

# Superintendent Procedure 3121SP **Attendance**



Approved by: s/Larry Nyland Date: 5/3/17

Dr. Larry Nyland, Superintendent

## I. INTRODUCTION

Consistent attendance is essential for students to achieve academic excellence. Clearly outlined expectations and consistent procedures will assist our students in meeting academic requirements and finding academic success. Through consistent attendance, learning environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives and presence of every student.

## II. ATTENDANCE TAKING MANDATORY

To ensure that the district is meeting its obligations under Washington's compulsory attendance laws, it shall be the responsibility of each teacher to maintain accurate attendance reports.

## III. INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

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 and supports 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 interventions and supports, including bilingual interventions. Such interventions and supports 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 absenteeism;
- If the student receives Section 504 accommodations, the accommodation plan may be evaluated or adjusted to address absenteeism;
- Referral of the student to a community truancy board;
- Adjustment of the student's transportation;
- Adjustment of the student's schedule or program;
- Arranging for counseling for personal problems affecting attendance;
- Seeking assistance from community agencies;
- Other interventions, as appropriate.

Interventions must be documented. Interventions will begin with the first unexcused absence, and shall not cease until the student is attending consistently. Judicial action will only be utilized as a final intervention if school and central interventions are not successful.

Suspensions and expulsions for non-attendance or truancy are not appropriate interventions, and shall not be used to motivate regular attendance.

#### IV. STATE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LAWS

The District adheres to State Becca Law procedures when unexcused absences occur. The State compulsory attendance laws (RCW 28A.225) include provisions that:

- A. Require parents/guardians 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/guardians 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/guardians 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/guardian.
- C. Require Seattle Public Schools to provide notice of the requirements of the compulsory attendance law annually and upon enrollment to students and parents/guardians. The notice shall be in the parent's/guardian's primary language, unless that is clearly not feasible. Parents/guardians should acknowledge receipt of the notice.
- 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/guardian's primary language, if feasible, and should inform the parent/guardian 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.
- 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 seven (7) unexcused absences in one month or ten (10) in the school year. Seattle Public Schools will not file a petition unless appropriate, comprehensive interventions are attempted and documented at the school, parents/guardians have been notified of the law and acknowledged receipt of the notification (C, above), and the student's unexcused absences continue.

#### V. MANDATORY ATTENDANCE CONFERENCE FOR EXCUSED ABSENCES

If an elementary school student has five (5) or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year or ten (10) or more excused absences in the current school year, the student's school will schedule a conference with the student and their parent(s)/guardian(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. An interpreter shall be provided for parents/guardians for whom English is not their primary language, as feasible.

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 a scheduled parent-teacher conference, provided it takes place within thirty days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan, a team able to modify that plan must reconvene.

A conference is not required if prior notice of the excused absences was provided to the school 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.

#### VI. MANDATORY ATTENDANCE CONFERENCE FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

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/guardians 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 analyze the causes of the student's absences. During the conference with the student the school may enter into an "Attendance Agreement" with the student and/or parent/guardian to address the attendance issues.

If the parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the conference may be held without the parent/guardian, but the school must notify the parent/guardian of the steps to be taken to eliminate the student's absences. If appropriate, the conference with the parent/guardian may be held by telephone or video conference.

#### VII. STUDENT ATTENDANCE AGREEMENTS

The school shall enter into an Attendance Agreement with a student and their parent/guardian no later than the student's fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence in a month.

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. All attendees should sign the Agreement, including interpreters, if present.

If the parent/guardian does participate in creating the Attendance Agreement, a copy of the signed agreement shall be provided to the parent/guardian.

Once completed, the Attendance Agreement must be sent to the Attendance Office for review. If the Attendance Office determines that the Attendance Agreement is unsatisfactory or incomplete, the Agreement will be returned to the school for revision. The Attendance Office shall use the Attendance Agreement in Court if it becomes necessary to file a truancy petition against the student.

#### **VIII. 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/guardians for purposes agreed upon by the school authorities and the parent/guardian, provided that such absences do 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/guardian 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; or
- J. The student is enrolled full-time in a program such as Running Start and takes all courses at a Community College.

