

Superintendent Procedure 3121SP

Attendance

Approved by: s/Dr. Brent C. Jones Date: 10/27/23

Dr. Brent C. Jones, Superintendent



I. Introduction

As provided by Board Policy No. 3121, Attendance, consistent attendance is essential. Clear expectations and procedures promote attendance and assist students in meeting academic requirements and achieving excellence. Consistent attendance also enriches the learning environment through the presence of each student and contribution of their individual perspective.

Under state law, children between the ages of eight and eighteen are required to be enrolled in public school, unless subject to an exception, including enrollment in a private school or home-based instruction. Per Board Policy D00.00, School Attendance, children under the age of mandatory attendance enrolled in public school are subject to the same attendance requirements as those students over age eight, including truancy requirements.

II. Attendance Taking Mandatory

To meet district obligations under Washington's compulsory attendance laws, it is the responsibility of each teacher to maintain accurate attendance reports. Teachers must take daily attendance for all enrolled students regardless of the instructional modality.

At the **elementary level**, teachers shall enter attendance into the Student Information System within the first thirty minutes of class each day. When instruction is synchronous online or asynchronous, elementary teachers must take attendance at least twice a day (for example, the first thirty minutes of class each day and at least thirty minutes before the class ends).

At the **secondary level**, teachers shall enter attendance into the Student Information System for each non-preparation period within the first ten minutes of class each day. When instruction is synchronous online or asynchronous, secondary teachers must take attendance daily in each course with planned instruction.

III. Supports and Interventions

Seattle Public Schools is dedicated to providing racially, culturally, linguistically and age-appropriate supports and interventions. If a student appears to have chronic absences, school and/or district officials must act to provide school-based and central supports per WAC 392-401-045 before the district submits a truancy petition.

Such supports and interventions include but are not limited to the following:

- A. Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused;
- B. Contacting families and verifying current contact information for each enrolled student that includes multiple attempts and modalities in the parent's home language;
- C. Differentiating supports that address the barriers to attendance and participation that include universal supports for all students and tiered supports/interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence, such as involvement with school and district attendance or engagement teams, community engagement boards and connection to community resources;
- D. Scheduling a home visit by staff to discuss the situation;
- E. Seeking assistance from community agencies;
- F. Arranging for counseling to support mental health needs that may be affecting attendance;
- G. Referring the student to a community engagement board;
- H. Determining if adjustments need to be made to any current student's:
 - 1. Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or behavior plans to ascertain if it appropriately addresses absenteeism;
 - 2. Section 504 accommodations to ascertain if they appropriately address absenteeism
 - 3. District provided transportation
 - 4. Daily schedule or programming
- I. Determining whether the student needs to be assessed for:
 - 1. Section 504 accommodation
 - 2. Drug or alcohol dependence
 - 3. Special education services

Supports and interventions must be documented in the Student Information System (using a PowerSchool log entry). Supports and interventions will begin as outlined in Sections IV, V, and VI of this Procedure, and shall not cease until the student is attending consistently. Judicial action will only be utilized as a final intervention if school-based and central supports and interventions are unsuccessful.

Suspensions and expulsions for non-attendance or truancy are not appropriate interventions and shall not be used. Attendance practices are not punitive in nature and should not be used as such. All disciplinary actions must align with the district's *Basic Rules of Seattle Public Schools* document.

IV. State Compulsory School Attendance Laws

The district adheres to state laws for compulsory attendance (RCW 28A.225) and

required procedures for unexcused absences (referred to as the Becca Law). These include provisions that:

- A. Require parents/guardians of any student between the ages of eight (8) and eighteen (18) 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 will be in the parent's/guardian's primary language as provided by Board Policy No. 4218 and Superintendent Procedure 4218SP, Language Access. 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, 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 three (3) 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 a truancy petition is filed. See Section VI, below.
- G. Give the Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools the authority to appoint community members to serve on community engagement 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 fifteen (15) in the school year. Seattle Public Schools will not file a petition unless appropriate, comprehensive supports and interventions are attempted and documented at the school, parents/guardians have been notified of the law (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.

The conference must include at least one school district employee, preferably a nurse, counselor, school social worker, teacher, or community human services 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 a Section 504 Plan or an IEP, a team able to modify that plan must convene.

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.

Additionally, a conference is not required if the student's absences are due to quarantine/isolation guidance they have received from Public Health—Seattle & King County or the SPS Health Services team. In this case, the student will be granted pre-approval status and remain enrolled.

