

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. 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 be provided such information in a language they can understand. 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 appropriately absent from class. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statement 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:

A. The following are valid excuses for absences:

1. Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
2. 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);
3. Family emergency, including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
4. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
5. Court, judicial proceeding court-ordered activity or jury service;
6. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
7. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
8. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
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;

12. Absences due to 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.
14. Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity.

The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence. Up to five (5) absences may be excused for any of the above valid excuses for absences. After five (5) excused absences for the academic year, documentation may be required for excused absences.

- A. If an absence is excused, the student will be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher; except that in participation-type classes, a student's grade may be affected because of the student's inability to make up the activities conducted during a class period.
- B. 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. If a student is to be released for health care related to family planning or abortion, the student may require that the district keep the information confidential. Students thirteen and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

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 must be 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.

Unexcused Absences

- A. 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.
- B. As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student whose absence is not excused will experience the consequences of his/her absence. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent.
- C. The school will notify a student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. If parent or guardian is not fluent in English, the school must make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent is fluent.
- D. A conference with the parent or guardian will be held after three unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. . A conference will be scheduled to determine what corrective measures should be taken to ameliorate the cause for the student's absences from school. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day is to take place within thirty days of the third unexcused absence, then the school district may schedule this conference on that day. If the child's parent does not attend the scheduled conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and school official. However the parent shall be notified of the steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the child's absence
- E. At some point after the second and before the fifth unexcused absence, take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the child's absences. In middle school and high school, these steps must include 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.
- F. Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community engagement board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.
- G. If such action is not successful, 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 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 superintendent 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.

Cross References:	Model Policy 3230	Student Privacy
	Model Policy 3241	Classroom Management, Corrective Actions or Punishment
Legal References:	RCW 13.34.300	Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
	RCW 28A.225	Compulsory school attendance and admission
	WAC 392-400-235	Discipline — Conditions and limitations
	WAC 392-400-260	Long-term suspension — Conditions and limitations
	WAC 392-401-020	Excused Absences
Management Resources:		
	<i>Policy News</i> , December 2011	Revision of Excused/Unexcused Definitions
	<i>Policy News</i> , June 2001	More Tweaking of Becca Petitions
	<i>Policy News</i> , July 2016	
	OSPI Memorandum No. 052-11M Unexcused Absence Definition	

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