

Belmont Charter School Truancy Policy 2020-2021

Students at Belmont Charter School and Belmont Academy are expected to attend school every day. Attending school and being on time every day is crucial to our core value of responsibility. Attendance is also known to be aligned with student academic success. To ensure our students' success, Belmont schools work with each family to ensure students are not chronically truant as defined by absent, tardy and/or dismissed early.

The start of the 2020-2021 school year will commence virtually, which provides some nuances to the truancy policy since students will not be physically present at school. In order to accommodate potential issues with access to internet, Belmont Charter School and Belmont Academy will note attendance but not formally commence with truancy marks until September 21, 2020. All special accommodations for the Truancy policy in the virtual environment will be marked below in each section.

Students are not permitted to attend OST or daycare on days they do not attend school.

Excused Absences

In accordance with policies from the School District of Philadelphia, we can excuse absences for the following reasons as long as we have a note from a parent/guardian on file:

- Illness
- Required court attendance
- Death in the family
- High School Visits

All other absences not outlined here will be considered unexcused.

Notes from parents/guardians must be submitted within three (3) days after the student returns to school and can only excuse up to 3 absences in a row. If your child is absent for more than 3 days in a row, a doctor's note or other official documentation is required.

In the event that a student or family member has contracted or been exposed to COVID-19, we will continue to accept a doctor's note or other official documentation. If a family is asked to quarantine during the virtual period of school, the student can participate with their class. In the event that school will resume in person instruction, parents will call the school to inform of the quarantine period and we request that an electronic (email) note is sent from the doctor confirming the quarantine.

A student's absence does not excuse him/her from the work that takes place while they are not in school. All work must be made up by the student.



A student who has ten (10) consecutive unexcused absences will be dropped from Belmont Charter School’s enrollment.

Tardies

Any student who arrives after 8:01am is considered tardy. Tardiness is tracked and negatively impacts a student’s record, it will also impact perfect attendance awards and incentives. When a student is late they are missing instructional time.

For the virtual learning environment and in accordance with the guidance from the State of Pennsylvania Department of Education, students must login to their morning zoom session to be considered on time and continue with their set schedule. Tardiness will be tracked, students will have the opportunity to access and make up work through asynchronous video recording to submit for verification of learning which will change the tardy mark to a present mark in our system.

Early dismissal

Signing a student out of school prior to dismissal is considered early dismissal. Early dismissals are tracked and count against perfect attendance. Belmont Schools are unable to accommodate early dismissals after 2:40/12:30 (Wednesdays).

Students can only be signed out of school by individuals listed on their emergency contact form. Identification is always required.

For the virtual learning environment and in accordance with the guidance from the State of Pennsylvania Department of Education, students must login to their afternoon zoom session to be considered on time and continue with their set schedule. Early Dismissals will be tracked, students will have the opportunity to access and make up work through asynchronous video recording to submit for verification of learning which will change the early dismissal mark to a present mark in our system.

Attendance Follow Up By School

Total UNEXCUSED absences	Follow Up
Each absence	Automated call
3 Unexcused Absences	Letter Sent via Parent Square by School Office *Student is considered truant.
6 Unexcused Absences	Family Support Specialist schedules phone or virtual conference with family. Attendance Improvement Plan *Student is considered habitually truant.

10 Unexcused Absences	Child is referred to the District Attorney's Office "Project Go" Program
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Total UNEXCUSED tardies or early release	Follow Up
10	Letter mailed home
20	Attendance Improvement Plan meeting held to create attendance improvement plan

Please note, students will NOT be suspended or expelled as a result of truant or tardy behavior as per applicable laws and the behavior policy at Belmont Charter School.

Additionally, students who miss 18 or more days of school are at risk of being retained

Special Event Attendance

In order to attend special events and after-school functions, a student must attend school that day. To attend Saturday special events and functions, a student must be present at school on Friday.

Out-of-School Time (OST) Attendance

Students must attend the school day to attend OST programming.

Afterschool:

The OST program has strict attendance requirements due to club activities and program guidelines. When students are absent, it hurts the club's progress in completing their culminating project.

1st- 5th Grade:

Students cannot miss more than 3 days per month without written documentation. Students will be exited from the program if they are absent more than twice in one month.

6th-11^h Grade:

Student cannot miss more than 5 days per month without written documentation. Students will be exited from the program if they miss more than 5 days in one month.

Students who are picked up before 5:20pm will be counted as absent and are subject to the OST attendance policy.



Daycare Attendance

Daycare students should not be picked up prior to 4:45pm in order for their clubs to complete the required work and meet the daily attendance requirements.

If a student accumulates 25 absences between July 1 and June 30th of the next year, their CCIS subsidy is affected. Parents will pay the \$23/school year daily and \$27/summer daily rate for absent days.

Project Go Partnership with the District Attorney's Office of Philadelphia for Truancy Prevention

If a Belmont Charter School student reaches 10 unexcused absences, his or her file will be referred to the District Attorney's Office as part of the Project Go program. Belmont Charter Schools are dedicated to the academic, social and emotional success of all students. Regular school attendance is an integral part of that success. In an effort to enforce Pennsylvania's compulsory attendance laws, Belmont Charter School and Belmont Academy Charter School partner with the District Attorney's office. By signing this handbook, you are giving your consent for Belmont Charter School and/or Belmont Academy Charter School to share your child's educational records with the District Attorney's office in the event your child has excessive unexcused absences. Please note that records from previous years will be included in any referral. If you object to your child's information being shared with the District Attorney's office, please write a letter to the school stating your objection within 10 days of enrollment. Letters can be either mailed to the school's address or delivered to the school's Main Office. If we do not hear from you, we will assume consent has been given and will release your contact information if your child violates our school's truancy policy. Please know that the partnership we have entered into with the District Attorney's office has been entered into with the very best of intentions for all of our students and their families.

Project "GO" (as in "go" to school) is an early intervention and prevention program developed by the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office to hold parents and excessively truant elementary and middle school students accountable for truancy. The law requires all children to attend school every day until the age of 17 years. The participating schools notify the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office when a student has exceeded the number of unexcused absences agreed to as the limit for that school. Upon receiving this notice, a letter is sent from the District Attorney's Office to the parents/guardians advising them of their responsibilities under Pennsylvania law. The parents and the children are required to attend a group meeting with the Assistant District Attorney, school staff, city agencies and community-based organizations. Parents are advised that continued attendance problems will not be tolerated and could result in court action against the parent and/or the child. At the same time, referrals are provided for parenting classes, counseling and other needed services.

If the letter and group meeting are not successful in improving attendance, the student and parent are invited to an individual meeting with the Assistant District Attorney and school staff to discuss the child's attendance problems. This meeting focuses on:



- Attendance problems
- Family issues/concerns
- School related issues/concerns
- The Assistant District Attorney reminds the parents of the possible legal consequences if the child does not attend school each and every day
- Both parents and children may be referred to appropriate agencies for necessary services
- Parents may also be required to sign a contract outlining the responsibilities of both the parent and child

If the individual meeting is not successful, the student and parent are referred to a final individual meeting with the Assistant District Attorney, school staff and other appropriate representatives. The message is reiterated for the final time.

Failure to improve thereafter will result in prosecution of the parent for Corruption of a Minor, 18 Pa.C.S. §6301(a)(2), a violation of the Public School Code, 24 P.S. §13-1333, and/or, in a particularly egregious case, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, 18 Pa.C.S. §4304. Similarly, a child 13 or older could be prosecuted for a violation of the Public School code (24 P.S. §13-1300, et seq); a child under 13 would be referred to the Department of Human Services as a dependent child.