

Tazewell County Public Schools

209 West Fincastle
P. O. Box 927
Tazewell, VA 24651-0927

School Board Members:
Mike Dennis, Chairman
Randy Conn

Steve Davis
Estelle "Cookie" Johnson
David Woodard

To: Principals
Assistant Principals
Guidance Counselors

From: George M. Godbey, Director of Operations

Date: September 17, 2010

Subject: Truancy Process

The attendance officer works with students who have five (5) or more unexcused absences.

It takes five (5) unexcused absences, not tardies or check-outs, to be truant. Tardies and check-outs are not mentioned in the code. A truancy petition cannot be filed based on portions of school days missed.

Truancy is not based on the number of absences but is based on five (5) or more unexcused absences from school. The seven (7) days per semester or fourteen (14) days per school year mentioned in the school calendar applies to permitting credit for assignments or work missed, not truancy.

It is the responsibility of the school principal/assistant principal to excuse or unexcuse absences. Be consistent with your decisions.

Documentation that may be provided for absences includes, but is not limited to, a note from the parent/guardian stating a justifiable reason for the absence, medical excuse for hospitalization, medical excuse from doctor or dentist, mandatory court appearances, approval from school principal prior to the absence, death in the family/funeral, school sponsored activities, and natural disasters. The school must verify what excuses have been turned in and document accordingly before contacting the attendance officer.

The principal/assistant principal contacts the attendance officer when a student has accumulated five (5) unexcused absences. The attendance officer works with the school to schedule an ACT (Attendance Counseling Team) conference requiring the parent/guardian to attend the conference. Initial correspondence and contacts with the parent/guardian will be made by the school. For example, the principal sees that the child has three (3) unexcused absences and makes contact with the parent/guardian. Document the contact. The attendance officer will assist in preparing the ACT conference letter. The ACT letter will be mailed by regular mail. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the rescheduled conference letter will be mailed by regular mail. If a truancy petition is filed, copies of both letters will serve as court documents.

The ACT conference includes, but is not limited to, the school principal/assistant principal, attendance officer, parent/guardian, and student. The purpose of this conference is to resolve the truancy problem. The ACT conference is required by law after the sixth absence.

During the ACT conference, the attendance officer may discuss the option of referring the family to the Truancy Intervention Committee (TIC), which is a voluntary program involving different agencies and is a means of resolving the truancy problem on an unofficial level. The TIC currently meets one time each month and Court Service Unit decides which cases are appropriate for this program and which are not. If the family is accepted, it is possible for additional absences to occur while waiting for their case to be heard by the committee. If Court Service Unit notifies the attendance officer that the case is not appropriate for TIC, additional unexcused absences will result in a truancy petition being filed with Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court.

If school is closed due to inclement weather, the ACT conference will be rescheduled.

Truancy petitions will not be filed based solely on suspensions. There must be five (5) unexcused absences to warrant a truancy case.

If any child turns six (6) years old after September 30 of the school year, a truancy petition will not be filed nor will Truancy Intervention be offered.

If a student is on probation, a truancy petition will not be filed. Mandatory school attendance will be monitored under the rules of probation.

Verification of residency is the responsibility of the school administrator, not the attendance officer.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.