

STUDENT ABSENCES

Merced City School District recognizes that students may be absent from school from time to time for the following reasons that are considered excused absence. We also recognize that any absence from school for any reason results in missed instruction and educational opportunities. As required by the California Department of Education, reporting on school and district progress is the reporting of chronic absenteeism, which is defined as a student being absent from school for 10% or more for any absence, excused or unexcused. Merced City School District works to educate parents on the extreme importance of regular and on time school attendance.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

A student's absence shall be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness (Ed. Code 48205)
2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer (Ed. Code 478205) (cf. 5112.2 – Exclusions from Attendance)
3. Medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointment (Ed. Code 48205)
4. Attendance at funeral services for a member of the immediate family, which shall be limited to one day if the service is conducted in California or three days if the service is conducted out of state. (Ed. Code 48205)
5. Jury duty in the manner provided by law (Ed. Code 48205)
6. The illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child to whom the student is the custodial parent (Ed. Code 48205) (cf. 5146 – Married/Pregnant/Parenting Students)
7. Upon advance written request by the parent/guardian and the approval of the principal or designee, justifiable personal reasons including, but not limited to: (Ed. Code 48205)
 - a. Appearance in court
 - b. Attendance at a funeral service
 - c. Observation of a holiday or ceremony of his/her religion
 - d. Attendance at religious retreats not to exceed four hours per semester
 - e. Attendance at an employment conference
 - f. Attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization
8. Service as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Elections Code 12302 (Ed. Code 48205) (cf. 6142.3 – Civic Education)
9. Participation in religious exercises or to receive moral and religious instruction in accordance with district policy (Ed. Code 46014).
 - In such instances, the student shall attend at least the minimum school day.
 - The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four days per school month. (cf. 6141.2 – Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs)
10. For the purpose of spending time with a member of the pupil's immediate family, who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Section 49701, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position. Absences granted pursuant to this paragraph shall be granted for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the superintendent of the school district.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

11. For the purpose of participating in a cultural ceremony or event.

A pupil absent from school under this section shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the absence that can be reasonably provided and, upon satisfactory completion within a reasonable period of time, shall be given full credit therefor. The teacher of the class from which a pupil is absent shall determine which tests and assignments shall be reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the pupil missed during the absence.

Method of Verification

When a student who has been absent returns to school, he/she shall present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the absence. Absences shall be verified by the student's parent/guardian, other person having control of the minor, or the student if age 18 or older.

(Ed. Code 46012.5 CCR 306)

All absences must be verified within 72 hours of the last date of absence or it will become an unexcused absence or truancy.

The following methods may be used to verify student absences:

- Written note, fax, Parent Square message, or email from parent/guardian or parent representative.
- Conversation, in person or by telephone, between the verifying employee and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative. The employee shall subsequently record the following:
 - a. Name of student

- b. Name of parent/guardian or parent representative
- c. Name of verifying employee
- d. Date(s) of absence
- e. Reason for absence

Visit to the student's home by the verifying employee, or any other reasonable method which establishes the fact that the student was absent for the reasons stated. The employee shall document the verification and include the information specified in item #2 above.

3. Physician's verification.

a. When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointment, district staff shall not ask about the purpose of such appointment but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.

Extensive absences beyond three consecutive days require verification from a physician or medical provider.

Since class participation is an integral part of students' learning experiences, parents/guardians and students shall be encouraged to schedule medical and other appointments during non-school hours. (BP 5113)

A student who is absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year or absent for more than 30 minutes during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof, will be classified as a truant. (EC 48260)

Parents/guardians will be notified of the student's truancy by an attendance letter.



ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

Notification of Truancy

In the Merced City School District, notifications are made to families through a letter that references the Education Code and uses language and terms provided by the State of California. Terms used may seem severe. The letter is not intended to alarm parents or families but to ensure they are fully informed of the requirements and possible consequences for truancy.

Parents/guardians will be notified that their child is truant by letter, email, or telephone call (EC 48260.5)

The letter will include the following information:

1. The student is truant
2. That the parent/guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the student at school
3. That parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be guilty of an infraction and subject to prosecution pursuant Article 6 (commencing with Section 48290)
4. That alternative educational programs are available in the school district
5. That the parent/guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the student's truancy
6. That the student may be subject to prosecution under Section 48264
7. For a student under 18 years of age but 13 years of age or older, that the student may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the student's driving privilege pursuant to Section 1302.7 of the Vehicle Code.
8. That is recommended that a parent/guardian accompany the student to school and attend classes with the student for one day (Amended by Stats. 2018, Ch. 507)

School Attendance Review Team (SART)

When a student has accumulated a minimum of 7 unexcused absences or truantries or 10 absences (excused or unexcused), parents will be notified through mail that a School Attendance Review Team (SART) meeting has been scheduled. The purpose of the meeting is to address reasons for absences and to work together to remove barriers that are preventing the student from going to school. A contract will be signed at the conclusion of the conference that indicates failure to comply with the SART will result in a referral to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB).

SART Attendees may include:

- Parent
- Student
- Administrator
- MCSd student Services Personnel if applicable (nurse, social worker, counselor, School Resource Officer)

The SART meeting will be held at the student's school site. Two attempts will be made to meet with parents to discuss attendance concerns and possible solutions. A home visit by an administrator or school resource officer may be conducted if the school is unable to conduct the SART meeting with the family. If families cannot be contacted through two attempts and a home visit by an administrator or school resource officer, the student will be referred to the School Attendance Review Board.

School Attendance & Review Board (SARB) and Truancy Mediation

When a student in MCSd is habitually truant, has irregular attendance at school, or is chronically absent (absent for 10 percent or more of the school year), the student may be referred to the School Attendance Review Board. After a student has reached 12 absences or truantries or 14 absences (excused or unexcused), the school site will send a SARB referral to the Pupil Services office. The intent of SARB is to provide targeted guidance to meet the special needs of students with school attendance problems or school behavior problems pursuant to EC Section 48320.

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES (continued)

These interventions are designed to support students with attendance and behavioral problems within the education system and to reduce the number of students who dropout of school.

The School Attendance Review Board may identify available community services that can resolve the attendance concerns. The SARB Panel shall direct the student or the student's parents or guardians, or both, to make use of community services.

The School Attendance Review Board may require, at any time, that it determines proper, the student or parents or guardians of the student, or both, to furnish satisfactory evidence of participation in the available community services. (EC 48263 b1)

SARB Hearings are held at Student Services located at 601 Mercy Ave.
SARB attendees may include:

- Parent/guardian
- Student
- MCSD Student Services Director or designee
- Merced County Probation Department
- Merced County Child Protective Services
- Merced Police Department
- Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS)
- MCSD Nurse
- MCSD Counselor
- MCSD Site Administrators
- Merced County District Attorney Representative (EC 48321)