## IX. DEFINITIONS

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

### A. Absence

- 1. Any time a student is not in class, at school or participating in a school-sponsored activity in lieu of attending school (e.g. on a field trip).
- 2. 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

a) The following are valid excuses for an absence:

- 1. Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
- 2. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including, but not limited to, medical, counseling, dental or optometry);
- 3. Family emergency, including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
- 4. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
- 5. Court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury;
- 6. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
- 7. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
- 8. Absence directly related to the student's homeless status, such as a house fire, moving, lack of new District transportation set up, a required agency visit, or similar emergency situation;
- 9. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
- 10. Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and
- 11. Principal (or designee) and parent/guardian or emancipated youth

mutually agreed upon approved activity, such as attending a youth conference or other one-time special event, or serving as a counselor at a school-sanctioned outdoor education program.

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

- b) 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.
- c) 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.
- d) For unplanned absences, written, verbal or electronic notice of the absence by the parent or guardian to the school within two (2) school days of the student's return will be used to establish an excused absence.
- e) For planned absences, written, verbal, or electronic notice by the parent or guardian to the school three (3) school days in advance and approval by the Principal or designee will establish the absence as excused. An excused absence may be one or more classes, up to the entire day. The principal will make the final determination in cases where the classification of the absence as excused or unexcused is disputed. Families are encouraged to not schedule appointments, vacations, or other events at times that would cause students to be absent from school.

### C. Unexcused Absences

Any absence from school is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above for an excused absence. Specifically, absences for the following reasons are not excused: oversleeping, missing one's bus or having other transportation problems, family trip or vacation, or a student needed to babysit a sibling or interpret for parents/guardians on an ongoing basis.

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]."

Schools will work with students whose absences are not excused as outlined in Sections IV and V. Students may also be referred for truancy, lose credit for the course, and/or their grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent.

#### D. Tardies

A “tardy” is defined as arriving late to school or to any class during the school day. Tardies may be excused or unexcused according to school rules/policies and District definitions for excused and unexcused absences.

Secondary students who miss 10 or more minutes of instructional time in a class will be marked as “absent”.

Elementary students who arrive late or are picked up early usually miss core academic instruction in literacy/reading, math, science, and/or social studies. Missing this instruction may have a serious adverse effect on students’ academic progress whether the tardies are excused or not excused. Elementary students who miss over half of their core instructional time will be marked as “absent” for the half day.

Schools may implement attendance interventions and supports outlined in this Procedure by including accumulated tardies and/or early departures with full-day absences.

#### E. Excessive Excused Absences

Students who exceed twenty (20) excused absences in a school year will be subject to school-based and central interventions for these absences, and may be subject to a truancy petition on the basis that excessive excused absences have a serious adverse effect on students’ academic progress.

#### F. Long-term Suspensions or Expulsions

Students who have been either long-term suspended or expelled and assigned to an alternative placement shall be subject to attendance rules. Students not assigned to a placement will be marked as excused absent.

#### G. 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, and an education plan is in place, the absent student may remain as an enrolled student for at most two monthly enrollment periods provided they return by the end of the school year.

Students will be withdrawn before the third enrollment count date if they have not returned to school.

Any agreement between the school and the parent or guardian under this section must be in writing and signed by the parties. Principals need to inform Student Systems Support of any students who will be absent for more than twenty days but should remain enrolled.

2. A student who receives home/hospital services shall be counted as an enrolled student for up to two monthly count dates provided they return by the end of the school year.

#### H. Absences at the beginning of the school year

Students who miss the first eight (8) days of school, whether the absences are excused or unexcused, will not be counted as enrolled students and will cease to be enrolled in the District unless there is a written agreement between the appropriate school official and a student's parent or guardian to begin attending later. Every student must attend at least one (1) day prior to October 1 or they will cease to be enrolled.

#### Cross Reference:

- Public Attendance Web page at <http://seattleschools.org/attendance>
- Staff Quick Reference Documents for Attendance and Attendance Intervention at <https://mysps.seattleschools.org/cms/one.aspx?portalId=25907&pageId=82997#Attendance>
- Staff Attendance Web page at <http://mysps.seattleschools.org/attendance>

Adopted: December 2011

Revised: May 2017; December 2014

Superintendent Procedure 3121SP

Cross Reference: Policy No. 3121; 3122; 3125; RCW 28A.225; WAC 392-400-233

Pages: 8 of 8