

## STUDENTS

### Excused and Unexcused Absences

The definition of an absence:

1. A student is absent when they are:
  - a. Not physically present on school grounds; and
  - b. Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
    - i. Instruction;
    - ii. Any instruction-related activity; or
    - iii. Any other district or school approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.

### Definition of Absence from Remote Learning

(1) A student is absent from remote learning when the student is not participating in planned instructional activities on a scheduled remote learning day.

(2) Evidence of student participation in remote learning may include, but is not limited to: (a) Daily logins to learning management systems; (b) Daily interactions with the teacher to acknowledge attendance (including messages, emails, phone calls or video chats); or (c) Evidence of participation in a task or assignment.

### Excused and Unexcused Absences

Educators and administrators have a responsibility to monitor absences to determine if students and families need support. Students are expected to attend all assigned in-person classes each day or participate in all assigned remote instructional activities. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the District shall inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of truancy, the role and responsibility of the District in regard to truancy, and resources available to assist the student and their parents and guardians in correcting truancy. The District will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents can request and receive such information in languages in which they are fluent. Parents will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

#### Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the District. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate

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remotely. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences. The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the District:

1. The following are valid excuses for absences from school:
  - A. Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
  - B. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including but not limited to medical, counseling, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health) for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible.
  - C. Family emergency, including but not limited to a death or illness in the family;
  - D. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
  - E. Court, judicial proceeding, court ordered activity, or jury service;
  - 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 or foster care/dependency 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. Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions imposed pursuant to chapter [392-400 WAC](#) if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in [WAC 392-121-107](#);
  - K. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
  - L. Absences due to a student's migrant status, and
  - M. An approved activity that is consistent with District policy and is mutually agreed upon by the principal or designee and a parent, guardian, or emancipated youth.
  - N. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19;

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- O. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19;
- P. Absences related to the student's employment or other family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary due to COVID-19 until other arrangements can be made, including placement in a more flexible education program;
- Q. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made;
- R. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet broadband access or connectivity; and
- S. Other COVID-19 related circumstances as determined between school and parent or emancipated youth.

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

2. If an absence is excused, the student shall be permitted to make up any graded assignments and/or equivalent participation points outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher(s); where reasonable, if a student misses a participation-type class, they can request an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.

An excused absence will be verified by a parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student, or school authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online or for students physically within the District, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent or other responsible adult. b. Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, in the event that a child in elementary school is required to attend school under RCW 28A.225.010 or 28A.225.015(1) and 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 School District shall schedule a conference or conferences with the parent and child at a time reasonably convenient for all persons included for the purpose of identifying the barriers to the child's regular attendance, and the supports and resources that may be made available to the family so that the child is able to regularly attend school. To satisfy the requirements of this section, the conference must include at least one school district employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except in those instances regarding the attendance of a child who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a plan developed

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under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required.

This conference is not required if the school has received prior notice or a doctor's note has been provided and an academic plan put in place so that the child does not fall behind.

Unexcused Absences

1. 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 above for an excused absence (A-S).
2. As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, students whose absences are not excused will experience the consequences of their absences. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent. A student's academic grade or credit in a particular subject or course may be adversely affected by reason of tardiness or unexcused absences only to the extent and upon the basis that:
  - a. The student's attendance and participation is related to the instructional objectives or goals of the particular subject or course, and
  - b. The student's attendance and/or participation has been identified by the teacher pursuant to the policy of the school district as a basis for grading, in whole or in part, in the particular subject or course.
3. The school shall notify a student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has incurred one unexcused absence (equivalent of one school day) within any month during the current school year. The notification shall include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language the parent understands. A conference with the parent or guardian shall be held after three unexcused absences (equivalent of three school days) within any month during the current school year.
4. The school will hold a conference with the parent or guardian after three (3) unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The conference will analyze the causes of the student's absences and develop a plan that identifies student, school, and family commitments to reduce the student's absences from school. If the parent does not attend the conference, the school official may still hold the conference with the student. However, the school will notify the parent of the steps the District has decided to take to

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eliminate or reduce the student's absences. For any child with an existing individualized education plan or 504 plan, these steps must include the convening of the child's individualized education plan or 504 plan team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the absences. If necessary, and if consent from the parent is given, a functional behavior assessment to explore the function of the absence behavior shall be conducted and a detailed behavior plan completed. Time should be allowed for the behavior plan to be initiated and data tracked to determine progress.