VI. Mandatory Steps to Address Unexcused Absences

- A. After a student's second (2nd) and before their seventh (7th) unexcused absence during any month in the course of the school year:
 1. The school 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 an assessment designed to understand the reasons behind a student's attendance issues.
 2. For any student with an existing 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/guardian gives consent, the district will conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and will complete a detailed behavior plan to explore the function of the absence behavior.
 3. 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 adversely affecting the student's educational performance due to attendance, these steps will include informing the student's parent/guardian of the right to obtain an appropriate evaluation at no cost to the parent/guardian to determine whether the student has a disability

or impairment that is adversely affecting the student's educational performance and needs accommodations, 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 will 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.

B. As soon as possible after a student's third (3rd) unexcused absence during any month during the school year:

1. A conference shall be scheduled at a time reasonably convenient for all attendees. Attendees should include the student (if appropriate), the parent/guardian, and at least one school official. Other people may be invited if they would assist in resolving the attendance concern. An interpreter shall be provided for parents/guardians for whom English is not their primary/home language. A copy of the letter inviting the parent or guardian to the conference will be kept at the school.
2. The purpose of the conference is to identify the causes of, and barriers to, the student's absences. During the conference the school may enter into an "Attendance Agreement" with the student and/or parent/guardian to address the attendance issues and identify the supports and resources that may be available to the family and the steps to be taken to support the student's attendance.
3. 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 reduce the student's absences. If appropriate, the conference with the parent/guardian may be held by telephone or video conference.

C. No later than the student's seventh (7th) unexcused absence during any month during the school year:

1. The school shall enter into an *Attendance Agreement* with the student and/or their parent/guardian to assist the student in returning to regular attendance. Supports and interventions to help improve the student's attendance shall be listed in the Agreement, along with the timeframes for implementing and/or monitoring the supports and interventions, and the person at the school responsible for implementing each support and intervention. All attendees should sign the Agreement, including interpreters, if present.
2. A copy of the signed agreement shall be provided to the parent/guardian even if they do not participate in creating the *Attendance Agreement*.

3. Once completed, the *Attendance Agreement* must be sent to the Central 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.

VII. 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 their parent/guardian 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.

VIII. 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. Any time a student fails to comply with Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) program attendance requirements.
3. A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not log in to the synchronous meeting/class.
4. A student is absent from asynchronous 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 (24) hour timeframe of when the participation is planned or expected.

B. Excused Absences

1. Absences pursuant to RCW 28A.225.010 or WAC 392-401-020 must be excused:
 - a. 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 may include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);
 - b. Family emergency, including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
 - c. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
 - d. Court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity, or jury service;
 - e. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
 - f. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
 - g. Absence directly related to the student's McKinney-Vento eligibility under Board Policy No. 3115, Students Experiencing Homelessness: Enrollment Rights and Services, or foster care status under Board Policy No. 3116, Dependent Students (Foster Care);
 - h. Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
 - i. Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion);

- j. Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
 - k. Absences due to a student's migrant status;
 - l. A reason of faith or conscience, or for an organized activity conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization, for up to two days per school year; and
 - m. Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet access or connectivity; and
 - 1. An approved activity that is consistent with district policy and subsection 3 of this section that is mutually agreed upon by the principal or designee and a parent, guardian, or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student.
2. In the event of emergency school facility closure due to COVID-19, other communicable disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other event when the district is required to provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction, absences due to the following reasons pursuant to WAC 392-401-020 must also be excused:
- a. Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19 or other communicable disease;
 - b. 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;
 - c. Absences related to the student's family obligations during regularly scheduled school hours that are temporarily necessary because of school facility closures, until other arrangements may be made; and
 - d. Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled school hours, until other arrangements may be made.
3. WAC 392-401-020 also provides for excused absences for district approved activities consistent with district policy. For Seattle Public Schools, the school principal or their designee has the authority to determine if an absence meets the criteria below as an excused absence.
- a. Participation in a district- or school-approved activity or instructional program;
 - b. School route weather conditions that create an unsafe condition for transport to school;
 - c. District-provided transportation delay or failure to pick up;
 - d. Activities that deepen and/or expand student learning, build community awareness, develop skills (e.g., technical, visual or performing arts, athletic) and/or prepare students for college, career and life. Activities eligible for approval include attending a youth conference, serving as a counselor at a school-sanctioned outdoor education program and participating in an activity sponsored by a nonprofit and/or community

organization that relates to the objectives listed above. At the time of the activity the student must meet or exceed the eligibility criteria for students participating in district-sponsored activities and have a plan in place for making up missed classroom activities and assignments; and

