

Policy—Excused and Unexcused Absences

I. Definitions

A. “Absence”

WAC 392-401-015 states the definition of an absence as follows:

1. A student is absent when they are:
 - a. No 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 an 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 education services as required by RCW 28A.600.015 and chapter 392-400 WAC; and
 - c. The student is enrolled in a 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.

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

B. 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 shall inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, 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 parent/guardian in correcting truancy. 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.

1. Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. At times, students may be appropriately absent from class. Teachers will report absence and tardiness in a timely fashion each day/period. School staff will maintain 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. The following principles shall govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

1. The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness:
 - a. 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;
 - b. Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
 - c. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
 - d. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
 - e. Post-secondary, technical school/apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
 - f. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
 - g. Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
 - h. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent/guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
 - i. 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 a qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107;
 - j. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
 - k. Absences due to a student's migrant status; and
 - l. 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.

2. 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.
3. An excused absence will be verified by the parent/guardian; by an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student; or by a school authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online or for students physically within the district, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excuse for the absence may be verified by the parent/guardian; by an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student; or by a school authority responsible for the absence. 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. Students fourteen and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

2. Unexcused Absences

1. Any absence from school for the majority of the hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above for an excused absence.
2. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent. If an absence is unexcused, the student may 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.
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 unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language the parent understands.

The superintendent 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 policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to students and parents/guardians annually.

Dependent Students 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 the adults involved with that students. The term “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 review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, unplanned school transitions, period 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 education progress.

Cross References:	Board Policy 3120	Enrollment
	Board Policy 3230	Student Privacy and Searches
	Board Policy 3240	Student Conduct, Expectations, and Reasonable Sanctions
	Board Policy 3241	Classroom Management, Corrective Action, or Punishment
	Board Policy 4218	Language Access Plan
Legal References:	RCW 28A.225	Compulsory School Attendance
	RCW 12.34.300	Relevance of Failure to Cause Juvenile to Attend School to Neglect Petition