

Attendance and Absences

The following attendance procedures are established by Tacoma School District No. 10 to focus attention of students, parents and staff on student school attendance as an educational priority and to provide the means for student attendance accounting.

Throughout this policy, the word "parent" refers to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a non-adult student; "parent" also refers to the individual student if such student is an adult.

- I. Student and parent responsibilities
 - A. Students are required to be punctual and attend all classes.
 - B. Students failing to attend all classes, unless excused, may be subject to corrective and/or legal action.
 - C. Students are not authorized to arrive late, be dismissed early, or be excused from any part of the regular school day for the purpose of taking private lessons of any kind.
 - D. For safety reasons, the parent is asked to notify the attendance/school office when a child will be absent and give the reason for absence on the morning of the absence. Upon the child's return to school, the parent must send a signed note or call the attendance/school office to provide reason for the absence. Absences shall be considered unexcused if the parent has not provided a reason within one school day of the student's return to school.
 - E. If a student knows in advance that he/she will be absent from class for a valid reason, he/she should notify the attendance/school office and his/her teacher(s) at least one day in advance.
 - F. If parents anticipate their child will be absent an extended period of time, they should provide the attendance office with written notice stating a valid reason three school days prior to the absence.
 - G. Students who leave school for any reason during the school day must check out through the attendance/school office. Students entering or returning to school during the school day must check in at the attendance/school office. Failure to check in and out may result in the absence being unexcused.
 - H. Parents should review student attendance and progress reports for summary/attendance information. If there are discrepancies or questions of interpretation, the attendance/school office should be contacted.

It is the student's responsibility to make up missed schoolwork within a reasonable length of time. A reasonable length of time shall be considered two days to complete make-up

work for each day of excused absence, unless the make-up period is extended by agreement with the teacher(s). Proper credit will be given for this make-up work.

- J. If a student's absence is expected to exceed twenty school days due to medical reasons, homebound instruction should be arranged in advance. The Special Education Office of the district should be contacted to arrange this homebound program.

- II. District, school and staff responsibilities
 - A. The principal shall communicate annually the attendance requirements of the district and school to students and parents. New students shall receive this information at the time of their enrollment.

 - B. Each teacher is responsible for taking daily attendance and maintaining accurate attendance records on each student assigned to his/her class(es). These records are the documentation of a student's attendance and are the basis for appropriate action for nonattendance. This responsibility may not be delegated to students.

 - C. At the first sign of an attendance problem, including, but not limited to absences from class, the teacher will contact the parent and ask for his/her assistance to correct the situation. Staff shall make continual efforts to assist students in correcting attendance problems.

 - D. On the first occasion in a month of a student's unexcused absence, the principal/designee shall telephone or send written notice to the student's parent. After the second unexcused absence in a month, a conference shall be scheduled with the parent in order to analyze the causes of the child's absences. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day is scheduled to take place within 30 days of the second unexcused absence, the conference regarding attendance may be held on that day. If the parent does not attend the conference, the parent shall be notified of the steps the district has decided to take to reduce the student's absences. Schools will utilize other appropriate interventions to eliminate or reduce attendance problems. Interventions include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1. Adjusting the child's school program, school or course assignment;
 - 2. Providing more individualized or remedial instruction;
 - 3. Providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;
 - 4. Assisting in obtaining supplementary services for the student, which may eliminate or reduce the cause(s) for absences.

Not later than the fifth unexcused absence in a month, the school shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements. If such action is not successful, the district shall file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, student, or parent

and student no later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year.

- E. In the event of excused absences (or emergency expulsions) of three or more days, staff members will make every effort to provide make-up work within a maximum of 24 hours of the student/parent request. Staff are not obligated to provide make-up work for students absent due to a long-term suspension or an expulsion.
- F. Students who are absent from school for twenty consecutive school days, or students who are expelled, shall be withdrawn from school. Students who are long-term suspended such that their suspension will result in a loss of grade(s) and/or credit(s) shall also be withdrawn from school. Prior to withdrawing a student because of unexcused absences, written notice of the absences will be sent to the student's parent.
- G. The principal has the ultimate responsibility for the disposition of any attendance-related decisions, consistent with this regulation.
- H. Students shall not be suspended for tardiness or unexcused absences.

III. Specific procedures applying to levels of schooling

- A. In addition to the above requirements, the following rules shall apply to the specified educational level:
 - 1. **Preschool Level**
A variety of early childhood programs provide educational and developmental experiences for children before kindergarten. Each early childhood program is responsible for developing attendance rules.
 - 2. **Elementary School Level (Kindergarten and Grades 1-5)**
 - a. Student absences shall be reported by teachers to the principal's office. If the student's parent has not been notified of the absence, a representative of the office will attempt to contact the parent by telephone on the first day of absence.
 - b. When a student returns to school after an absence, the student's homeroom teacher or office personnel will indicate on the attendance record whether the absence is excused or unexcused. If verification of an excused absence is received the next day, the teacher or office personnel will correct the attendance record to show an excused absence.
 - c. Elementary attendance is entered in the district attendance system on a half-day basis (a.m. and p.m.). A student missing more than 90 minutes per half day will be considered absent for that half day. Half days are calculated on first 3 hours of the day and last 3 hours of the day.
 - d. An unexcused absence for a day is defined in the following manner:
For kindergarten students who are at least six years old, an unexcused absence for half-day kindergarten session shall be counted as a day's unexcused absence. For

students in grades 1 through 5 who are at least six-years old, an unexcused absence for half of the day (either morning or afternoon) plus an unexcused absence for any portion of the other half of the day shall be counted as a day's unexcused absence.