- e. Participation in one civic engagement activity each semester when the student provides a completed civic engagement activity absence form signed by a parent/guardian describing the nature of the civic engagement activity two (2) days before the planned absence. Seattle Public Schools believes students have an important voice in their education and in our community. Participation in civic engagement provides students an opportunity to learn firsthand the important role each of us can have in our democracy and communities. Civic engagement activities can include, but are not limited to, legislative visits, campaigning, peaceful protests, awareness walks, or advocacy efforts. The decision to participate in a civic engagement activity is made between the student and their parent/guardian. The role of the school principal or their designee is to determine if the civic engagement activity absence form submittal process was followed. Other than those activities required by Seattle Public Schools course curriculum, civic engagement activities are optional. As such, civic engagement activities are not supervised by district staff.
4. 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 teacher of the class. However, 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 if an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activities missed is not reasonable.
 5. 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/guardian or an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student. If a student of any age 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.
 6. For unplanned absences, written, verbal or electronic notice of the absence by the parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student must be received by the school within two (2) school days of the student's return to establish an excused absence.
 7. For planned absences, written, verbal or electronic notice by the parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student

must be received by the school two (2) 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 (or designee) 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.

A student who does not 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 district definitions for excused and unexcused absences.

Elementary students who arrive late or are picked up early usually miss core academic instruction in literacy/reading, mathematics, 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 more than an hour of the day will be counted as “absent” for the half day, and students who miss more than 195 minutes (3 hours 15 minutes) will be counted as “absent” for the full day.

For students in secondary schools, the district has the flexibility to categorize the amount of time a student misses of a specific class as:

- a tardy (arrived late after the start of the class period);
- an early dismissal (left early, before the end of the class period); or
- an absence (student missed all or the majority of the class period)

The district differentiates a tardy and an early dismissal from an absence and will exclude tardies from any reports that tally absences for the purposes of filing a truancy petition.

Schools may implement attendance supports and interventions outlined in this Procedure by including accumulated tardies and/or early departures with full-day absences, however students shall not be subject to a truancy petition based on tardies.

E. 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 unless they are receiving and participating in educational services and enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107.

F. 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 four circumstances:

1. If there is an agreement between the appropriate school official and a student's parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student 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 up to two (2) monthly count dates 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 appropriate school official and a student's parent/guardian or an adult, emancipated, or appropriately aged student under this section must be in writing, in place either prior to the student's absences or shortly afterwards, and signed by the parties.

2. A student who receives Home/Hospital services shall be counted as an enrolled student for state reporting for up to two (2) monthly count dates provided they return by the end of the school year, or for up to twenty (20) consecutive school days if they don't return. As long as a student is participating in Home/Hospital they will remain enrolled in the district but will have their enrollment FTE changed to zero (0) when they are no longer counted as an enrolled student for state reporting.
3. A student who misses more than twenty (20) consecutive school days as a direct result of their McKinney-Vento eligibility, Foster Care and/or migrant status will remain enrolled in the district until the end of the current school year, but will have their enrollment FTE changed to zero (0) after the twentieth consecutive absence for state reporting.

4. A student who is subject to quarantine for more than twenty (20) consecutive school days pursuant to current district health and safety requirements and verified by the school as absent for this reason, will remain enrolled in the district.

Principals need to email *Student Systems Support* regarding any students who will be absent for more than twenty consecutive days but should remain enrolled.

A tiered response system for student absences (WAC 392-401-045) should include 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 outreach and reengagement process must include:

- A school and/or district point person/people to maintain the list, keep it updated, and coordinate the outreach;
- School or district staff assigned to conduct the outreach and attempts at reengagement in coordination with community partners or other programs;
- Multiple methods of communication and outreach in a language or mode of communication that the parent understands including phone calls, texts, letters, and home visits;
- Referral to community-based organizations;
- Documentation of the attempts to reach student and family; and
- Follow the required steps to address unexcused absences in chapter 28A.225 RCW, including early communication to parents, holding parent 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.

G. 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.

Additional Resources:

- [District Attendance web page](#) (*public*)
- [Staff Knowledge Articles for Attendance and Attendance Intervention](#) (*district login required*)
- [Attendance web page for staff](#) (*district login required*)

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Cross Reference: Policy Nos. 2340; 2150; 2151; 2161; 2163; 2165; 2255; 3114; 3115; 3116; 3121; 3123; 2124; 3125; 3127; 3130; 3414; 4218