

## STUDENTS

### Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers shall keep an accurate record of absence and tardiness. Absences shall be verified in writing.

### Excused Absences

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Missed work assignments and activities may be made up in the manner prescribed by the teacher.

- a. Participation in school-approved activity. To be excused this absence must be authorized by a staff member and the affected teacher(s) must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
- b. **Absence due to:** illness; health condition; medical appointment; family emergency; religious purposes; court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury; post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview; State recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055; and directly related to the student's homeless status.

When possible, the 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. If no excuse is provided with the notification, or no notification is provided, the parent/guardian will submit an excuse via phone, e-mail or written note upon the student's return to school. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation. Students fourteen years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease will notify the school of their absence with a note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen years and older may do the same for mental health, drug or alcohol treatment; and all students have that right for family planning and abortion.

A parent/guardian may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday. In addition, a student, upon the request of his/her parent, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property. A student will be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.

- c. Absence for parental-approved activities. This category of absence shall be counted as excused for purposes agreed upon by the principal and the parent prior to absence. An absence may not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on

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the student's educational progress. In participation-type classes (e.g., certain music and physical education classes) the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. In such a case, a parent or guardian-approved absence would have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress which would ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course. 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 such is not conducted on school property or otherwise involves the school to any degree.

- d. Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension. 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 suspension, shall have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments will be a substantial lowering of the grade.
- e. 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 practicable. If the student is unable to do his/her school work, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.
- f. Excused absence 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 parents shall apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program shall be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information shall be respected at the parents request.

Unexcused absences

Unexcused absences fall into two categories:

1. The parent, guardian or adult student submits an excuse that does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above; or2. The parent, guardian, or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement, whether by phone, e-mail or in writing, for an absence.
  - a. **Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year**

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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 such an absence.

b. **After three unexcused absences within any month of the current school year**, a conference will be held between the principal, student and parent to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty days of the third unexcused absence, the district may schedule the attendance conference on the same day. If the parent/guardian does not attend the scheduled conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and principal. However, the parent will be notified of the steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

**At some point after the second and before the fifth unexcused absence**, the district will take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. In middle school and high school, these steps will include a risk assessment by a designated district employee.

For any student with an existing Individualized Education Program (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.

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 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.

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- c. If the above action fails to correct the attendance problem, the student shall be declared a habitual absentee. The principal or designee shall interview the student and his/her family and prescribe corrective action. No later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month (equivalent of seven school days) during the current school year or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year (equivalent of ten school days) the district shall 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. The petition consists of written notification to the court alleging that:
1. The student has unexcused absences in the current school year (petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences (equivalent to seven school days) within any month during the current school year or ten or more unexcused absences (equivalent to ten school days) in the current school year, but a petition may be filed earlier; also unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district may be counted for all purposes in this procedure)
  2. Actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
  3. Court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student's absences from school.

Additionally, the petition shall include the student's name, age, school and residence; and the names and residences of the student's parents. The petition must include facts that support the allegations made in the petition, must generally request relief available under the statute, and must describe what the court might order.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required.

At the district's choice, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

- e. Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of his/her parents, in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence shall be subject to appropriate corrective action.

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- f. A reasonable effort shall be made to acquire a written excuse for each absence or a written documentation by school personnel as to why the excuse was not obtained.
- g. All written excuses of each school year will be maintained and stored by the designated building official.

Building Attendance Committees

Each building shall have a Building Attendance Appeal Committee made up of 3-7 teachers, administrators, and classified personnel appointed by the Building Principal or designee.

The Building Attendance Appeal Committee shall meet after the conclusion of each semester and after grades have been recorded to consider appeals from students and parents who have received a Denial of Class Credit notification.

The Building Attendance Appeal Committee shall consider student appeals using the following general framework:

- Building good attendance habits in students will help ensure success later in life.
- Students who can demonstrate improving attendance should get their credits restored.
- Students may need assistance in changing some of their behaviors and conditions in order to improve their attendance.
- The total number of absences in this and other semester classes should be considered.
- Patterns of absences in prior semesters should be considered.
- Whether the non-school related absences were related to verified illness, emergencies within the family, and/or absences that have a significant family or educational related value
- Whether the student, even though he/she has excessive absences, has earned an A, B, or C in the course
- Whether the student has earned a D+ or D in the course
- Whether the student has been voluntarily been involved in other mitigating factors developed by the high school.

Tardies

Students are expected to be to class on time. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student shall be referred to the principal or counselor.

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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.

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