

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers shall keep a record of absence, tardiness and student excuses. All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with attendance policies and procedures shall be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment.

Students at times may appropriately be absent from class. The following principals shall govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

1. Excused Absences

- 1.1 Excused absences are those due to illness or a health condition; a religious observance; school-approved activities; and family emergencies. In addition, the principal may, upon request by a parent, grant permission in advance by pre-arrangement for a student's absence, providing such absence does not adversely affect the student's educational process.
- 1.2 If an absence is excused, the student shall be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher, commensurate with the numbers of days missed, except that in participation-type classes, every effort will be made by the teacher to provide make up assignments for the work missed during the absence.
- 1.3 An excused absence shall be verified by the parent(s)/guardian(s), adult student [those over eighteen (18)] or emancipated student [those over sixteen (16) who have been emancipated by court action], or school authority responsible for the absence.

Valuable classroom experiences, such as discussions, demonstrations, films and lectures generally cannot be made up. A teacher who wishes to have a more stringent make-up procedure must have it approved in writing annually by the principal and must document parent consent at each enrollment period.

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness.

- 1.4 **Participation in school-approved activity.** To be excused, this absence must be authorized by a staff member, and the effected teacher must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
- 1.5 **Absence due to illness, health condition, family emergency, or religious purposes.** When possible, the parent, or the adult student is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence. A written and signed note of explanation is to be submitted to the school within forty-eight (48) hours of his/her return to school.

There are some students with well known and established health limitations for whom a health care plan will be in place. The administration of the school attended by the student, and possibly special education and health services staff, will work with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure maximum attendance despite the student's physical limitations. Should such student's attendance show a pattern of deterioration and health be the reason given, then a school health plan will be put in place as described in the preceding paragraph, see also section 2.4.

Students fourteen (14) years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease shall notify the school of their absence with a signed note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen (13) years and older may do the same for mental health, drug or alcohol treatment; and all students have the right to receive information regarding family planning and abortion (RCW 9.02.100).

A parent may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday. In addition, a student, upon the request of her/his parent(s)/guardian(s), may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property and is scheduled with the least interruption of the school day.

- 1.6 **Absence for parental-approved activities; pre-arranged absences.** This category of absence shall be counted as excused when the request is agreed upon by the principal and the parent(s)/guardian(s). Absences are approved if they cause no serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress. The individual student's academic progress or lack of progress may be the deciding factor of why one student may be approved and another not be approved for the same family trip.

Course work may be required to be completed in advance of the absence. In participation-type classes, such as certain music, science lab, and physical education classes, the student may not be able to achieve the objective of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. In such a case, a parent-approved absence would have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress, which could ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course. A student may be withdrawn from school rather than be granted a prearranged absence. Prearranged absences are limited to two (2) state attendance count periods, approximately twenty (20) days.

- 1.7 **Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension.** As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure or students who have been placed on short-term suspension shall have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments shall be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
- 1.8 **Extended illness due to health condition.** If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school shall arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practicable. If the student is unable to do his/her homework, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of the class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty; see section 2.4.
- 1.9 **Removal from school due to head lice.** Treatments for head lice are speedy and effective. Systematic checks for lice are made at the end of the day so that the child remains in school for the day and to minimize students' time out of school; weekend treatment negates the need for further absences. Students may receive one (1) day of excused absence for head lice exclusion if necessary so that home treatment may be done.

2. Unexcused Absences

As a means of instilling the values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student whose absence is not excused as described above shall experience the natural consequences of his/her absence. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent and is not made up by the student. For reporting purposes, unexcused absence for a school day or a particular course or class means that a student has failed to attend at least the majority of hours or periods in an average school day and has failed to meet the district's policies and procedures for excused absences. A student's grade shall not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.

2.1 Unexcused absences are:

- (a) Submitting a signed excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined previously; or
- (b) Failing to submit any written excuse statement signed by the parent(s)/guardian(s) or adult student within forty-eight (48) hours of the absence. This type of absence is also defined as truancy.

