and assignments reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the pupil missed during the absence.

Extended Absences

All extended student absences (5 or more consecutive days) must be investigated. The Attendance Office is responsible for the verification of the reasons for extended absences. The Attendance Office will work with appropriate school staff, such as

the Child Study Team or Counseling Department.

Student Transfers/Withdrawals

No staff shall adopt an "automatic drop" policy as a remedy to a prolonged student absence. Staff will work closely with the Child Study Team and/or the Counseling Department to utilize all available means to investigate the student's whereabouts. If necessary, the Attendance Office shall pursue legal procedures, such as contacting the Division of Child Protection & Permanency, DCP&P (formerly known as the Division of Youth and Family Services, DYFS). Every effort shall be made to program a student returning from an extended absence into his/her appropriate classes.

Procedure for Student Transfers/Withdrawals

- The parent/guardian of the student informs the Child Study Team or Counseling Department that the student will be removed from the school's roster and states where the student will be attending
- The Child Study Team or Counseling Department verifies that the student has enrolled in an appropriate instructional program that meets the requirements of the State's compulsory school attendance laws
- A request for records is received from another school or school district
- Telephone calls to all numbers on the Registration and Emergency Cards fail to ascertain the current whereabouts of the student (In this event school personnel shall conduct a home visit)
- A home visit by appropriate certificated school personnel determines that the student no longer resides at the given address

Lost Credit

A student who **exceeds twenty (20) absences** will lose credit for the year. Parents will be notified via a letter at five absences. A student will be considered truant at **ten (10) absences**. A student is considered in danger of losing credit for the school year at **fifteen (15) absences**. **A student will be denied credit once he/she accumulates twenty one (21) absences.** At 21 or more absences, a certified letter will be sent to the parent as well as a referral to Piscataway Campus' Academic Intervention Program. Please Note: All students have a right to appeal their case; notification of the student and/or parents' desire to appeal their case must be received in writing within five (5) days of the receipt of the student's twenty (20) day letter.

Attendance Retrieval Process

There are two options that can be exercised in order to regain lost credit for a course(s) during the school year.

Option 1. Appeal Process- Appeals for exceptions to the loss of credit due to excessive absences must be made to the Attendance Office. **A written request** must be submitted asking for an informal hearing with the Attendance Review Committee. Appeal Hearings will begin in April and last through June. This meeting consists of the Student, Parent/Guardian, Administrator(s), Counselors, and other staff as appropriate. The Principal will make the final determination for credit retrieval or credit loss.

Option 2. Academic Intervention Program Process- A student may apply to Piscataway Campus' Academic Intervention Program. This process can be initiated by the parent submitting the Academic Intervention Registration Form included with their 21+ day notification letter. The Academic Intervention Program affords students the opportunity to recover lost credits due to poor daily and/or class attendance by participating in Piscataway Campus' academic workshops. The Academic Intervention Program allows students to gain additional seat time in their class(es).

Only students continuing their education at Piscataway Campus will be considered to participate in the Academic Intervention Program, if approved. Credit may only be retrieved for courses that were passed in the course of a normal school year. The retrieval process only permits reinstatement of grades and credits earned. Retrieval is not a replacement for failures or courses completed in summer school. Students with a cumulative average of 65 or below in their class(es) will not be considered. Failure of the parent or student to respond to 21 day letter will result in loss of credit for the class(es) with 21+ days missed.

Academic Intervention Program

Piscataway Campus implements afterschool and weekend classes as a means of assisting students who have been absent for unexcused reasons, who have been deemed truant, or whose parents, voluntarily, want them to make up missed classes.

The Academic Intervention Program provides homework assistance to students after school and/or on Saturdays through May and June. The program provides various structured activities and projects for student's academic success. In addition, the program offers Lead project-based cooperative learning groups.

Intervention for At-Risk Students/Potential Dropouts

Piscataway Campus developed a system to identify and assist high-risk students and potential dropouts. This system shall include, but not be limited to, the Academic Intervention Program, assigning a case manager (such as the Student Assistance Counselor) to assist students who exhibit patterns of poor attendance.

Mandated Attendance Intervention Protocol

Administration is responsible for the execution of the daily procedures delineated below.

NOTE:

1. Each step replicates and builds on previous actions and interventions.
2. Each step must be specifically documented.
3. Each school shall designate a staff member to manage attendance process.

