

STUDENTS

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Definition of Absence

WAC 392-015 states the definition of an absence:

1. A student is absent when they are:
 - a. Not physically present on school grounds; and
 - b. Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
 - i. Instruction;
 - ii. Any instruction-related activity; or
 - iii. Any other district or school approved activity that is regulated by and instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.
2. Students shall not be absent if:
 - a. They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled pursuant to Chapter 392-400 WAC;
 - b. Are receiving educational services as required by RCW 28A.600.015 and Chapter 392-400 WAC;
 - c. The student is enrolled in qualifying “course of study” activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107.
3. A full day absence is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.
4. A school or district shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.
5. A student shall be considered absent if they are on school grounds but not in their assigned setting.

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 will inform students and their parent/guardian of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of truancy; the potential effects of excessive absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused, on academic achievement, and graduation and dropout rates; the schools expectations of the parent/guardian to insure regular attendance by the child; the role and responsibility of the school, and the resources available to assist the student and their parent/guardian. The district will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents/guardians are able to request and receive such information in a language in which they are fluent. Parent/guardian will be required to date acknowledge review of this information online or in writing before or at the time of enrollment of the child at a new school and at the beginning of each school year.

Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. Students at times may appropriately be absent from class. School staff will keep a record of absences 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 will be excused:

1. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including, but not limited to, medical, counseling, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health) for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible;
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 suspension, 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 a student's safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
11. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
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.

A school principal or designee has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

1. 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, where reasonable, if a student misses a participation-type class, they can request an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.
2. An excused absence must 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, and absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent/guardian 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. Student fourteen and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.
3. In the event that a child in elementary school is required to attend school under RCW 28A.225.010 or 28A.225.015(1) and has five (5) or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year, or ten (10) or more excused absences in the current school year, the school district will schedule a conference or conferences with the parent/guardian and child at a time reasonable convenient for all persons included for the purpose of identifying the barriers to the child's attendance, and the supports and resources that may be made available to the family so that the child is able to regularly attend school. The conference must include at least one school district employee preferably a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except if the student has an individualized education program or a plan developed under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required.

The conference is not required if the school has received prior notice or a doctor's note has been provided and an academic plan put in place so that the child does not fall behind.

Unexcused Absences

1. An unexcused absence means a child has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day, and has failed to meet one of the criteria above for an excused absence; or has failed to comply with alternative learning experience program attendance requirement as described by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).
2. A student whose absence is not excused may experience the consequences of their 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.

3. The school will notify a student's parent/guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one (1) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. If the parent/guardian is not fluent in English, the school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent/guardian is fluent.
4. The school will hold a conference with the parent/guardian and child at a reasonable convenient time after three (3) unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The purpose of the conference will be to analyze the causes of the student's absences and develop a plan that identifies student, school and family commitments to reduce the student's absences from school. If the parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the school official may still hold the conference with the student. However, the school will notify the parent/guardian of the steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.
5. Between the student's second (2nd) and fifth (5th) unexcused absence, the school must take the following data-informed steps:
 - a. Middle and high school students will be administered the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment;
 - b. These steps must include, where appropriate, providing an available approved best practice or research-based intervention, or both, consistent with the WARNS profile or other assessment, if an assessment was applied, adjusting the child's school program or school or course assignment, providing more individualized or remedial instruction, providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience, referring the child to a community truancy board, requiring the child to attend an alternative school or program, or assisting the parent/guardian or child to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the cause or causes for the absence from school; and
 - c. For any child with an existing individualized education program or 504 plan, these steps must include the convening of the child's individualized education program or 504 plan team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the absences. If necessary, and if consent from the parent/guardian is given, a functional behavior assessment to explore the function of the absence behavior will be conducted and detailed behavior plan completed. Time should be allowed for the behavior plan to be initiated and data tracked to determine progress.
6. Not later than the student's fifth (5th) unexcused absence in a month the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parent/guardian 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.

7. If the above actions are not successful in substantially reducing a student's absences, the district will file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent/guardian, student(s) no later than the seventh (7th) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year or not later than the tenth (10th) unexcused absence during the school year.

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/guardian, foster parents and/or the person providing placement for the student. The purpose of the review is to determine the cause of the absences, taking into account 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 so the student does not fall behind.

Migrant Students

The district, parent/guardian and student are encouraged to work to create and Extended Absence Agreement with the school to decrease the risk of an adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

The Superintendent or his designee will enforce the district's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents/guardians are necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, they will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents/guardians and students annually.

Cross References:	Board Policy 2342	Religious Holidays and Observances
	Board Policy 2420	Grading and Progress Reports
	Board Policy 3120	Enrollment
	Board Policy 3230	Student Privacy and Searches
	Board Policy 3241	Student Discipline
	Board Policy 4218	Language Access Plan

Legal References:	RCW 13.34.300	Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
	Chapter 28A.225 RCW	Compulsory School Attendance and Admission
	Chapter 392-400-235 RCW	Statewide definition of excused and unexcused absences.

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