The school shall notify a student's parent(s)/guardian(s) (or adult or emancipated student) in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one (1) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year and shall inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.

The school shall request a conference with parent(s)/guardian(s) and student after two (2) unexcused absences within any month during the current school year to determine what corrective measures should be taken to lessen the cause for the student's absences from school; and if the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) does not attend the scheduled conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and official, in which event the parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified of the steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absence.

- 2.2 A telephone call or written notification will be made to parent(s)/guardian(s) after one (1) unexcused absence. Each written notice shall be in English or in the primary language of the parent when possible.
- 2.3 After two (2) unexcused absences within any month, a conference shall be held between the parent, student and teacher/principal or designee. A Community Truancy Board (CTB) may be designated to work with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) to consider the truant behavior. At such a conference the staff person(s), student and parent shall consider: adjusting the student's program; providing more individualized instruction; preparing the student for employment with specific vocational experience or both; transferring the student to another school; assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or, imposing other corrective actions that are deemed to be appropriate.

Not later than the student's fifth (5th) unexcused absence in a month or tenth (10th) unexcused absence in a year, the district shall enter into an agreement with the student and parent that establishes school attendance requirements, and shall refer the student to a CTB and/or shall file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of [RCW 28A.225.010](#).

The school shall take steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. These steps shall include, where appropriate, adjusting the child's school program or school or school or course assignment, providing more individualized or remedial instruction, providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience, referring the student to a community truancy board (CTB), requiring the student to attend an alternative school or program, or assisting the parent(s)/guardian(s) or student to obtain an alternative school or program, or assisting the parent(s)/guardian(s) or student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or lessen the cause or causes for the absence from school.

No later than the student's five (5) days of unexcused absence in a month, the district shall enter into an agreement with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) that establishes attendance requirements, and/or shall refer the student to a community truancy board, and shall file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of [RCW 28A.225.010](#).

- 2.3.1 If such action is not successful, the district shall petition for a hearing with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, student, or parent and student upon five (5) days of unexcused absence within any month during the current school year or upon ten (10) days of unexcused absence during the current school year.
- 2.3.2 A student may be suspended or expelled for a pattern of habitual truancy. Prior to suspension or expulsion, the parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be notified in writing in her/his primary language, where possible, that the student has unexcused absences.
- 2.3.3 All suspensions and/or expulsions shall be reported in writing to the superintendent within twenty-four (24) hours after imposition.
- 2.3.4 All students must show proof of adequate immunization status. Students unable to show proof of immunization status after adequate warning cannot attend school and those resulting absences will be unexcused.

Unexcused Absences: Unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district shall be counted for all purposes in this procedure.

- 2.4 **Chronic Health:** In cases where excused absences are extraordinarily frequent and excessive, a physician's excuse will be required for health appointments made during the school day and for extended illnesses of more than five (5) days. Sporadic illnesses totaling ten (10) non-consecutive days will be regarded as a chronic health problem which calls for the formation of a school health plan (see form 3122.3X) to assist in improving the student's attendance at school. The school nurse, principal and counselor will begin involvement with the family in order to seek contact with the family physician to assist in the development of this school health plan.

Sporadic health-excused absences of ten (10) days or more for an apparently healthy student whose family has not worked with the school to develop a health plan will cause the BECCA truancy process to be begun, so that alternative supports to the family may be developed for the student's attendance. A letter will be sent from the school to the parent(s)/guardian(s) asking them for a principal conference and notifying them that henceforth, absent the health plan, absences which are attributed to and reported as illness will be unexcused. This recording of unexcused absences will be reported according to BECCA requirements. Upon principal conference and an agreed upon health plan, illness excuses may again be considered for excused designation.

