

STUDENTS

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Definition of Absence

WAC 392-401-015, 016, and 040 states the definition of an absence:

- (1) A student is absent from in-person instruction 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.
- (2) A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not log in to the synchronous meeting/class.
- (3) A student is absent from asynchronous online instruction when there is no evidence that the student accessed the planned asynchronous activity. Evidence of student participation in asynchronous activities must occur daily, within a twenty-four-hour time frame of when the participation is planned or expected. Students shall 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.

A student shall be considered absent if they are on school grounds but not in their assigned setting for more than 50% of the period; and

A school or district shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

Dissemination of Attendance Information

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 parents and guardians in

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Dissemination of Attendance Information (continued)

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. A student's grade may not be adversely affected by an absence. Students must be given an opportunity to make up any coursework that was missed due to an absence.

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. 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:

A. The following are valid excuses for absences:

1. Physical health or mental health symptoms, illness, health condition or medical appointment for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. Examples of symptoms, illness, health conditions, or medical appointments include, but are not limited to, medical, counseling, mental health wellness, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and behavioral health treatment (which can include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);
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 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;

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Excused Absences (continued)

10. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or harassment, intimidation, or bullying (“HIB”);
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; and
13. Absences due to the student’s lack of necessary instruction tools, including internet access or connectivity.

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

Additionally, in the event of an emergency school facility closure where the district is required to provide asynchronous instruction, absences due to the following reasons must be excused:

1. Absences related to the student’s illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19 or other communicable disease;
2. Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19, other communicable disease, or other emergency health condition related to school facility closures.
3. Absences related to the student’s family obligation during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary because of school facility closures, until other arrangements can be made; and
4. Absences due to the student’s guardian’s work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements can be made.

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Unexcused Absences

An "unexcused absence" means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours (greater than 50%) or periods (greater than 50%) in an average school day and has failed to meet the district's policy for excused absences. Additionally, an "unexcused absence" means that a student has failed to comply with alternative learning experience program attendance requirements.

Unexcused absences occur when:

1. The parent, guardian, or adult student submits an excuse that does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above; or
2. 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.

Multi-tiered System of Support for Attendance

The district will implement a multitiered response system to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy, which will include:

1. Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused.
2. 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;
3. 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, including schools and district attendance or engagement teams, connecting community resources, and community engagement boards; and
4. A process for outreach and reengagement for students who have been withdrawn due to nonattendance and there is no evidence that the student is enrolled elsewhere. This process will include the following requirements of WAC 392-401-045(d):
 - (i) A school and/or district point person/people to maintain a list of students withdrawn due to nonattendance, keep it updated, and coordinate the outreach;
 - (ii) School or district staff assigned to conduct the outreach and attempts at reengagement in coordination with community partner or other programs;
 - (iii) Multiple methods of communication and outreach in a language or mode of communication that the guardian understands including phone calls, texts, letter, and home visits;

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Multi-tiered System of Support for Attendance (continued)

- (iv) Referral to community-based organization;
- (v) Documentation of the attempts to reach student and family; and
- (vi) Follow the required steps to address unexcused absences in chapter 28A.225.RCW, including early communication to guardian, holding guardian conferences and administering a truancy screener to understand the underlying reasons for the absences, and providing evidence-based or best practice interventions, even if the student has been withdrawn due to nonattendance.

Students Dependent Pursuant to Chapter 13.34, RCW

A 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 that 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 for 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 their school work.

Migrant Students

The district is encouraged to work with migrant students and parents/guardians to create an Extended Absence Agreement to decrease the risk of an adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

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Cross References:	Policy	3120	Compulsory Attendance
		3230	Student Privacy
		3300	Student Conduct Expectations and Reasonable Sanctions
		3310	Discipline and Corrective Action for Student Misconduct
Legal References:	RCW	13.34.300	Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
		28A.225	Compulsory school attendance and admission
	WAC	392-401	Statewide definition of excused and unexcused daily Absences
Management Resources:			2018 – August Issue
			2017 – July Policy Issue
			2016 – July Issue
			2015 – June Issue
			2012 – December Issue
			2011 – December Issue
			Policy News, June 2001 More Tweaking of Becca Petitions

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