



PROCEDURE: EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers will report absences and tardiness in a timely fashion each day/period. 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 absences.

I. Excused Absences

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Students will be permitted to make up assignments not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness 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. A student will be allowed at least one make up day for each day of absence.

1. Illness, health condition, or medial 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/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/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 a 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; and

11. Absences due to a student's migrant status.

When possible, the student's parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail, or written note, and to provide the excuse for the absence. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office by phone, e-mail, or written note, and provide the excuse for the absence. Students who are 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 old and older may do the same for mental health and drug or alcohol treatment. All students have that right for family planning and abortion.

A. Absence for Parent-Approved Activities

Students may be excused for parent-approved activities if agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian. An absence may not be excused if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress, including if the student is unable to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. 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 that the instruction is not conducted on school property or otherwise involves the school to any degree.

B. Absence Resulting from Disciplinary Actions or Short-Term Suspensions

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 or long-term suspension will have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom.

C. Extended Illness or Health Condition

If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school will 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 the class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.

D. Excused Absences 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 may apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program

may be written following the advice and recommendation of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program would require approval by the principal. As needed, staff will be informed of the student's needs; the confidentiality of medical information will be respected at the parent's request.

E. Mandatory Attendance Conference for Elementary School Students

If an elementary school student has **five or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year or ten or more excused absences in the current school year**, the principal or his/her designee will schedule a conference with the student and his/her parent/guardian at a reasonably convenient time. The conference is intended to identify barriers to the student's regular attendance and to identify supports and resources so the student may 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, and may occur on the same day as the scheduled parent-teacher conference provided it takes place within thirty days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, the team that created that program must reconvene.

A conference is not required if prior notice of the excused absences was provided to the school or if a doctor's note has been provided and a plan is in place to ensure the student will not fall behind in his/her coursework.

II. Unexcused Absences

An unexcused absence means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day, has failed to comply with a more restrictive school district policy on absences, or has failed to comply with alternative learning experience program attendance requirements.

The following are instances when unexcused absences occur:

1. The parent/guardian or adult student submits an excuse that does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above.
2. The parent/guardian or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement by phone, e-mail, or written note.

A. Mandatory Steps to Address Unexcused Absences

Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year will be followed by a letter or phone call to the parent informing them of the consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this

information in a language in which that parent is fluent. A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during the absence.

After **three unexcused absences within any month of the current school year**, the school will hold a conference with the principal or his/her designee and the parent to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty (30) days of the third unexcused absence, the principal or his/her designee may schedule the attendance conference on the same day. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the school may hold the conference with the student and the principal or his/her designee. However, the school will notify the parent/guardian of the steps identified to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

After a student's second and before his/her fifth unexcused absence, the school will take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. In middle school and high school, these steps will include application of the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment by the school's designated employee.

For any student with an existing IEP or Section 504 Plan, these steps will include convening the student's IEP team or Section 504 team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the student's absences. If necessary, and if the student's parent gives consent, the district will conduct a functional behavior assessment and will complete a detailed behavior plan to explore the function of the absence behavior.

For any student who does not have an IEP or Section 504 Plan, but who is reasonably believed to have a mental or physical disability or impairment, these steps will include informing the student's parent/guardian of the right to obtain an appropriate evaluation at no cost to the parent/guardian to determine whether the student has a disability or impairment and needs accommodations, special education services, or related services. This includes students with suspected emotional or behavioral disabilities. If the school obtains consent to conduct an evaluation, time should be allowed for the evaluation to be completed, and if the student is found to be eligible for accommodations, special education services, or related services, a plan will be developed to address the student's needs.

The school will designate staff members to apply the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment, and, where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions consistent with the assessment results. As appropriate, the school will also consider:

- adjusting the student's course assignments;

- providing the student more individualized instruction;
- providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;
- requiring the student attend an alternative school or program;
- assisting the parent or student to obtain supplementary services; or
- referring the student to a Community Engagement Board.

No later than a student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the school will:

- enter into an agreement with the student and parent/guardian that establishes school attendance requirements;
- refer the student to a Community Engagement Board; or
- file a petition to juvenile court.

III. Transfers

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the sending district will provide the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS or other assessment and any interventions previously provided to the student, the most recent truancy information for that student. The information will include the online or written acknowledgement by the parent and student. The sending district will use the standard choice transfer form for releasing a student to a nonresident school district for the purposes of accessing an alternative learning experience program.

IV. Community Engagement Board

A "Community Engagement Board" is a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the school district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school. The district entered into an MOU with the juvenile court in Skagit County to establish a Community Engagement Board.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court and to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including procedures with the court, coordinating trainings, sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices, recruitment of Community Engagement Board members, and coordination of Community Engagement Board. The district will also identify a person within each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy.

No earlier than a student's **seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or fifteenth unexcused absence during the current school year**, if the district's attempts to substantially reduce a student's absences have

not been successful and if the student is under the age of seventeen, the district will file a petition and supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court.

The Petition to Juvenile Court will contain the following:

1. A statement that the student has unexcused absences in the current school year;
2. An attestation that actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school;
3. A statement that court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student's absences from school;
4. A statement that RCW 28A.225.010 has been violated by the parent, student, or parent and student;
5. The student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity, the names and addresses of the student's parent/guardian, whether the student and parent/guardian are fluent in English, whether there is an existing IEP, and the student's current academic status in school;
6. A list of all interventions that have been attempted, a copy of any previous truancy assessment completed by the student's current school district, the history of approved best practices intervention(s) and/or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the school district, and a copy the most recent truancy information document provided to the parent.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required. Per the district's MOU with Skagit Juvenile Court, school buildings submit petitions to Skagit Juvenile Court, and Skagit Juvenile Court completes notification. At the district's choice, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions. If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of evidence, the court shall grant the petition and enter an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determine by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to more likely cause the student to return to and remain in school while the student is subject to the court's jurisdiction. If the court assumes jurisdiction, the school district will periodically report to the court any additional unexcused absences by the student, actions taken by the school district, and an update on the student's academic status in school as specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

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 the children are eight years old 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, 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 policy 3241.)