

Procedures and Standards Governing Student Attendance; Absences, Tardiness and Excuses

INTRODUCTION

On-time, daily attendance is essential for students to achieve academic success. Clearly outlined expectations and consistent procedures will assist our students in meeting academic requirements and achieving academic success.

State Compulsory Attendance Laws

The district adheres to State Law Procedures when unexcused absences occur. The State compulsory attendance laws (RCW 28A. 225) include provisions that:

1. Require students six or seven years of age, who have been enrolled in the district to attend school and their parents are responsible for ensuring that they attend;
2. Require parents/guardians of any student between the ages of eight and eighteen to ensure that their child(ren) attend the school to which the student has been assigned;
3. Require the district to distribute notice of the requirements of the compulsory attendance law annually to students and parents/guardians. The notice shall be in the parents/guardians primary language, unless that is clearly not feasible;
4. Require the school to notify the student's parent/guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has one to two unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. Such a notice shall be in the parents/guardians primary language, if feasible, and should inform the parent/guardian of the potential consequences of continued unexcused absences;
5. Require the school to schedule an attendance conference with the parent/guardian and the student after the student has accrued a minimum of five unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The goal of the conference is to identify the reason for the absences and sign an "Attendance Agreement" to correct truant behavior. If the parent does not attend the scheduled conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and school staff. However, the parent shall be notified of the steps taken to eliminate or reduce the child's absence;
6. Require the school to intervene to eliminate the student's absences. All such steps shall be documented in writing, and shall be available for review by the Snohomish County Juvenile Court in the event that a truancy petition is filed against the student;
7. Give the superintendent the authority to appoint community members to serve on community truancy boards established by the district. The state legislature has identified

community truancy boards as an effective intervention in discovering barriers to attendance and increasing school connection; and

8. Require the district to file a truancy petition in Snohomish County Juvenile Court if a student has had seven unexcused absences in one month or ten in the school year at the discretion of the administrators. The district will not file a petition until appropriate interventions have been exhausted and are documented and truancy continues. If district staff determine that the interventions are unsatisfactory or incomplete, the request for a petition may be denied, and the school may be asked to update or revise the required interventions in order to prevent the petition being dismissed in Truancy Court. The district shall use documentation provided by the school if it becomes necessary to file a truancy petition.

9. Exceptions shall be granted by the superintendent or designee for children who are sixteen (16) years of age or older if the child has:

- 1.a) Become regularly and lawfully employed; and
- b.) either the parent agrees that the child should not be required to attend school or the child has been emancipated;
2. Met graduation requirements; or
3. Received a certificate of educational competence as established under RCW 28A.305.190.

DEFINITIONS

Absence

Any time a student is not in class, at school or participating in a school-sponsored activity.

Excused Absence

The following are valid excuses for an absence:

1. Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
2. Illness, health condition, or medical appointment;
3. Family emergency, including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
4. Religious or cultural purpose, including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
5. Court, judicial proceeding, or serving on a jury;
6. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
7. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
8. Absence directly related to the student's homeless status;

9. Absence resulting from disciplinary/corrective action (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and
10. Principal and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon activity.

Approval of Absences

The school principal/designee has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence, request verification and use his/her discretion to excuse an absence due to individual circumstances. All absences shall require a written excuse or notification by telephone within two business days of an absence. After the two business days it is to the discretion of the building administrator to excuse the absence.

Make-up Work

Students have the right to make up work due to an excused absence. Students have as many days as they missed to make-up work if the absence is excused. Teachers are not required to give the opportunity to make-up work if the absence has not been excused.

* Please refer to vacation/travel section for makeup work guidelines specific to vacations and travel.

Extended Illness or Health Condition

Students with chronic health conditions must provide medical documentation with a medical diagnosis and the impact the illness has on the student's ability to attend school. If the student or the family does not provide medical documentation then the absences may be coded as unexcused until the appropriate documentation is provided. Once the documentation has been provided, a school team will determine if the student qualifies for modifications to their education.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence from a school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria for an excused absence and is not excused within two business days. (Please refer back to excused absence.)

Unexcused tardies beyond ten minutes in middle and high school are considered absences.

Missed Periods Converted to Unexcused Absences - Secondary

For middle school and high schools with a six (6) period class schedule, every six (6) periods missed (consecutive or nonconsecutive) will be counted as one (1) day of unexcused absence.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as a student subject to compulsory school attendance and who is absent without valid cause from such attendance for a school day or portion thereof.

Tardies

Elementary:

Elementary students who miss up to 10 minutes of instructional time may be marked tardy. It is at the building's discretion (administrator or designee) to determine whether a student is tardy or not. Excessive tardies may result in interventions at the building level.

Secondary:

A "tardy" at the secondary level will be defined as arriving up to ten minutes late to class. Tardies may be excused or unexcused according to school rules/policies and district definitions for excused and unexcused absences. If a student is tardy at the beginning of the school day more than ten minutes the student shall report to the attendance office, whereby appropriate staff will determine if the tardy will be deemed a tardy or unexcused absence. Unexcused tardies beyond ten minutes in middle and high school are considered unexcused absences.

Early Release

Students are expected to remain in class until the end of the class/day. The parent/guardian shall send a written statement requesting an early dismissal including the date of the dismissal, the reason, and a phone number where the parent can be reached.

Excessive Excused Absences

Due to new legislation to the state compulsory attendance laws (under section 3 of 28A.225) elementary schools shall contact families to discuss excused absences when a student reaches five days in a month or ten days in a school year.

Excessive absences are defined as ten days of excused absences within one school year. Up to ten absences shall be excused at parent/guardian's request. Absences exceeding ten days may lead to a conference with the school in which it will be determined if absences will no longer be excused without a note from a physician.

After ten days of excused absences, the school may request a doctor's note for every two consecutive absences or a letter from a doctor stating a medical diagnosis and the impact the medical condition has on the student's ability to attend school.

Family Vacations/Travel

Families should not schedule vacations while school is still in session. If a family vacation must occur while school is in session, it must be prearranged and approved. The pre-arranged absence form must be completed and turned in five school days prior to the absence. School staff shall review the request to determine whether the absence will adversely affect learning. If a family goes on vacation without an approval, it is up to the school building administrator's discretion whether to excuse the absences.

* Prearranged homework is provided at the discretion of school administrators.

Suspension or Expulsions

Students shall not be suspended out of school for tardiness or unexcused absences.

Mandatory Recording of Attendance

To ensure that the district is meeting its obligations under Washington State's compulsory attendance laws, it shall be the responsibility of each teacher to maintain accurate attendance records for each period (secondary)/ day (elementary).

Withdraw From School

Students who are absent for more than twenty consecutive school days are required to be dropped by law from enrollment. Students who withdraw from school without an official records request from the new school may be subject to truancy court intervention. WAC 392-121-108.

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Edmonds School District

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