

Tumwater School District Board Policy

EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

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/guardians and guardians in correcting truancy. The district will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents/guardians can request and be provided such information in languages in which they are fluent. Parents/guardians will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

Definition of Absent or 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.
- (2) Students shall not be absent if:
 - (a) They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled;
 - (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 by WAC 392-121-107.
- (3) A full day absence is when a student is absent for 50% of their scheduled day.
- (4) A school or district shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. Students at times may appropriately be 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. Absences due to the following reasons must be excused:
1. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including but not limited to medical, counseling, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health); 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, 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/dependence 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 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. Principal (or designee) may excuse up to five (5) days per school year.

Any absence from school is unexcused unless it meets one of the above criteria provided in WAC 382-410-020.

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

- A. If an absence is excused, 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 that in participation-type classes, a student's grade may be affected because of the student's inability to make up the activities conducted during a class period.
- B. An excused absence will be verified by a parent/guardian or an 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 and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

Unexcused Absences

- A. 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 above for an excused absence.
- B. As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student whose absence is not excused will experience the consequences of his/her absence. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent.
- C. 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 period during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.
- D. A conference with the parent or guardian will be held after three unexcused absences within any month period during the current school year. A student may be suspended or expelled for habitual truancy. Prior to suspension or expulsion, the parent/guardian will be notified in writing in his/her primary language that the student has unexcused absences. A conference will be scheduled to determine what corrective measures should be taken to ameliorate the cause for the student's absences from school. If the parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the parent/guardian will be notified of the steps the district has decided to take to reduce the student's absences.
- E. Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, during the current school year, the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community truancy board and file a stay petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.
- F. 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/guardian, student or parent/guardian and student no later than the seventh unexcused absence, within any month period, during the current school year or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year.
- G. All suspensions and/or expulsions will be reported in writing to the superintendent within 24 hours after imposition.

The superintendent will enforce the district's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents are necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents/guardians and students annually.

Student dependents pursuant to Chapter 13.34, RCW

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 that student. Adults includes 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.

Cross References: 3120 - Enrollment
3230 - Student Privacy and Searches
3240 - Student Conduct Expectations and Reasonable Sanctions
3241 – Classroom Management, Discipline and Corrective Actions
4218 – Language Access Plan

Legal References: Chapter 28A.225 Compulsory school attendance and admission[new section added pursuant to SSHB 2449 (2016 legislative session)]
RCW 13.34.300 Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
WAC 392-400-325 Statewide definition of excused and unexcused daily absences.

Management Resources:

2016 - July Issue
2015 - June Issue
2012 - December Issue
2011 – December Issue
Policy News, June 2001 More Tweaking of Becca Petitions

ADOPTION DATE: November 14, 1985

REVISION DATE: December 2006; June 2011; December 2012; June 2015; July 2016; October 11, 2018