

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers/school staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including documentation of students' excused absences.

Excused Absences

The following are 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.

- A. **Participation in school-approved activity.** 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.
- B. **Absence due to illness, health condition, family emergency or religious purposes.** When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence and send a signed note of explanation with the student upon his/her return to school. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) shall notify the school office of their absences with a signed note of explanation. Students fourteen years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease shall notify the school of their absence with a signed note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. 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. A parent 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/guardian, 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 shall be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.
- C. **Absence for parental-approved activities.** This category of absence shall be counted as excused for purposes agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian. 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 as a result of absence from class. In such a case, a parent parent/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 — or short-term suspension.** As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure or students who have been placed on short-term suspension shall 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 shall 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 shall 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.

- F. **Excused absence for chronic health condition.** Students with a chronic health condition which interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and his/her parent/guardian shall apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program shall be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program shall be approved by the principal. Staff shall be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information shall be respected at the parent's request.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences fall into two categories:

- A. Submitting a signed excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined previously; or
- B. Failing to submit any type of excuse statement signed by the parent/guardian or adult student.
 - 1. Each unexcused absence shall be followed by a warning letter to the parent/guardian of the student. Each notice shall be in writing in English or in the primary language of the parent. A student's grade shall not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.
 - 2. After two unexcused absences within any month, a conference will be held between the parent, student and principal. At such a conference the principal, student and parent *shall* will consider:
 - a. Adjusting the student's program;
 - b. Providing more individualized instruction; preparing the student for employment with specific vocational experience or both;
 - c. Transferring the student to another school;
 - d. Assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or,
 - e. Imposing other corrective actions that are deemed to be appropriate.

Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the district shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community truancy board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.

- 3. If the above action fails to correct the attendance problem, the student shall be declared a habitual absentee. The principal shall interview the student and his/her family and prescribe corrective action which may include suspension for the current semester and expulsion.

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 district *shall* 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. The petition consists of written notification to the court alleging that:

- a. The student has unexcused absences in the current school year (petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any month during the current school year or ten or more unexcused absences in the current school year, but a petition may be filed earlier; also unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district shall be counted for all purposes in this procedure);

- b. Actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
 - c. Court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student's absences from school. Additionally, the petition shall include the student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity and the names and addresses of the student's parents/guardians. The petition must include facts that support the allegations made in the petition, must generally request relief available under the statute and must describe what the court might order. Petitions may be served by certified mail with a 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.
4. A student who has been expelled for attendance violations may petition the superintendent for reinstatement. Such petition may be granted upon presentation of a firm and unequivocal commitment to maintain regular attendance.
 5. Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of his/her parent, in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence shall be subject to the same corrective action that would have occurred had the false excuse not been used.
 6. Students six or seven years of age, who have been enrolled in the district are required to attend school and their parents are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents who wish to withdraw their children before age of eight and against whom no truancy petition has been filed, may withdraw the students from school. When a six or seven year old student has unexcused absences, the district shall do the following:
 - a. Notify the parent or guardian in writing or by telephone after one unexcused absence in any month.
 - b. Request a conference with the parent or guardian and child to analyze the causes of the student's absences after two unexcused absences in any month (a regularly scheduled teacher-parent conference held within thirty days may substitute).
 - c. Take steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences, including adjusting the school program, school or course assignment; providing more individualized or remedial instruction; offering enrollment in alternative schools or programs; or assisting in obtaining supplementary services.
 - d. After seven unexcused absences in a month or ten in a school year, the district shall file a truancy petition.

Students are expected to be in class on time. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student shall be referred to the principal or counselor. If counseling, parent conferencing or disciplinary action is ineffective in changing the student's attendance behavior, he/she may be suspended from the class.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures shall be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment. (See WSSDA model Policy 3241, Classroom Management, Corrective Actions or Punishment.)

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