

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a call log and/or a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian or, in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences.

Excused Absences

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Assignments and/or activities not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness may be made up in the manner provided by the teacher.

- A. **Participation in school-approved activity or instructional program.** To be excused this absence must be authorized by a staff member and the affected teacher must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
- B. **Absence due to:** illness; health condition; medical appointment; family emergency; religious purposes; court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury; post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview; State recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055; and directly related to the student's homeless status.

When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail or written note and to provide the excuse for the absence. If no excuse is provided with the notification, or no notification is provided, the parent/guardian will submit an excuse via phone, e-mail or written note upon the student's return to school. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation. Students fourteen years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease will notify the school of their absence with a note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen years and older may do the same for mental health, drug or alcohol treatment; and all students have that right for family planning and abortion.

A parent/guardian may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday. In addition, a student, upon the request of his/her parent, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property. A student will be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.

- C. **Absence for parental-approved activities.** This category of absence will be counted as excused for purposes agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian. An absence may not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress. In participation-type classes (e.g., certain music and physical education classes) the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. In such a case, a parent or guardian-approved absence would have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress which would ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course. A student, upon the request of his/her parent/guardian, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property or otherwise involves the school to any degree.
- D. **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 will 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 will be a substantial lowering of the course grade.

- E. **Extended illness or health condition.** If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school will arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practical. If the student is unable to do his/her schoolwork, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.
- F. **Excused absence for chronic health condition.** Students with a chronic health condition which interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and his/her parent will apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program will be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program will be approved by the principal. Staff will be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information will be respected at the parent's request.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences fall into two categories:

- A. Submitting an -excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined previously;
or
- B. Failing to submit, whether by phone, e-mail or in writing, any type of excuse statement by the parent, guardian or adult student.
 - 1. Each unexcused absence will be followed by a warning letter to the parent of the student. Each notice will be in writing in English or in the primary language of the parent. A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.
 - 2. After two unexcused absences within any month a conference will be held between the parent, student and principal. At such a conference the principal, student and parent will consider:
 - a. Adjusting the student's program;
 - b. Providing more individualized instruction; preparing the student for employment with specific vocational experience or both;
 - c. Transferring the student to another school;
 - d. Assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or,
 - e. Imposing other corrective actions that are deemed to be appropriate.

Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community truancy board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.

- 3. If the above action fails to correct the attendance problem, the student will be declared a habitual absentee. The principal will interview the student and his/her family and

prescribe corrective action, which may include suspension for the current semester and expulsion.

The following truancy petition procedure will apply only to students under the age of seventeen:

No later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year, the district will file a petition and affidavit 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:

- a. The student has unexcused absences in the current school year. While petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any one month, or ten or more unexcused absences in the current school year, a petition may be filed earlier. In addition, unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school will be counted when preparing the petition;
- b. Attesting that actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
- c. Court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student's absences from school.

The petition will include the student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity; and the names and addresses of the student's parents/guardians, whether the student and parent are fluent in English, whether there is an existing individualized education program (IEP) and the student's current academic status in school.

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, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court shall grant the petition and enter an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determined by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to most likely cause the student to return to and remain in school while the student is subject to the court's jurisdiction.

If the court assumes jurisdiction, the school district shall will periodically report to the court any additional unexcused absences by the student, actions taken by the school district, and an update on the student's academic status in school at a schedule specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three (3) months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

4. 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.
5. Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of his/her parent/guardian, in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence will be subject to the same corrective action that would have occurred had the false excuse not been used.
6. Students six or seven years of age, who have been enrolled in the district are required to attend school and their parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents/guardians who wish to withdraw their children before the age of eight, and

against whom no truancy petition has been filed, may withdraw the students from school. When a six or seven year old student has unexcused absences, the district will do the following:

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

Students are expected to be in class on time. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student will be referred to the principal or counselor. If counseling, parent conferencing or disciplinary action is ineffective in changing the student's attendance behavior, he/she may be suspended from the class.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment. (See WSSDA model policy 3241, *Classroom Management, Corrective Actions or Punishment.*)

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