

STUDENTS

Attendance

Absence Definitions

To establish common attendance practices within and across all school levels, the following definitions will determine the appropriate category for absence reporting.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Excused Absences

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness and describe the process to have an absence or tardy excused.

- A. **Participation in a district or school-approved activity or instructional program.** To be excused this absence must be authorized by a staff member and the affected teacher(s) must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
- B. **Illness, health condition or medical appointment** including, but not limited to, medical, counseling, dental or optometry. If the 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.
- C. **Family emergency** including but not limited to a death or illness in the family.
- D. **Religious or cultural purposes** including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction.
- E. **Court, judicial** proceeding or serving on a jury.
- F. **Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program** visitation, or scholarship interview.
- G. **State-recognized search and rescue activities** consistent with [RCW 28A.225.055](#).
- H. Absence directly related to the **student's homeless status**.
- I. Absences related to **deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian** who is an active duty member consistent with [RCW 28A.705.010](#).
- J. **Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action** (e.g., short-term suspension, or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion). 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.

K. Principal (or designee) and parent/guardian mutually agreed upon approved activity.

This category of absence will be counted as excused for purposes agreed to by the principal (or designee) and the parent/guardian or emancipated youth.

For items B-I, the parent/guardian is expected to contact the attendance office at their student's school on the morning of the absence when reasonably possible. Additionally, a written note of explanation is expected to be received by the school within thirty (30) calendar days of the student's return to school to excuse the absence. Written notes provided to the school can be hand-written, sent from a parent's/guardian's email address listed in the district's database, or sent by fax. Parents/guardians may contact the school by phone to provide an explanation for a student absence. Such parent/guardian contact will be recorded in writing and verified by the school to excuse the absence. Parents/guardians needing language assistance to provide a written note may use the district's Communication Line for Non-English Speaking Families by calling 425-385-4011.

The written note should contain the following information:

- Student name and student ID number;
- Date(s) of the absence;
- Reason for the absence;
- Parent/guardian name;
- Parent/guardian name and signature; and
- Phone number where the note can be verified

The principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence from school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria for an excused absence. Unexcused absences occur when:

1. The parent/guardian or adult student submits an excuse statement that does not constitute an excused absence as defined above; or
2. The parent/guardian or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement.

Length of Absence

The length of a student's daily absence per the definitions below determines if the absence will be recorded as a tardy, part day or full day absence.

Tardy/Part Day Absence

Students are tardy if they arrive after the published start time or leave before the published end time for school or class.

Elementary

At the elementary level, a student's attendance will be recorded as a part day absence from school if the student is more than thirty (30) minutes late or if the student leaves thirty (30) minutes or more early.

Secondary (Middle and High Schools)

At the secondary level, a student's attendance will be recorded as a period absence if the student arrives five (5) minutes or more late to class or leaves five (5) minutes or more early.

Full Day Absence

A full day absence is defined as a student failing to attend the majority of hours or periods they are scheduled to attend on that school day.

Elementary

At the elementary level, a student's attendance will be recorded as a full day absence when the student misses more than 50% of the instructional minutes scheduled for that school day. On a regularly scheduled school day, there are 6.5 total hours per day.

Secondary (Middle and High Schools)

At the secondary level, a student's attendance will be recorded as a full day absence when the student misses more than 50% of the instructional minutes or periods scheduled for that student's school day. On a regularly scheduled school day, there are seven (7) periods in middle school and six (6) periods in high school.

Prearranged Absences

Families should not schedule vacations or travel while school is in session. If a family vacation or travel must occur while school is in session, it must be prearranged prior to the absence and approved by the principal (or designee). Pursuant to item K above, the principal (or designee) may excuse up to five (5) school days for a prearranged absence per student each school year. Assignments requested for a prearranged absence will be provided to the student or parent if requested five (5) school days prior to the absence.

Response to Student's Failure to Attend School

A. Notice to Parent/Guardian

If a student fails to attend school, the student's parent/guardian will be informed by a notice in writing or by telephone whenever the child has failed to attend school after one (1) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The school shall inform the parent/guardian of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. If the parent/guardian is not fluent in English, the school must make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent/guardian is fluent.

