



ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Consistent attendance is essential for students to achieve academic success. Clearly outlined expectations and consistent procedures will assist our students in meeting academic requirements and finding academic success.

II. STATE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LAWS

The State compulsory attendance laws (RCW 28A.225) include provisions that:

- A. Require parents of any student between the ages of eight and eighteen to ensure that their child(ren) attend the school to which the student has been assigned.
- B. Require parents of any student who is age six (6) or seven (7) and who is enrolled in a public school to ensure that their child(ren) attend the school to which the student has been assigned. An exception shall be made for students whose parents formally remove them from enrollment if the student is less than eight (8) years old and a truancy petition has not been filed against the parent.
- C. Require Seattle Public Schools to distribute notice of the requirements of the compulsory attendance law annually to students and parents. The notice shall be in the parent's primary language, unless that is clearly not feasible.
- D. Require the school to notify the student's parent/guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has one unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. Such notice shall be in the parent's primary language, if feasible, and should inform the parent of the potential consequences of continued unexcused absences.
- E. Require the school to schedule an attendance conference with the parent/guardian and the student after the student has two unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. See Section V, below.
- F. Require the school to intervene to eliminate the student's absences. All such steps shall be documented in writing, and shall be available for review by the King County Juvenile Court in the event that a truancy petition is filed against the student. See Section VI, below.



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- G. Give the Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools the authority to appoint community members to serve on community truancy boards established by the District.
- H. Require the District to file a truancy petition in King County Juvenile Court if a student has 7 unexcused absences in one month or 10 in the school year. Seattle Public Schools will not file a petition unless appropriate interventions are documented and the truancy continues.

III. MANDATORY ATTENDANCE CONFERENCE

As soon as possible after a student accumulates two unexcused absences during any month during the school year, a conference shall be scheduled at a time reasonably convenient for all attendees. Attendees should include the student, the parent/guardian, and at least one school official. Other people may be invited if they would assist in resolving the attendance problem. An interpreter shall be provided for parents for whom English is not their primary language, as feasible. A copy of the letter inviting the parent or guardian to the conference will be kept at the school.

The purpose of the conference is to enter into an "Attendance Agreement" with the student and/or parent to correct the truant behavior. The Attendance Agreement is designed to assist the student in returning to regular attendance. Interventions shall be listed in the Agreement, along with the time frames for implementing the interventions. The Agreement shall also contain a statement by the student that he or she will return to regular attendance, along with steps the student will take to pursue this goal.

If the parent is unable or unwilling to attend the conference, the conference may be held without the parent, but the school must send a copy of the Attendance Agreement and any pertinent information to the parent. If appropriate, the conference with the parent may be held by telephone.

All conference attendees should sign the Agreement, including interpreters, if present. Once completed, the Attendance Agreement and a copy of the letter inviting the parent/guardian to the conference must be sent to the Truancy Office for review. If the Truancy Office determines that the Attendance Agreement is unsatisfactory or incomplete, the Agreement will be returned to the school for revision. The Truancy Office shall use the Attendance Agreement in Court if it becomes necessary to file a truancy petition against the student.



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IV. EXEMPTION FROM MANDATORY ATTENDANCE LAWS

Students are entitled to attend school until they reach age twenty-one (21) or until high school graduation, whichever comes first. However, students may be exempted from the compulsory attendance laws in certain circumstances. The fact that a student is eligible for exemption does not, by itself, diminish the student's right to receive an education. A student may be excused from the mandatory attendance laws in the following circumstances:

- A. The student is attending private school;
- B. The student is receiving authorized home-based instruction;
- C. The student is physically or mentally unable to attend school;
- D. The student has been temporarily excused upon the request of his or her parents for purposes agreed upon by the school authorities and the parent, provided that such absences not cause a serious adverse effect upon the student's educational progress.
- E. The student is attending a residential school operated by the department of social and health services or is incarcerated in an adult correctional facility;
- F. The student is at least age sixteen (16); is regularly and lawfully employed, and either the parent agrees that the student should not be required to attend school or the student is emancipated;
- G. The student is at least age sixteen (16) and the student has already met graduation requirements in accordance with state board of education rules and regulations;
- H. The student is at least age sixteen (16) and the student has received a certificate of educational competence under the rules and regulations established by the State Board of Education;
- I. The student is either below age six (6) or is age eighteen (18) or older and therefore is beyond the reach of the compulsory attendance laws;
- J. The student is enrolled full-time in a program such as Running Start and takes all courses at a Community College.

V. DEFINITIONS



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The following Seattle Public Schools definitions apply to students at every age, and in every District school, except as otherwise noted:

- A. Absence means any time a student is not at school or participating in a school-sponsored activity in lieu of attending school (e.g. on a field trip).

An absence from a class at the secondary level is defined as any time a student misses more than ten (10) minutes of a given class period.

