

STUDENTS

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Consistent school attendance matters for school success, and developing the habit of attendance prepares students for success in college, career, and in life. Reducing absenteeism ensures an equitable opportunity for children to learn, grow, and thrive.

Educators and administrators have a responsibility to monitor attendance to determine if students and families need support. Students are expected to attend all assigned in-person classes each day or participate in all assigned remote instructional activities. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the district will inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of excessive absences, the role and responsibility of the district in regard to truancy, and resources available to assist the student and their parents and guardians in correcting excessive absences. The district will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents can request and be provided such information in a language in which they are fluent. Parents will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

Definition of Absence

Absence from in-person learning

WAC 392-401A-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 an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.
 - c. A student will be considered absent if they are on school grounds but not in their assigned setting.
2. Students will 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; and
 - 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 will not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

Absence from remote learning

1. A student is absent from remote learning when the student is not participating in planned instructional activities on a scheduled remote learning day.
2. Evidence of student participation in remote learning may include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Daily logins to learning management systems;
- (b) Daily interactions with the teacher to acknowledge attendance (including messages, emails, phone calls or video chats); or
- (c) Evidence of participation in a task or assignment.

Unexcused Absences from Remote Learning

Absences from remote learning must be marked as excused or unexcused according to the criteria in WAC 392-401A-020. However, unexcused absences from remote learning prior to March 1, 2021 may not accrue for the purposes of filing a truancy petition.

Excused absences from in person learning

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate remotely. 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 excused absences.

The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

The following are valid excuses for absences:

1. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including, but not limited to medical, counseling, dental or optometry), 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, or serving on a jury;
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 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 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;
11. Absences due to a student's migrant status;
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.
13. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19;
14. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19;
15. Absences related to the student's employment or other family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary due to COVID-19 until

other arrangements can be made, including placement in a more flexible education program;

16. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made;
17. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet broadband access or connectivity; and
18. Other COVID-10 related circumstances as determined between school and parent or emancipated youth.

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

Unexcused absences from in person learning

Any absence from school unless it meets one of the criteria provided in WAC 392-401-015 for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused.

Missed Assignments Due to Absence

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 except in the case of participation-type classes. If a student misses a participation-type class, an alternative assignment will be provided that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.

Tiered Response to Address Attendance Concerns

WAC 392-401A-045 states:

School districts must implement a tiered response system to reduce chronic absenteeism and address barriers to student engagement in learning during the COVID epidemic. Tiered response systems under this section must include:

- (a) Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent from remote learning, whether excused or unexcused;
- (b) A process to contact families and verify current contact information for each enrolled student that includes multiple attempts and modalities in the parent's home language;
- (c) Daily notification of absences to parents;
- (d) A process for outreach from the school to determine student needs, such as basic needs, connectivity and hardware, connection with health and social services as necessary;
- (e) Differentiated supports that address the barriers to attendance and participation that includes universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence; and
- (f) When feasible and appropriate, transitioning the students to full-time in-person learning or other program to accommodate the student's needs.

If such action is not successful, the district 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 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.

Parent or Guardian Responsibility to Verify Excused Absence

An excused absence will be verified by the parent/guardian or a responsible 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, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent 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 (13) and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol, or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen (14) and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

School Responsibility to Notify Parent or Guardian About Absence

The school will notify a student’s parent or 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 is necessary for the success of the policy and procedures, the procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents and students annually.

Dependent Students

Pursuant to RCW Chapter 13.34, 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 the student. Adults include the student’s caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent or guardians, foster parents and/or the person providing placement of the student. The review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, 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 the 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’s educational progress.

Cross References:	Policy 3120	Enrollment
	Policy 3230	Student Privacy
	Policy 3241	Student Discipline
	Policy 4218	Language Access Plan
Legal References:	RCW 13.340.300	Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
	Chapter 28A.225	Compulsory school attendance and

Chapter 392-401A admission
WAC Statewide definition of absence for the
2020-21 school year

Management Resources: 2020 – September
Policy Alert
2018-August Issue
2017-July Policy Issue
2016-July Issue
2015-June Issue
2012-December Issue
2011-December Issue
2001-June More Tweaking of Becca Petitions

**Date: 2/12/70; 3/2/92; 9/23/96; 8/21/97; 7/26/99; 10/28/02; 6/24/03; 5/23/05; 1/23/17; 6/7/18;
5/21/20; 11/19/20.**

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