

EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the District shall inform students and their parents/guardians that students are expected to attend classes each day, the benefits of regular 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 superintendent or designee will enforce the district's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents/guardians is necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents and students annually.

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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.

Daily Attendance Taking

The district will take daily attendance for all enrolled students whether the instruction is in-person, synchronous, or asynchronous. When instruction is synchronous online or asynchronous, secondary schools will take attendance daily in each course with planned instruction and elementary schools will take attendance at least twice a day.

Absence Defined

A student is absent from in-person learning when they are not physically present on school grounds and not participating in instruction, instruction-related activity, or other district or school approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports, at an approved location.

A full day absence is when a student is absent for fifty (50) percent or more of their scheduled day.

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

A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not engage in two-way academic communication with teaching staff and participate in class activities as outline in WAC 392-550-025. A student is absent from asynchronous instruction when there is no evidence that the student accessed the planned asynchronous activity. Evidence of student participation in asynchronous activities must occur weekly, as defined in WAC 392-550-025.

Minimum Time for Being Considered Present

The district has authority to establish minimum thresholds similar to in-person attendance for the

time in which a student must be logged in to be considered present. The superintendent or designee will develop a consistent and equitable approach that is documented in the student handbook and communicated clearly to all students and families. Determining a threshold for when a student is present or absent will not be left to individual teachers.

Absence from Asynchronous Instruction

Similar to local determinations on what constitutes presence for synchronous online instruction, the superintendent or designee will develop a consistent and equitable approach that establishes what constitutes “evidence of participation.” This approach will be documented in the student handbook and communicated clearly to all students and families. Determining what constitutes “evidence of participation” will not be left to individual teachers.

Tardies

The district has the flexibility to determine what constitutes a tardy in synchronous online settings. The district differentiates a tardy from an absence and will exclude tardies from any reports that tally absences for the purpose of filing a truancy petition. A school shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is a student and parent/guardian responsibility and necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. It is recognized that classroom interaction between teacher and student enriches and clarifies knowledge of subject matter beyond the mere accumulation of factual data. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate remotely. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by parents/guardians or in certain cases, students, to document a student’s excused absences.

Unexcused Absence

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 listed in the corresponding procedures. A student’s grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of unexcused absence.

Disciplinary Actions

Students will not be counted absent for purposes of attendance or truancy when the student:

- a. Have been suspended, expelled, or emergency removed 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. Is enrolled in qualifying “course of study” activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107. Course study activities do not include sending homework packets home.

Tiered Response System for Student Absences

The district must maintain a multitiered system of support for attendance to address barriers to

student attendance, provide timely interventions and best practices to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy. Multitiered systems of support include:

- Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused;
- 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;
- 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, including school and district attendance or engagement teams, connecting to community resources, and community engagement boards; and
- A process for outreach and reengagement for students who have been withdraw due to nonattendance and there is no evidence that the student is enrolled elsewhere. This outreach and reengagement process must include:
 - A school and/or district point person/people to maintain the list, keep it updated, and coordinate the outreach;
 - School or district staff assigned to conduct the outreach and attempts at reengagement in coordination with community partners or other programs;
 - Multiple methods of communication and outreach in a language or mode of communication that the parent understands including phone calls, texts, letters, and home visits;
 - Referral to community-based organizations;
 - Documentation of the attempts to reach students and family; and
 - Follow the required steps to address unexcused absences in chapter 28A.225 RCW, including early communication to parents, holding parent conferences and administering a truancy screener to understand the underlying reasons for the absences, and providing evidence-based or best practice interventions, even if the student has been withdrawn due to non-attendance.

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 include the student's case worker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent/guardian, 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 students' unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. The representative or staff member must proactively support the students' management of their schoolwork.

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.

RSD #400

Legal References: Chapter 392-401 WAC Statewide definition of absence for the 2020-21 school year
RCW 13.34.300 Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school as evidence under neglect position
Chapter 28A.225 Compulsory School Attendance and Admission
WAC 392-550-025 Alternative learning experience requirements

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