- B. Excused Absences

1. Unplanned absences are excused when the student's personal illness or injury, or the illness, injury or death of a family member, prevents the student from attending school. The school may require a note from the student's doctor before excusing those absences if the student is absent due to illness or injury for an excessive number of days, generally more than 10 cumulative days in a semester or trimester.
2. Planned absences are excused when the parent submits a request to the Principal or Assistant Principal at least three school days before the start of the planned absence and the Principal or Assistant Principal approves the absence. Planned absences are traditionally family trips of short duration, medical appointments, or religious or other special one-time events. Long-term absences or a succession of long-term absences may affect whether the student will be promoted.
3. Absences due to short-term discipline of the student are excused on District attendance records unless the student is under court order to attend school without additional trancies or behavior problems.

Written or verbal notice of the absence by the parent or guardian to the school within two (2) school days of an unplanned absence will be used to establish the absence as an excused absence. Written or verbal notice by the parent or guardian to the school three (3) school days in advance of a planned absence will also establish the absence as excused if approved by the Principal or Assistant Principal. An excused absence may be one or more classes, up to the entire day. Principals may, at their discretion, require that notices regarding absences be made exclusively in writing. The Principal will make the final determination in cases where the classification of the absence as excused or unexcused is disputed.

Students whose absences are excused, including those who are absent due to short-term disciplinary sanctions, are to be given the opportunity to make-up missed class work.



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C. Unexcused Absences

All other absences are considered unexcused. A student who has failed to attend the majority of hours or periods in an average school day will be marked as having an "unexcused absence." A student who misses individual classes will be marked as having one or more "unexcused class[es]."

D. Long-term Suspensions or Expulsions

The absences of students who have been either long-term suspended or expelled, and for whom space is available in the reentry program but who do not enroll and attend the reentry program, are unexcused. A student with a long-term suspension for longer than twenty (20) school days will be dropped from enrollment from their school of origin.

E. Absences for longer than twenty (20) consecutive school days

Students who are absent for more than twenty (20) consecutive school days, whether the absences are excused or unexcused, will not be counted as enrolled students and will cease to be enrolled in the District, except in the following two circumstances:


1. If there is an agreement between the appropriate school official and a student's parent or guardian that the student's temporary absence is not deemed to cause a serious adverse effect upon the student's educational progress, the absent student may remain as an enrolled student for at least two monthly enrollment periods, but the District will not include the student on its reporting of enrollment to the State for funding purposes.

Any agreement between the school and the parent or guardian under this section must be in writing and signed by the parties.

2. A student who receives home/hospital services shall be counted as an enrolled student.

VI. INTERVENTIONS

Attendance is critical to the academic success of every student. If a student appears to have chronic absences, particularly unexcused absences, school and/or District officials shall take action. School based and central interventions will be taken before those required by State law, subject to sufficient funding and staff availability. Seattle Public Schools is dedicated to providing racially, culturally, and age-appropriate

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interventions, including bilingual interventions. Such interventions may include the following:

- A home visit by staff to discuss the situation;
- Determination whether the student needs to be evaluated for
 - o Special education
 - o Section 504 accommodation
 - o Drug or alcohol dependence
- If the student is a special education student, the student's IEP or behavior plan may be evaluated to determine if it addresses chronic absenteeism;
- If the student receives Section 504 accommodations, the accommodation plan may be evaluated or adjusted to address chronic absenteeism;
- Referral of the student to a community truancy board;
- Adjustment of the student's transportation, if appropriate;
- Adjustment of the student's schedule or program, if appropriate;
- Arranging for counseling for personal problems affecting attendance;
- Seeking assistance from community agencies;
- Other interventions, as appropriate.

Interventions must be documented on the attendance agreement and should continue to be documented on an addendum to the attendance agreement as the interventions occur. Interventions will begin with the first unexcused absence, and shall not cease until the truant behavior stops. Judicial action will be utilized as a final intervention if school and central interventions are not successful.

Neither short-term nor long-term Suspensions for non-attendance or truancy are appropriate interventions, and shall not be used to motivate regular attendance.

VII. ATTENDANCE TAKING MANDATORY

In order to enforce this School Board Policy and to ensure that the District is meeting its obligations under Washington's compulsory attendance laws, it shall be the responsibility of the teacher to maintain accurate attendance reports.

Reference:

- RCW 28A.225
- WAC 180-44-010

Originally Adopted:

- H 10.01 Compulsory Attendance Procedure (August 1984)
- H 10.02 Attendance Category Definitions (January 1979)



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H 10.03 Exemption From Attendance Procedure (August 1984)
H 10.04 Attendance Remediation of Problems (August 1984)
H 10.05 Absences Due to Religious Observances (January 1983)
H 10.06 High School Attendance (October 1987)
H 12.00 Truancy Boards (November 1995)
D40.01 Attendance Procedure (September 2003)

Cross Reference:

Student Information Services Office Manual Truancy Manual
D40.00 Attendance Policy
D41.00 Attendance/Participation and Grades