To release your child early from school aka **permission to leave school** (PTL):

**Philip Mack**

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**To report your student’s absence from school please email:** [TarponSpringsHS.absence@pcsb.org](mailto:TarponSpringshs.absence@pcsb.org)

**Alternative Bell Schedule (ABS)**

Students who commit infractions to our discipline policy may have the consequence of an Alternative Bell Schedule or ABS.  The ABS consequence has students attend school from 1:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. under the supervision of classroom teachers.  The ABS consequence is designed to keep students current with class assignments.

ABS is an alternative to out-of-school suspension and is considered a disciplinary infraction that will be on the student's cumulative record.

**One of the hardest policies to explain is the attendance policy.  Students and parents...and sometimes staff...get confused as to what counts; what does not count; is it five or four absences...etc.**

**State of Florida Mandated Attendance**

The State of Florida has mandated that students have good regular attendance.  If the student is habitually truant, the state will revoke the student’s driving privilege (or the ability to get a license).  Once a driving privilege is revoked (suspended), it takes 30 days of nearly perfect attendance to have the privilege returned.  For Tarpon Springs High School, habitual truants will be referred to our Child Study Team who looks at problematic students and work together to support the students’ successes in school.

**Early Release**

**Students’ who must leave school during school hours must have their parent request this release by phone or in person to the office to obtain pre-approval. Schools will establish procedures for early release that ensure a secure campus for dismissal. Signing out early repeatedly may count toward a pattern of non-attendance that may indicate early signs of truancy. Repeated early sign outs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine if there is a pattern of non-attendance.**

**Truancy**

Let us first discuss truancy.  Truancy is when a student is absent, and a parent has not contacted the school.  As the system sees it, without a parent contact, the student is skipping school.  Officially, parents have 48 hours from the actual absence to notify the school.  Your contact must be timely.  You may contact the appropriate support staff listed above by telephone, email, or handwritten note with your child upon return to school to authenticate the absence as being excused.

**Five Excuses by Parent**

Parents may excuse five (5) absences during the semester without any further documentation (such as a doctor’s note).  These five days can be whole days or partial (arriving late or leaving early) days.  Once the parent exceeds the five excused absences, we are not permitted to correct any further absences to excused without documentation.  Please continue to contact with absences; however, we will write in the notation, **“Sick, parent exceeded 5.”**  The intention of the five absences a parent may excuse are for legitimate absences.  The school board has officially stated in policy that being out of school for family vacations or trips; power outages at home; car troubles or missing the school bus are not legitimate reasons for missing school.

In the same policy, the school board has established that legitimate absences for going to the doctor, dentist, or eye doctor and appointments with the courts or attorneys (along with supporting documentation) are not limited.  Students attending religious services or religious instruction (along with supporting documentation) are also excusable with advance notice to the school.  Advance notice is 3 days prior to the religious event in writing to the school.

Special situations may be excused too.  Special situations may be a deployment, major illness, death of an immediate family member (parents, siblings, grandparents, or others living in the home). Whenever possible, the permission to be absent should be acquired prior to the absence.

**Tardy**

Students are considered tardy to class if they are not in the classroom before the final bell.  It may sound technical - but the student's body must be in the classroom - the physical being must be in the room.  Leaving a bookbag, being in the hallway or in the restroom does not count as actually being in the room.  Technically, students are to be in their classroom seat waiting for instruction by the final bell.

We are only able to excuse tardies for appointments that happen before school - such as a doctor's appointment, dentist appointment or appointment with an attorney.  Oversleeping, car issues or other reasons for being tardy are not excusable by county policy.  Documentation of the appointment will be necessary to verify the activity.

**Check Attendance**

Parents and students should regularly check attendance.  A good habit is to do it weekly to look for errors.  Challenging an absence that goes back weeks or months is not possible.  Teachers cannot be expected to remember if a student was in class several weeks back to make an adjustment.  The attendance system for teachers makes it easy to click the wrong student when taking attendance.  By checking attendance on a regular basis, you can expect to have accurate attendance records.