Title: **Excused and Unexcused Absences**

Code: 3122

Section: WSSDA Model Policies

Section: 3000 - Students

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 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 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.

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.

Parents will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

The District Must Take Attendance Daily
The District will take daily attendance for all enrolled students whether the instructional modality 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.

What Constitutes an Absence?

Absence Defined

Absence from in-person learning

A student is absent from in-person instruction when they are neither physically present on school grounds, nor participating in instruction, any instruction-related activity or any other district or school approved activity

that is regulated by an instructional or 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 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.

Absence from Synchronous Online Instruction
A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not log in to the synchronous meeting or class.

Absence from Asynchronous Online Instruction
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 daily, within a twenty-four-hour time frame of when the participation is planned or expected.

Students Must Be in Attendance for a 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 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 should not be left to individual teachers.

Similar to local determinations on what constitutes presence for synchronous online instruction, the Superintendent will develop a consistent and equitable approach to asynchronous online instruction 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" should not be left to individual teachers.

Participation, such as turning video on and participating in discussion or chat, are not to be considered when determining if a student is present or not. These are examples of participation and should be considered distinct from attendance.

The District has the flexibility to determine what constitutes a tardy in synchronous online settings. The District differentiates a tardy from an absence (where the student does not attend at all) and will exclude tardies from any reports that tally absences for the purposes of filing a truancy petition. A school shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

When Is an Absence Excused?

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. 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 a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences.

Absences due to the following reasons are excused:

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;
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; and
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 a global pandemic, 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 communicable disease;
2. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to 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.

When Is an Absence Unexcused?

Any absence from school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it is for any reason identified as an excused absence above or in administrative procedure for an excused 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 of 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 withdrawn 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 student 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 nonattendance.

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 includes the student's caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent or guardians, 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 student's unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. The representative or staff member must proactively support the student's management of their school work.

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.

Adopted: **03.89**
Classification: **Critical**
Revised Dates: **01.95; 10.95; 10.01; 08.05; 09.21; 08.22; 11.23; 11.26**

Legal References:
- Chapter 28A.225 Compulsory school attendance and admission
- RCW 13.34.300 Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
- Chapter 392-401 WAC Statewide definition of absence for the 2020-21 school year

Management Resources:
- 2023 - July Issue
- 2022 - June June
- 2021 - June Issue
- 2020 - September Alert

- 2018 - August 2018 - August Policy Issue
- 2017 - July Policy Issue
- 2016 - July Issue
- 2015 - June Issue
- 2012 - December Issue
- 2011 - December Issue
- 2011 - June Issue
- Policy News, June 2001 More Tweaking of Becca Petitions

Cross References:

- 3120 - Enrollment
- 3230 - Searches of Students and Student Privacy
- 3241 - Student Discipline
- 4218 - Language Access

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