1st – 4th Day

- Attendance Office makes daily phone calls to parent/ guardian when students are absent.
- Attendance Office will document reason(s) for absence and expected date of return in Student Information System (Genesis).
- Attendance Verify accuracy of all contact numbers and update disconnected/ wrong numbers in Honeywell System.
- Attendance Office will obtain day-time phone numbers, including cell phones, and e-mail addresses.

5th Day

- Attendance Office will notify CST and/or School Counselors of students' 5th day of absence via email
- Send Truancy Letter #1.

7th Day

- Attendance Office will notify CST and/or School Counselors of students' 7th day of absence via email.
- CST and/or Counseling Department will hold a meeting with the student. CST and/or Counseling Department will hold a telephone conference with the parent/guardian.

10th Day

- Student will lose driving privileges for 10 days
- Teacher, CST and/or School Counselor will refer student to I&RS Team to review prior absences and to discern existing patterns.
- Attendance Office will refer student to Attendance Review Committee (ARC) for monitoring and case management.
- Administrator will hold an evening assembly for parents/guardians of chronically absent students.
- Send mandatory referral to court program
- Send Truancy Letter #2

15th Day

- Student will lose driving privileges for 15 days
- ARC will hold a mandatory parent conference (student must be present)
- ARC will refer the family to appropriate school-based and/or social service agencies within the local community, if applicable.
- Send Truancy Letter #3

21st Day

- Student will lose driving privileges for 20 days
- Lost Credit process begins
- ARC will consult with administration
- Send Loss of Credit Letter

Attendance	#	Criteria/Consequence
Absence Unexcused	5	Warning Notice (Regular mail)
Absence unexcused	7	Student meeting with Child Study Team/School Counselor
Absence unexcused	10	Student is deemed truant. Notification requesting parent/guardian contact district (Certified mail) and mandatory referral to court program.) Loss of driving privileges (10 days)
Absence unexcused	15	Student deemed in danger of losing credits (Certified mail). Mandatory parents conference with Attendance Review Committee. Loss of driving privileges. (15 days)
Senior credit retrieval	21+	Notification of loss of credit for the year (Certified mail). Graduation in jeopardy. Appeal and/or Academic Intervention Process. Loss of driving privileges. (20 days)

Academic Intervention Program (FAQs)

Is the Academic Intervention Program session required?

The **Academic Intervention Program** is not mandatory, but it is highly recommended. Students with excessive unexcused absences are referred to the **Academic Intervention Program** in order to receive extended educational support and enrichment. This is an opportunity to recover lost instructional time and to make up student absences. A student recovers 1 full day's absence by attending four hours of the **Academic Intervention Program** Session.

What is the purpose of the Academic Intervention Program session?

The purpose of the **Academic Intervention Program** session is to provide students with instruction in the core curriculum areas, which may include math, language arts, physical education, and other required subject areas. Students must bring their own assignments to the **Academic Intervention Program** session to complete them with the assistance of a certificated teacher. In addition, the program gives the students the opportunity to make up absences that occurred earlier in the school year.

Can the Academic Intervention Program Saturday session date be rescheduled?

Yes. There are several **Academic Intervention Program** sessions planned throughout the school year.

What is the District policy on clearing an absence?

If a student is absent a parent should notify the Attendance Office on the first day of the absence.

What is an excused absence?

Excused absences includes absences due to significant illness, a medical/dental appointment, student-court appearance, observance of a holiday or ceremony of the student's religion, and death in your immediate family, mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, and grandfather (1-day in state and 3-day out of state)

Can I send my student to make up an excused absence to the Academic Intervention Program Saturday session?

Yes, students with excused absences can attend and recover their excused absence that occurred earlier in the year. Please be aware that the **Academic Intervention Program** sessions are for all students, especially for those students wishing to achieve perfect attendance and recover absences.

Can my student bring a snack or will lunch be provided?

Yes. It is advisable to bring a snack and drink. Students and parents may also pre-order a school lunch if they are participants in our free lunch program.

What instructional materials will be used if my student doesn't bring his/her own schoolwork?

The Character Education curriculum and instruction provided during the **Academic Intervention Program** session will be standard based activities and test preparation skills appropriate for the student's grade level. The instruction may vary depending on the student's needs and the focus of the school.