

## **STUDENTS**

### Excused and Unexcused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students. It is recognized that, at times, students appropriately may be absent from class. Therefore, the following principles shall govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

### Excused Absences

1. The following are valid excuses for absences from school:
  - A. Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
  - B. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including but not limited to medical, counseling, dental or optometry);
  - C. Family emergency, including but not limited to a death or illness in the family;
  - D. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
  - E. Court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury;
  - F. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
  - G. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
  - H. Absence directly related to the student's homeless status;
  - I. Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action. (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and
  - J. Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity.

The 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 shall be permitted to make up any graded assignments and/or equivalent participation points outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher(s).
3. An excused absence shall be certified by the parent in writing, or by the school authority responsible for the absence.

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Unexcused Absences

1. Any absence from school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria in #1 A-J above for an excused absence.
2. As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student's academic grade or credit in a particular subject or course may be adversely affected by reason of tardiness or unexcused absences only to the extent and upon the basis that:
  - a. The student's attendance and participation is related to the instructional objectives or goals of the particular subject or course, and
  - b. The student's attendance and/or participation has been identified by the teacher pursuant to the policy of the school district as a basis for grading, in whole or in part, in the particular subject or course.
3. The school shall notify a student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has incurred one unexcused absence (equivalent of one school day) within any month during the current school year. The notification shall include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. A conference with the parent or guardian shall be held after two unexcused absences (equivalent of two school days) within any month during the current school year. A student may be suspended or expelled for habitual truancy. Prior to suspension or expulsion, the parent shall be notified in writing in his/her primary language that the student has unexcused absences.
4. A conference shall be scheduled to determine what corrective measures should be taken to remedy the cause for the student's absences from school. If the parent does not attend the conference, the parent shall be notified of the steps the district has decided to take to reduce the student's absences.
5. Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence (equivalent of five school days) in a month the district shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community truancy board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.
6. If such action is not successful, 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 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.
7. Students who are court ordered to return to school may be placed in an alternative learning setting until the next appropriate reentry point to the regular school setting.

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8. All suspensions and/or expulsions shall be promptly reported in writing to the superintendent or designee. Policies and procedures shall be made available to parents and students upon request.

Potential Loss of Credit

Students who attend class are more likely to earn passing grades and credits toward graduation than students who are excessively absent. Therefore, absence limits have been established to promote student engagement in school. Excessive absences may lead to loss of credit as described in this section.

Parents will be notified of their student's absences on the fifth, eighth, and twelfth absence.

After the 12<sup>th</sup> non-school-related absence in a semester, the high school student will be notified of the 12<sup>th</sup> absence to determine whether an attendance contract is appropriate.

In addition to the contract, and after the 12<sup>th</sup> non-school-related absence per semester in a given class, the classroom teacher, at his or her discretion, may forward to the building administration a notice of referral for denial of class credit. The classroom teacher, at his or her discretion, may thereafter rescind said notice, or having rescinded said notice, reinstate it any time for attendance and classroom work related behavior together with a brief explanation thereof, until a week before the meeting of the building Attendance Committee.

The building Attendance Committee shall be formed by the building principal or designee and shall review all timely referrals for denial of credit within a week after the completion of each semester and recording of grades and attendance. An affected student and parent shall be given timely notice and may appear at such review. The Attendance Committee shall consider relevant facts that include:

- Total number of absences in this and other semester classes,
- Pattern of absences in prior semesters,
- Whether the non-school related absences related to verified illness, emergencies within the family, and/or absences that have a significant family or educational related value, (a mitigated factor),
- Whether the student has earned an A-through a C- in the course, (a mitigating factor),
- Whether the student has earned a D+ or D in the course, (a negative factor), or
- Whether the student has voluntarily been involved in other mitigating factors developed by the high school.

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In the event of credit denial, the student and/or parents have the right to appeal to the building principal. In the event that the issue is still not resolved, the student and/or parents may appeal to the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education. In the event that this issue is still not resolved, the students and/or parent may appeal to the School Board following the procedure in Policy 3323-R2.

Each high school shall report the number of notice of referral for denial of class credit by teacher, the number of credits denied, and the summary of rationale. Current levels of attendance and graduation shall be baseline and reviewed with potential revision of this policy in September 2010.

Legal Reference:     [RCW 28A.225](#)           Compulsory School Attendance

Adopted:           September 8, 1993

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