B. Required Conference for Elementary School Students

If an elementary school student has five (5) or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year or ten (10) or more excused absences in the current school year, the district will schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and student at a reasonably convenient time.

The conference is intended to identify barriers to the student's regular attendance and to identify supports and resources so the student may regularly attend school.

A conference is not required for students with five (5) or more excused absences if:

- (a) Written notice of the prearranged excused absence was provided to the principal (or designee); or
- (b) If a doctor's note was provided and an academic plan was in place to ensure the student did not fall behind while absent.

If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day is to take place within thirty days (30) of the absences, the district may schedule the conference on that day. If the student does not have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, the conference must include at least one (1) district employee, such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher or community human services provider. If the student has an IEP or a Section 504 Plan, the team that created that program must reconvene.

C. Required Conferences for All Students relating to Unexcused Absences

After two (2) unexcused absences within any month, a conference will be held between the parent/guardian, student and school official to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty (30) calendar days of the second unexcused absence, the district may schedule the attendance conference on the same day.

The district will designate a staff member to apply the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) and, where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions consistent with WARNS. As appropriate, the district will also consider:

1. Adjusting the student's school, program or course assignments;
2. Providing the student more individualized or remedial instruction;
3. Providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;
4. Requiring the student to attend an alternative school or program;
5. Assisting the student or parent/guardian to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or
6. Referring the student to a community truancy board.

If the parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and the school official. The parent/guardian will be notified of the steps the school has decided to take to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

D. After Five (5) Unexcused Absences

Not later than a student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the district will:

1. Enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements;
2. Refer the student to a community truancy board; or
3. File a petition with juvenile court (see below).

E. Petition to Juvenile Court

For students under the age of seventeen (17), 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 supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court alleging violation of the State's school attendance laws.

The petition will contain the following:

1. A statement that the student has unexcused absences in the current school year;
2. An attestation that actions taken by the district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school;
3. A statement that court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the district to reduce the student's absences from school;
4. A statement that [RCW 28A.225.010](#) has been violated by the parent/guardian, student or parent/guardian and student;
5. 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, the languages in which the student and parent/guardian are fluent, whether there is an existing individualized education program (IEP), and the student's current academic status in school;
6. A list of all interventions that have been attempted, a copy of any previous truancy assessment completed by the student's current school/district, the history of approved best practices or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the district, and a copy of the most recent truancy information document signed by the parent/guardian and student;
7. Facts that support the above allegations; and
8. The relief requested.

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 grants the petition and enters 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 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.

Students Found Dependent Pursuant to [RCW 13.34](#)

A district representative or staff member will review unexpected or excessive absences with a student who has been found dependent under the [Juvenile Court Act](#) and the adults involved with that student. Adults includes the student's caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parents/guardians, foster parents or the person providing placement for the student. The purpose of the review is to determine the cause of the absences, taking into account: unplanned school transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, school adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and the student's unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. The district representative or staff member must proactively support the student's management of their school work so the student does not fall behind and to avoid suspension or expulsion based on truancy.

Students Six or Seven Years Old

Students six (6) or seven (7) 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 (8), 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 will follow the steps described above under Response to Student's Failure to Attend School.

Discipline and Corrective Action

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.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding discipline or corrective action.

Student Transfers

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the receiving district will include the unexcused absences accumulated at the previous district. The sending district will provide this truancy information to the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS assessment and any interventions previously provided to the student. The information will include the online or written acknowledgment by the parent/guardian and student.

Community Truancy Board

A “community truancy board” means a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school. Prior to the 2017-18 school year, the district will enter into an MOU with the Snohomish County Juvenile Court to establish and operate a community truancy board.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court a staff member to assist in the recruitment of community truancy board members, coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating training for members of the community truancy board, and sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices. The district will also identify a person at each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy.

Cross References:	Board Policy 3122	Attendance
	Board Policy 3441	Release of Student during the School Day
	Procedure 3441P	Release of Student during the School Day
	Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) Data Manual	

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