



January 20, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is to remind you that as of January 1, 2015 the Palm Beach School for Autism has aligned our school policies more closely with the policies and procedures set forth by the Palm Beach County School District and the State of Florida regarding the monitoring and documentation of student attendance, tardiness, and truancy. The following is the Florida Statute relating to school attendance: **“A parent who refuses or fails to have a minor child who is under his or her control attend school regularly, or who refuses or fails to comply with the requirements in subsection (3), commits a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s.775.082 or s.775.083. The continued or habitual absence of a minor child without the consent of the principal or teacher in charge of the school he or she attends or should attend, or of the tutor who instructs or should instruct him or her, is prima facie evidence of a violation of this chapter; however, a showing that the parent has made a bona fide and diligent effort to control and keep the student in school shall be an affirmative defense to any criminal or other liability under this subsection and the court shall refer the parent and child for counseling, guidance, or other needed services.” [Florida State Statute § 1003.27 (7)(a)(1)(2)]**

Letters and phone calls will be made in order to ascertain information regarding any absences for which the reasons are unknown. We have again listed the relevant policy definitions/guidelines for your review; please take the time to familiarize yourself with the terms below:

Absence means not being actually present when attendance is checked, unless the student arrives within time to be marked “tardy” instead of absent. Students may not be counted in attendance while away from the school on a school day unless they are engaged in an educational activity which constitutes part of the school-approved instructional program.

Class Attendance is the physical presence of a student in class for at least half of the period, or a student who has been excused by the teacher on a class-related assignment, or a student who has been requested by a member of the support staff for an approved school activity.

School Attendance is the presence of student on days school is in session. The student must be actually at the school to which he or she has been assigned or present at an education activity which constitutes part of the approved school program for that student.

Early dismissal means leaving school/class before the day/period ends.

Excused Absence is an allowable absence in accordance with this and other Board policies. Students must be in school unless the absence has been permitted or excused for one of the reasons listed below.

- i. Student illness. If a student is continually sick and repeatedly absent from school, he or she must be under supervision of a physician in order to receive an excuse from attendance.
- ii. Medical appointment.
- iii. Death in the family.
- iv. Observance of a religious holiday or service that is recognized as such by all members of the faith.
- v. Subpoena by law enforcement agency or mandatory court appearance.
- vi. Extreme weather conditions such as, but not limited to, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, or other acts of God which make it impractical or inadvisable for the safety of the student to attend school.
- vii. Suspension. Suspension, in-school and out-of-school, is the temporary removal of the student from his or her regular school program or all classes of instruction on public school grounds and all other school-sponsored activities, except as authorized by the Principal or designee, as defined by Fla. Stat. § 1003.01(5)(a),(b), and provided for in the Student Conduct Codes, Policies 5.1812 and 5.1813.
- viii. Students on field trips which are authorized by the principal are not considered absent. The school related trips should be those which related to the curriculum.



- ix. Students on field trips which are authorized by the principal are not considered absent. The school related trips should be those which related to the curriculum.
- x. Other individual student absences beyond the control of the parent or student, as determined and approved by the principal or the principal's designee.

Late Arrivals or Tardiness. Students reporting late to school/class when the day/class period begins are considered tardy. Excessive tardiness shall be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Unless excused under the provisions of this policy, accumulated tardiness will be recorded as unexcused absences consistent with Fla. Stat. § 1003.02(1)(b) and this policy. When a secondary student misses fifty (50) percent or more of the instructional day or of the identified instructional class period, due to late arrival or tardiness, the student shall be considered absent.

Early Dismissal. Excessive early sign-outs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance. Unless excused under the provisions of this policy, accumulated early dismissals will be recorded as unexcused absences consistent with Fla. Stat. § 1003.02(1)(b) and this policy. When a secondary student misses fifty (50) percent or more of the instructional day or of the identified instructional period, due to early dismissals, the student shall be considered absent. Schools shall establish procedures for early checkouts that ensure students are treated consistently.

Accumulated Tardiness and Accumulated Early Dismissals will result in a documented unexcused absence on the 5th (10th, 15th, etc.) instance of being tardy or early dismissal. Every five tardies equals one absence.

Academic Time. Students are not to be sent home or refused admission to school due to tardiness. Students who arrive late for any class period must be allowed to proceed to their classes after obtaining **proper** documentation of their tardiness.

NOTE: ABA Therapy is **NOT** an excused absence. Please schedule your child's therapy sessions before or after school hours.

We'd also like to remind you of the school times as well as some policies listed in your parent handbook:

Pre-school begins promptly at 9am and ends at 2pm – there is no dismissal after 1:15pm. Any parents arriving after 1:15 must go through car pool. **Morning car pool is from 8:50am – 9:10am & afternoon carpool is from 1:50pm – 2:10pm.**

Elementary/Middle and High school all begin promptly at 8:30am and ends at 2:30pm – there is **NO** dismissal after 1:45pm – Any parents arriving after 1:45pm must go through car pool. **Morning car pool is from 8:15am – 8:40am & afternoon carpool is from 2:20pm – 2:40.**

Thank you for your cooperation with these policies,

Palm Beach School for Autism Administration