

## Excused and Unexcused Absences

The Bellevue School District believes that regular school attendance and engagement is essential to student success. 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.

Each school will inform students and parents about:

- benefits of regular school attendance; and
- potential effects of excessive absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused, on academic achievement and graduation and dropout rates,
- school's expectations of the parents and guardians to ensure regular school attendance,
- resources available to assist the student and parents and guardians;
- role and responsibilities of the school; and
- consequences of truancy, including compulsory education requirements.

A parent must date and acknowledge review of the information before or at the time of enrollment of the student at a new school and at the beginning of each school year.

### Excused Absences

The following are examples of 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.

#### Absence due to:

1. Physical health or mental health symptoms, illness, health condition or medical appointment for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. Examples of symptoms, illness, health conditions, or medical appointments include, but are not limited to, medical, counseling, mental health wellness, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and behavioral health treatment (which can include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);
2. Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
3. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
4. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
5. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
6. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
7. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
8. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
9. 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;

10. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
11. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
12. 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;
13. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet access or connectivity.

In the event of emergency school facility closure due to COVID-19, other communicable disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other event when districts are required to provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction, absences due to the following reasons are excused:

1. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19 or other communicable disease;
2. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19, other communicable disease, or other emergency health condition related to school facility closures;
3. Absences related to the student's family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary because of school facility closures, until other arrangements can be made; and
4. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made.

- A. **Parental notification.** 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. The explanation does not need to specify the nature of the testing or treatment. 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. **All excuses must be received within two school business days of the return of the student to school.**

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 day to makeup work for each day of absence.

- B. **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.
- 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 for a maximum of five days per year. 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 because of absence from class. All such absences shall be prearranged. Failure to prearrange the absence may result in the absences being unexcused. 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.** As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure 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.

### **Required conference for elementary school students**

If an elementary school student has **five or more excused absences in a single month** during the current school year or ten or more excused absences in the current school year, the district will schedule a conference with the student and their parent(s) 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.

The conference must include at least one school district employee, preferably a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher or community human service provider, and may occur on the same day as the scheduled parent-teacher conference, provided it takes place within thirty days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 Plan, the team that created that program 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.

### **Tiered response system for student who are absent from remote learning**

Students who are marked absent from remote learning will receive interventions and services consistent with the tiered response system for student absences implemented by the district pursuant to WAC 392-401A-045. Under the tiered response system, the district will:

- Monitor daily attendance data for all students who are absent from remote learning, whether excused or unexcused;
- Make multiple attempts to contact the families regarding student absences using multiple modalities and in the parent's home language;
- Provide daily notification of absences to parents;
- Provide outreach from the student's school to determine student needs, such as basic needs, connectivity and hardware, connection with health and social services as necessary;
- Provide differentiated supports to students that address the barriers to attendance and participation, including universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence; and
- When feasible and appropriate, transition students to full-time in-person learning or other program to accommodate the student's needs.

### **Unexcused Absences**

An "unexcused absence" means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day, has failed to comply with a more restrictive school district policy on absences, or has failed to comply with alternative learning experience program attendance requirements.

Unexcused absence occur when:

1. The parent, guardian, or adult student submits an excuse which does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above; or
2. The parent, guardian or adult student fails to submit, any type of excuse statement whether by phone, e-mail or in writing, for an absence; or
3. The parent, guardian, or adult student fails to submit the excuse in a timely manner as described above.

Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year will be followed by notification to the parent or guardian of the student. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which that parent in fluent A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.

After three unexcused absences within any month of the current school year, the school will hold a conference with principal (or designee), student and parent to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty days of the third unexcused absence the school may schedule the attendance conference the same day. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the school may hold the conference with the student and principal, or designee. However, the school will notify the parent of the steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. At such a conference the principal or designee, student and parent may consider:

- a. Adjusting the student's schedule
- b. Adjusting the student's program;
- c. Providing more individualized instruction;

- d. Providing appropriate vocational course or work experience;
- e. Transferring the student to another school, or program;
- f. Assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence;
- g. Referring the student to the District Attendance Team; or,
- h. Other interventions deemed to improve the students' attendance.