3. Middle School Level (Grades 6-8)
 - a. Student absences shall be recorded on a period-by-period basis by teachers.
 - b. In the case of an absence, if the student's parent has not contacted the attendance office, the attendance office staff will attempt to contact the parent by mail or telephone.
 - c. When the student returns to school after an absence, he/she must obtain a re-entry form from the attendance office before returning to class. If a student attempts to enter class without a re-entry form, the teacher will send the student to the attendance office. If the student's absence has not been verified as excused, the absence will be marked unexcused. A student who must leave class to obtain a re-entry form will be marked tardy.
 - d. Middle school attendance is entered in the district attendance system on a half-day basis (a.m. and p.m.). A student missing more than 90 minutes per half day will be considered absent for that half day. Half days are calculated on first 3 hours of the day and last 3 hours of the day.
 - e. An unexcused absence for a day is defined in the following manner: For schools operating with an even number of periods in the day, an unexcused absence for half of the periods in the day plus an unexcused absence for any portion of the rest of the day shall be counted as a day's unexcused absence. For schools operating with an odd number of periods in the day, an unexcused absence for more than half of the periods in the day shall be counted as a day's unexcused absence.

4. High School Level (Grades 9-12)
 - a. Student absences shall be recorded on a period-by-period basis by teachers.
 - b. In the case of an absence, if the student's parent has not contacted the attendance office, the attendance office staff will attempt to contact the parents by mail or telephone.
 - c. When the student returns to school after an absence, he/she must obtain a re-entry form from the attendance office before returning to class. If a student attempts to enter class without a re-entry form, the teacher will send the student to the attendance office. If student's absence has not been verified as excused, the absence will be marked unexcused. A student who must leave class to obtain a re-entry form will be marked tardy.
 - d. High school attendance is entered in the district attendance system on a period-by-period basis.

- e. An unexcused absence for a day is defined in the following manner:
For students with an even number of periods in their school program, an unexcused absence for half of the periods in the schedule plus an unexcused absence for any portion of the rest of the day shall be counted as a day's unexcused absence. For students with an odd number of periods in their school program, an unexcused absence for more than half of the periods in the schedule shall be counted as a day's unexcused absence.
- 5. Special Education (Preschool through Grade 12)
If a student is enrolled in a special education program and the procedures specified in this regulation fail to improve the student's attendance, an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting will be convened to review the appropriateness of the student's program and placement. Failure to reach agreement on the student's placement or program may be resolved through the procedures specified in federal, state, and district regulations.
- 6. Alternative Programs (Kindergarten through Grade 12)
Each alternative program shall develop program-specific guidelines for the reporting and recording of student absences, which are consistent with this regulation. An unexcused absence for a day in an alternative program is defined as the student being absent without excuse for more than half of the student's scheduled day.

IV. Tardiness

- A. A student is tardy when not at his/her desk or workstation when class begins. Teachers may allow exceptions for students with special needs.
- B. Tardies may be excused for the same reasons absences are excused. (Refer to V. B)
- C. If tardiness becomes a continuing problem, the student's parent will be notified by the teacher and the student will be referred to the principal/designee. The principal/designee shall work cooperatively with the student and parent to remediate the tardiness problem. Remediation will include disciplinary action, but shall not include short- or long-term suspensions. (see Section II. C. and II. H.)

V. Absences

- A. Any period a student is not in class shall constitute a class absence, except for school-related activities as described in "D" below.
- B. Excused Absences:
 - 1. Absences for the following reasons shall be excused:
 - a. Personal illness, health condition, or medical or dental appointments;
 - b. Family emergencies approved by the principal (examples include: fire, significant illness, death or funeral of a family member);

- c. Appearances in court when required by law;
 - d. Long-term suspensions that do not result in a loss of grades or credits, short-term suspensions, and emergency expulsions;
 - e. Approved family activities, as detailed in section V.E. of this regulation;
 - f. Religious observances; and
 - g. School-approved activities.
 - 2. Students absent for religious observances shall not have the absence count against attendance requirements for school-based reward, incentive or behavior management programs
- C. Unexcused absences:
 - 1. Absences for reasons not listed above are unexcused.
 - 2. Students returning to school without providing a valid excuse from a parent within one school day will have the absence recorded as unexcused.
 - 3. Schools may (but are not obligated to) provide the opportunity for make-up work due to unexcused absences.
 - 4. Unexcused absences may adversely affect a student's grade if the teacher:
 - a. has shown a relationship between attendance and instructional goals and objectives of the course;
 - b. advised the student and parent(s)/guardians(s) in writing and by posting at the beginning of the year; and
 - c. obtained approval from the principal for guidelines to be used in classes in which attendance may adversely affect grades or credits.
- D. Impact of Attendance on Grades
 - 1. At the beginning of each term, each teacher shall specify in writing the student learning goals or standards for his/her respective courses.
 - 2. A student's grade may be adversely affected by an absence if the teacher has:
 - a. Shown a relationship between attendance and instructional goals and objectives of the course;
 - b. Advised the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing and by posting at the beginning of the school year; and
 - c. Obtained approval annually from the principal for guidelines to be used in which attendance may adversely affect grades or credits.
- E. Planned Family Activities
 - 1. A parent may request that a planned family activity be approved by contacting the building principal in writing at least three school days before the child's absence.
 - 2. If approved, the planned family activity shall be considered an excused absence, provided all conditions in this section are met.
 - 3. Approval is at the discretion of the principal. Approval or denial is on a student-by-student basis, and shall include a fair consideration of the impact of the planned absence on the student's academic progress.

4. The principal may require an agreement with the student and parent to complete special assignments and/or missed work.
5. Failure to complete an agreed upon assignment will cause the absence to be considered unexcused.
6. Except in extenuating circumstances, the total number of days for excused absences due to planned family activities in a school year shall not exceed five days.

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