5. Not later than the student's fifth (5) unexcused absence (equivalent of five school days) in a month the District shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents 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](#).
6. If such action is not successful, the District shall 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 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.
7. Students who are court ordered to return to school may be placed in an alternative learning setting until the next appropriate reentry point to the regular school setting.
8. All suspensions and/or expulsions shall be promptly reported in writing to the superintendent or designee. Policies and procedures shall be made available to parents and students upon request.
9. The superintendent and or designee will enforce the District's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents are necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents and students annually.

Potential Loss of Credit

Students who attend class are more likely to earn passing grades and credits toward graduation than students who are excessively absent. Therefore, absence limits have been established to promote student engagement in school. Excessive absences may lead to loss of credit as described in this section.

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Parents will be notified of their student's absences on the fifth, eighth, and twelfth absence.

After the 12<sup>th</sup> non-school-related absence in a semester, the high school student will be notified of the 12<sup>th</sup> absence to determine whether an attendance contract is appropriate.

In addition to the contract, and after the 12<sup>th</sup> non-school-related absence per semester in a given class, the classroom teacher, at his or her discretion, may forward to the building administration a notice of referral for denial of class credit. The classroom teacher, at his or her discretion, may thereafter rescind said notice, or having rescinded said notice, reinstate it any time for attendance and classroom work related behavior together with a brief explanation thereof, until a week before the meeting of the building Attendance Committee.

The building Attendance Committee shall be formed by the building principal or designee and shall review all timely referrals for denial of credit within a week after the completion of each semester and recording of grades and attendance. An affected student and parent shall be given timely notice and may appear at such review. The Attendance Committee shall consider relevant facts that include:

- Total number of absences in this and other semester classes,
- Pattern of absences in prior semesters,
- Whether the non-school related absences related to verified illness, emergencies within the family, and/or absences that have a significant family or educational related value, (a mitigated factor),
- Whether the student has earned an A-through a C- in the course, (a mitigating factor),
- Whether the student has earned a D+ or D in the course, (a negative factor), or
- Whether the student has voluntarily been involved in other mitigating factors developed by the high school.

In the event of credit denial, the student and/or parents have the right to appeal to the building principal. In the event that the issue is still not resolved, the student and/or parents may appeal to the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education. In the event that this issue is still not resolved, the students and/or parent may appeal to the School Board following the procedure in [Policy 3323-R2](#).

Each high school shall report the number of notice of referral for denial of class credit by teacher, the number of credits denied, and the summary of rationale.

### **Tardies and Disciplinary Actions**

1. Students shall not be absent if:

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- a. They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled pursuant to chapter 392-400 WAC;
  - b. Are receiving educational services as required by RCW 28A.600.015 and chapter 392-400 WAC; and
  - c. The student is enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107.
2. A full day absence is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.
  3. A school shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

A student shall be considered absent if they are on school grounds but not in their assigned setting.

### **Tiered Response System for Student Absences**

WAC 392-401A-045 states:

School districts must implement a tiered response system to reduce chronic absenteeism and address barriers to student engagement in learning during the COVID epidemic. Tiered response systems under this section must include:

- (a) Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent from remote learning, whether excused or unexcused;
- (b) A process to contact families and verify current contact information for each enrolled student that includes multiple attempts and modalities in the parent's home language;
- (c) Daily notification of absences to parents;
- (d) A process for outreach from the school to determine student needs, such as basic needs, connectivity and hardware, connection with health and social services as necessary;
- (e) Differentiated supports that address the barriers to attendance and participation that includes universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence; and
- (f) When feasible and appropriate, transitioning the students to full-time in-person learning or

other program to accommodate the student's needs.

### **Students Dependent Pursuant to Chapter 13.34, RCW**

A School District representative or certificated staff member will review unexpected or excessive absences of a student who has been found dependent under the Juvenile Court Act with that student and adults involved with that student. Adults includes the student's caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent or guardians, foster parents and/or the person providing placement for the student. The review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, 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 representative or staff member must proactively support the student's management of their school work.

### **Migrant Students**

The District, parent/guardian and student are encouraged to work to create an Extended Absence Agreement with the school to decrease the risk of an adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

Legal Reference:	<a href="#">RCW 28A.225</a>	Compulsory School Attendance
	<a href="#">RCW 28A.600.015</a>	Expulsions and Suspensions
	<a href="#">WAC 392-121-107</a>	Course of Study
	<a href="#">WAC 392-400</a>	Student Discipline
	<a href="#">WAC 392-401-015A</a>	Definition of an absence:
	<a href="#">RCW 13.34.300</a>	<a href="#">Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition</a>
	<a href="#">WAC 392-401A</a>	<a href="#">Statewide definition of absence for the 2020-21 school year</a>

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