After the second unexcused absence and before the seventh unexcused absence the school will take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the child's absences. In middle and high school, these steps must include offering the application of the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment by a school district's designee under RCW 28A.225.026

Any student with an existing Section 504 plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP), these steps must include convening of the student's IEP or Section 504 team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the student's absences.. If necessary and if consent from the parent is given, a functional behavior assessment (FBA) will be conducted to explore the function of the absence behavior and if appropriate, a behavior plan completed.

Any student, without an IEP or Section 504 Plan, but who is reasonably believed to have a mental or physical disability or impairment, will be brought to guidance team to consider an evaluation. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the school may hold the conference with the student and principal. However, the school will notify the parent of the steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

No later than the student's seventh 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 engagement board; or
3. file a petition with the juvenile court (see below).

### **Community Engagement Board**

A "community engagement board" means a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the school district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school. The district will enter into an MOU with the juvenile court in King County to establish a community engagement board prior to the 2017-2018 school year.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court (and update as necessary) and to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, coordinating the MOU, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating trainings, sharing

evidence-based and culturally appropriate “promising practices”. The district will also identify a person within each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy and assisting in the recruitment of community engagement board members.

If the above action fails to correct the attendance problem, the following truancy petition procedure will apply only to students under the age of eighteen:

After the student’s **seventh unexcused absence within any month and not later than the fifteenth unexcused absence during the current school year**, and if the district’s attempts to substantially reduce a student’s absences have not been successful, the district will file a petition and supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court.

### **Petition to juvenile court**

While petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any one month, or fifteen 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 district will be counted when preparing the petition.

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 school 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 school district to reduce the student’s absences from school;
4. A statement that RCW 28A.225.010 has been violated by the parent, student or parent and student;
5. 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;
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 intervention or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the district, and a copy of the most recent truancy information document provided to the parent.
7. Facts that support the above allegations.

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 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.

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 corrective action in accordance with Policy 3241 and Procedure 3241P.

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.

### **Transfers**

If a student transfers to the Bellevue School District from another school district during the school year, the Bellevue School District will request attendance records (including unexcused absences) and a copy of the WARNS or other assessment used to determine steps taken to reduce or eliminate unexcused absences and a history of any best practices or research based intervention attempted by the student's prior school.

If a student transfers from the BSD to another school district during the school year, the BSD will provide the abovementioned information with a request of records.

### **Tardies**

Students are expected to be in class on time. This means that students are expected to be in their classrooms, in their seats, and ready for class at the beginning of the class. Students who show up late disrupt the teacher and the learning of others, and do not get the full value of the education being offered. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student may be referred to the principal or counselor and may be subject to corrective action.

### **Early Release**

Students are expected to remain in class until the end of the class. This means that students are expected to be in their classrooms and engaged in the learning until the students have been dismissed by the teacher. Students who leave early disrupt the teacher and the learning of others, and do not get the full value of the education being offered. When a secondary student leaves class or school early without permission or it becomes frequent or disruptive, the student may be referred to the principal or counselor and may be subject to corrective action.

### **Sanctions**

All corrective actions and/or interventions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance

policies and procedures will be implemented in accordance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment. (See Bellevue School District policy 3241, and procedure 3241P, *Classroom Management, Corrective Actions and/or Interventions*, and Procedure 3241.1P *Exceptional Misconduct*.)

### **Excessive Absences**

If a student has excessive absences, a note from a medical/mental health professional may be required. If a student reaches 20 absences in a year (excused and unexcused) a petition may be filed at the principal's discretion if interventions to improve the student's attendance have been attempted.

### **Absences and Student Athletes**

Student athletes are expected to attend on days of practices and competitions. Coaches are provided with a daily printout of attendance to ensure their athletes are eligible to practice or compete based on the following:

- Students must attend a minimum of (5) classes for a 7-period schedule (Monday, Tuesday and Friday)
- Students must attend a minimum of (4) classes for a 6-period schedule
- Students must attend a minimum of (2) classes for a 3-period schedule (Wednesday)
- Students must attend a minimum of (3) classes for a 4-period schedule (Thursday) In rare, extreme and extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student, eligibility to practice or compete may be granted in advance, on a case-by-case basis.

**Date: 8.14, 9.15, 8.17, 8.18, 8.22**