



## **Administrative Procedures for Board Policy #3122 Excused and Unexcused Absences**

### **Excused absences**

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Assignments and/or activities not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness may be made up in the manner provided by the teacher.

1. **Participation in school-approved activity** or instructional program. To be excused this absence must be authorized by a staff member and the affected teacher must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly too difficult to do so.
2. **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) living on their own or with parent and school approval and emancipated

students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) shall 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 shall notify the school of their absence with a signed 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 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/guardian, 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 shall be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.

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

4. **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 shall be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
5. **Extended illness or health condition.** If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school shall 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 class the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty. (reference Home Hospital language)
6. **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 parent/guardian shall apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program shall be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program shall be approved by the principal. Staff shall be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information shall be respected at the parent's request.
7. **Excused Absences.** The district shall initiate court petition procedures beginning with a parent conference and resulting in a court petition in cases of excessive absenteeism which adversely affect the student's educational progress.

For the purpose of this policy, excessive absenteeism may be defined as follows - When a

student accumulates a combined total (excused and unexcused) of: five (5) absences within a quarter (45 days), ten (10) absences within a semester (90 days), and eighteen (18) absences in a year.

#### Required 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 district will schedule a conference with the student and their parent(s) 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 service 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 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 district or if a doctor's note has been provided and a plan is in place to ensure the student will not fall behind in their coursework.

#### Unexcused Absences

An "unexcused absence" means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day or 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.

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 excused statement, whether by phone, e-mail, or in writing, for an absence.

Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year will be followed by a telephone call or warning letter to the parent/guardian informing them of the consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent is fluent. A student's grade shall not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.

After three unexcused absences within any month, of the current year, the district will make every attempt to hold a conference 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 application of the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment by the district's designated 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 when 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 to determine whether the student has a disability or impairment and needs accommodation, 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 district will designate a staff member to apply the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) and, where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions consistent with WARNS. As appropriate, the district 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 to attend an alternative school or program;
- assisting the parent or student to obtain supplementary services; or
- referring the student to a community truancy board.

If the student's parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the conference may be conducted with the student and school official. However, the parent will be notified of the steps taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

### **Transfers**

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the sending district will provide to the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS 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 acknowledgment 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.

Not later than a student's **fifth unexcused absence in a month**, the district may:

- a. enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements;

- b. refer the student to a community truancy board; or
- c. file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court (see below)

### **Community Truancy Board**

A “community truancy board” means 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 will enter into an MOU with the juvenile court in Lewis County to establish a community truancy board prior to the 2017-2018 school year.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court (and update as necessary) and to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, coordinating the MOU, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating trainings, sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices. The district will also identify a person within each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy and assisting in the recruitment of community truancy board members.

Not later than a student’s seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or a tenth 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.



## **Petition to juvenile court**

The petition will contain the following:

1. A statement that the student has unexcused absences, and or excessive absences, in the current school year. (District Note: While petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any month during the current school year or ten or more unexcused absences in the current school year, but a petition may be filed earlier; Unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district shall be counted when preparing the petition);
2. An Attestation that actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
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 petition will include the student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity; and the names and addresses of the student's parents/guardians, whether the student and parent are fluent in English, whether there is an existing individualized education program (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 or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the district, and a copy of the most recent truancy information document provided to the parent.

7. Facts that support the above allegations.

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.

If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court shall grant the petition and enter an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determined by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to most 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 shall 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 at a schedule specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three (3) months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

Tardiness and Early Departures: are defined as not being in the classroom at the assigned start to the instructional day or secondary class period and/or leaving more prior to the official end of the school day and/or class period.

- a. In grades K-6, if a student arrives more than ten (10) minutes late in the morning, or leaves more than ten (10) minutes prior to the end of the official end of the school day this will be counted as either a tardy (am) and/or an early departure (pm). When students have the accumulation of three (3) tardies and/or early departures it may equal one (1) day of unexcused absence for the purposes associated with court reporting requirements.
- b. Every tardy at the secondary level is considered an unexcused absence for that class period.

Elementary:

- a. When an elementary student arrives to school late by thirty (30) minutes or more, he/she will be charged with an absence for the morning (1/2 day).
- b. When a student departs thirty (30) minutes or more prior to the end of the official end of the school day, he/she will be charged with an absence for the afternoon (1/2 day).

Secondary:

- a. Absences at secondary schools – Students who are absent with no excuse for three or more periods in a day will be considered absent for a day for purposes of filing a Becca petition with the courts.
- b. When secondary students are absent without excuse for one or two periods in a school day these periods may be accumulated so that three periods of unexcused

absence will count as one day of unexcused absence for the purpose of filing a Becca petition with the courts.

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 discipline or corrective action. (See Policy 3241, Classroom Management, Discipline or Corrective.)

**Date:** October 1995

**Revised:** November 1998; November 1999; October 2001; October 2002; December 21, 2011; April 17, 2013, May 20, 2015; June 17, 2015; June 15, 2016; March 15, 2017; March 21,2018.