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## **EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: 3122P**

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Students are expected to attend all classes each day. Teachers shall keep an accurate record of absences and tardiness. Schools shall compile and maintain such records.

### **1. Excused Absences**

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness:

- A. Participation in District or school-approved activity or instructional program. To be excused, a staff member must authorize this absence 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, 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). When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence or before and send a signed note of explanation with the student upon his/her return to school. To be excused, an absence of this type must be verified as explained in Section (4) below;
- 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. 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;
- E. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity 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 or foster care/dependency status;
- I. Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action. (e.g., short-term 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 be required to make-up assignments or tests missed during the time they

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were denied entry to the classroom if such work has a substantial effect upon the student's semester grade, or if failure to complete the work would preclude the student from receiving credit for the course;

- J. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
- K. Absences due to a student's migrant status;
- L. Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity. An absence for parent-approved activities may not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress. For activities approved by parent/guardian of greater than two (2) days (pre-arranged absences), the adverse effect on the educational progress may be minimized by requesting approval for the absence in writing at least three (3) days prior to the absence, requesting make-up work from the student's teachers at least three (3) days in advance, and following established timelines to return the completed work; and
- M. 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.

The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence. For all requests for an excused absence, the parent/guardian is asked to make the request or notify the school regarding the absence in advance.

### 2. Unexcused Absences

All absences, which are not authorized by the principal (or designee), or that do not meet the criteria in this policy or procedure (3122, 3122P), or in State law, are counted as unexcused.

### 3. Tardiness and Early Departures

Students are expected to be in class on time. Students arriving late for school or class for any reason not described as an excused absence above will be counted as unexcused tardy. Elementary students who are picked up early usually miss core academic instruction in literacy/reading/math science and/or social studies. Missing this instruction may have a serious adverse effect on students' academic progress, whether the tardies/early departures are excused

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or unexcused.

Elementary students arriving up to 30 minutes late, or leaving up to 30 minutes early, from school will be marked as Tardy. More than 30 minutes tardy, (either arriving late or leaving early) will be calculated as a half-day absence.

Secondary students arriving later than one-third of the class shall be counted as absent for the class and not tardy. This will be designated as “Tardy Absent.”

### 4. Prearranged Absences

Parents/guardians planning to take their student(s) out of school for a period of more than two (2) days must turn-in a Prearranged Absence form to their child’s school at least three (3) school days prior to the absence. The school principal or designee receiving prearranged absence requests will look at the student’s attendance record, current grades and the reason for the absence before determining if the absence will be excused (see above).

Prearranged absences that are not excused will be coded “Vacation” for the first two (2) days of absence, and “unexcused” afterward, noting that it is an unexcused prearranged absence. Approved prearranged absences will be coded “Prearranged” so as not to require additional documentation or intervention for the absence.

### 5. Verification

A. Excused absences and tardies must be verified by a parent, guardian, emancipated student or adult student in a manner prescribed by the principal within two (2) school business days of the absence. After five (5) consecutive days of absence due to a health condition, or an accumulation of ten (10) absences during a single semester due to illness or a health condition, a note of explanation signed by a doctor may be required, unless the absence was prearranged. If a doctor’s note is not possible, the school may require the responsible adult to consult with the school nurse in order to address the health concern.

Absences directly related to a disability identified in an IEP or 504 plan will be excused and coded “Medical” so as not to require additional documentation or intervention.

Absences directly related to the loss of stable housing or state dependency (foster care) will be excused and coded “Family Emergency” so as not to require additional documentation or intervention for the absence.

B. Even when verification is received, school officials have the discretion to investigate the circumstances surrounding an absence to determine the validity of the excuse and the effect

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of such absence upon the student’s education progress before or after excusing such absence.

### **Procedures for Promoting Regular School Attendance**

#### **1. Communication**

- A. The District will provide a copy of the District’s attendance procedures to all students through the “Scholar Rights and Responsibilities” handbook or through the online registration process. Such handbook will be provided to all students at the beginning of the school year and to new students entering later in the school year upon enrollment.
- B. For each class, the teacher will explain the relationship between attendance and other instruction objectives of the particular class.

#### **2. Tardiness**

All schools will promote on-time attendance as part of their efforts to create a safe and positive school climate. Each school administrator will determine what constitutes excessive tardies and identify students who meet those criteria. The school will send a letter to the parents/guardians of those students explaining the importance of on-time attendance and asking to partner and collaborate on a plan to improve.