3. Petition for Civil Action

- 3.1 If the above action fails to correct the truancy problem, the student shall be declared a habitual absentee. The principal or designee shall interview the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) and prescribe corrective action which may include suspension for the current semester, expulsion, and/or referral to the juvenile court. Upon five (5) days of unexcused absence within any calendar month during the current school year or upon ten (10) days of unexcused absence during the current school year, the district must petition for a hearing with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, student, or parent and student. The petition consists of written notification to the court alleging that:
- 3.1.1 The student has five (5) or more unexcused absences within any month during the current school year or ten (10) or more unexcused absences in the current school year; see section 2.5;
 - 3.1.2 Actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
 - 3.1.3 Court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district in reducing the student's absences from school.

Additionally, the petition shall include the student's name, age, date of birth, school and residence; and the names and residences of the student's parent(s)/ guardian(s). The petition must include facts that support the allegations made in the petition, must generally request relief available under the statute, and must describe what the court might order. A parent's date of birth is required.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required.

At the district's choice, the district may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

- 3.2 A student who has been expelled for attendance violations may petition the superintendent for reinstatement. Such petition may be granted upon presentation of a firm and unequivocal commitment to maintain regular attendance.

- 3.3 Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of her/his parent(s)/guardian(s), in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence, shall be subject to the same corrective action that would have occurred had the false excuse not been used.

4. Students Six (6) or Seven (7) Years of Age

Students six (6) or seven (7) years of age, who have been enrolled in the district, are required to attend school and their parents are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents who wish to withdraw their children before the children are eight (8) years old and against whom no truancy petition has been filed may withdraw the students from school. When a six (6) or seven (7) year old student has unexcused absences, the district shall do the following:

- 4.1 Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing or by telephone after one (1) unexcused absence in any month.
- 4.2 Request a conference with the parent(s)/guardian(s) and child to analyze the causes of the student's absences after two (2) unexcused absences in any month (a regularly scheduled teacher-parent conference held within thirty (30) days may substitute).
- 4.3 Take steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences, including: adjusting the school program, school, course assignment; providing more individualized or remedial instruction; offering enrollment in alternative schools or programs; or assisting in obtaining supplementary services.
- 4.4 After five (5) unexcused absences in a month, or ten (10) in a school year, the district shall file a truancy petition.

5. Attendance Effects

Students who have poor attendance, whether excused or unexcused, may be reassigned to another room, program, or building. In any case, students absent twenty (20) consecutive days or two (2) consecutive report periods will be withdrawn from school enrollment.

6. Tardiness and Leaving Early

Students are expected to be in class on time and leaving early. When a student's tardiness or leaving early becomes frequent or disruptive, the student shall be referred to the principal or counselor. Since tardiness represents valuable time away from instruction. Schools may define tardies or leaving early in such a way that a specific number equals a half-day or more of unexcused absence.

Tardiness of an extended period in the morning, such as one extending more than an hour, may be considered a loss of a half-day of instruction for BECCA reporting calculations because of the intensity of early morning context teaching. High schools with extended periods may develop and publicize in building rules a standard of a specific number of tardies equating to an unexcused absence. For schools without special requirements specified, seven (7) tardies will be considered to equate to a day of unexcused absence. Parents will be notified by telephone, letter and in person of issues of tardiness and leaving early.

If counseling, parent(s)/ guardian(s) conferencing, or disciplinary action is ineffective in changing the student's attendance behavior, he/she may be suspended from class.

Cross References:

(cf.: 2420 – Grading and Progress Reports)

(cf.: 3123 – Early Withdrawal)

(cf.: 3201 – Student Rules, Regulations and Conduct; Teacher and Staff Rights and Responsibilities)

(cf.: 3230 – Search of Students and Student Privacy)

(cf.: 3413 – Student Immunization)

Legal References:

RCW 13.34.300 Failure to cause juvenile to attend school as evidence under neglect petition

RCW 28A.225.005-060 Attendance mandatory - Age - Person having custody shall cause child to attend public school - Exceptions

RCW 70.24.110 Minors - Treatment, consent, liability for payment for care

WAC 180-16-215(4) Minimum 180 school year – Five day flexibility - Students graduating from high school

WAC 392-400-235 Discipline - Conditions and limitations

WAC 392-400-260 Long-term suspension - Conditions and limitations

WAC 392-121-108 Definition -- Enrollment Exclusion

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