Secondary students may be responsible for making up time missed in a manner determined by the school. Examples of such discipline may include, but not be limited to, after-school or recess detention, school or community service hours, or exclusion from an activity conducted by the school other than actual class time. The length of the discipline assigned shall, whenever reasonably possible, bear an equivalent relationship to the time missed during the tardies.

Schools will not use exclusionary discipline for tardies, such as in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions or expulsions. Schools will not categorize tardies as defiance or failure to comply, in order to impose greater discipline. Tardies will not be included and calculated into a truancy/Becca petition.

#### **3. Unexcused Absences**

An absence of any duration (greater than a tardy) shall be addressed with the consequences set forth in section (a) below. For the purposes of the notice, conference, and truancy petition described below, the failure to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day shall be counted as one unexcused absence.

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### A. Consequences

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.

Students may be responsible for making up time missed in a manner determined by the school. Examples of such discipline may include, but not be limited to, after-school or recess detention, school or community service hours, or exclusion from an activity conducted by the school other than actual class time. The length of the discipline assigned shall, whenever reasonably possible, bear an equivalent relationship to the time missed during the unexcused absence. In no instance shall the discipline be an out of school suspension.

### B. Notice

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

### C. Conference/Agreement

A conference with the parent or guardian will be held after three (3) unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The school shall schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and student at a time reasonably convenient to all persons involved for the purposes of analyzing the causes of the student's absences and identifying interventions which may be helpful in reducing such absences. Such interventions may include, where appropriate in the judgment of the school officials:

- 1) adjusting the student's educational program;
- 2) providing more individualized or remedial instruction;
- 3) transferring the student to another school;
- 4) assisting the student in obtaining supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes for absences; or
- 5) making a student a focus of concern for placement in special education or other special program designed for educational success.

In all cases, the participants in the conference shall enter into a written agreement that establishes school attendance requirements and outlines the interventions identified as appropriate.

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If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and the school official. However, the parent/guardian shall be notified of the steps taken or proposed to reduce the child’s absences.

Not later than the student’s fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence in a month the District will enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements, and outlines steps to avoid having a petition filed with the juvenile court alleging violation of state school attendance laws (RCW 28A.225.010).

### D. Truancy Petition

If the interventions identified above are not successful in substantially reducing the student’s absences, not later than the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence in a month, or tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence in the school year, the school shall contact the District official responsible for the truancy to initiate the filing of a petition with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the student, the parent/guardian or both the student and the parent/guardian.

### E. Community Truancy Board

A “Community Truancy Board” as described in RCW 28A.225.025 is a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding between a juvenile court and a school district and composed of members of the local community in which the child attends school. The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court (and update as necessary) a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including the Community Truancy Board (CTB).

Duties of a Community Truancy Board shall include, but not be limited to: identifying barriers to school attendance, recommending methods for improving attendance such as connecting students and their families with community services, culturally appropriate promising practices, and evidence-based services such as functional family therapy, multisystemic therapy, and aggression replacement training, suggesting to the school district that the child enroll in another school, an alternative education program, an education center, a skill center, a dropout prevention program, or another public or private educational program, or recommending to the juvenile court that a juvenile be referred to a HOPE center or crisis residential center.

Students and families invited to participate in a Community Truancy Board hearing will have the option to opt-out and proceed directly with juvenile court processes, if they so choose.

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### 4. Excused Absences

#### A. Consequences

Work assignments and the activities portion of the grade missed during an excused absence may be made up in the manner provided by the teacher.

#### B. Conference

After five (5) or more excused absences within any month, or ten (10) or more excused absences within the school year, the school will schedule a conference with the parent and student at a time reasonably convenient to all persons involved. The conference is intended to analyze the causes of the student's absences and identify interventions which may be helpful in reducing such absences.

#### C. Required Conference for Elementary School Students

If an elementary student has five (5) or more excused absences within any month, or ten (10) or more excused absences within the school year, the school will schedule a conference with the parent and student at a time reasonably convenient to all persons involved for the purposes of analyzing the causes of the student's absences and identifying interventions which may be helpful in reducing such absences. An interpreter shall be provided for parents/guardians for whom English is not their primary language, if possible. The conference must include at least one District employee, preferably a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher or contracted community human service provider, and may occur on the same day as the scheduled parent-teacher conference, provided it take place within 30 days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, the team that created that plan must reconvene. A conference is not required if prior notice of the excused absences was provided to the district or if a doctor's note has been provided and a plan is in place to ensure the student will not fall behind in their coursework.