

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a call log and/or a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian or, in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences.

Each school will inform students and parents about the benefits of regular school attendance; and the potential effects of excessive absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused, on academic achievement and graduation and dropout rates, the school's expectations of the parents and guardians to ensure regular school attendance, the resources available to assist the student and parents and guardians; the role and responsibilities of the school; and the consequences of truancy, including compulsory education requirements.

A parent must date and acknowledge review of the information before or at the time of enrollment of the student at a new school and at the beginning of each school year.

Excused Absences

The following are examples of valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Assignments and/or activities not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness may be made up in the manner provided by the teacher.

- A. **Participation in school-approved activity or instructional program.** To be excused, this absence must be authorized by a staff member and the affected teacher must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
- B. **Absence due to:** illness; health condition; medical appointment; family emergency; religious purposes; court, judicial proceeding, court-ordered activity or serving on a jury; post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview; State recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055; directly related to the student's homeless status, or foster care/dependency status; disciplinary/corrective action; safety concerns; and migrant status.

When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail or written note and to provide the excuse for the absence. Each school will publish procedures regarding how to excuse an absence. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation. Students fourteen years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease will notify the school of their absence with a note of explanation which will be kept confidential. The explanation does not need to specify the nature of the testing or treatment. Students thirteen years and older may do the same for mental health, drug or alcohol treatment; and all students have that right for family planning and abortion.

A parent/guardian may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday. In addition, a student, upon the request of his/her parent, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property. A student will be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.

- C. **Absence for parental-approved activities.** This category of absence will be counted as excused for purposes agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian for a maximum of five days. An absence may not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress. In participation-type classes (e.g. certain music and physical education classes), the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction because of absence from class. All such absences shall be prearranged. Failure to prearrange the absence may result in the absences being unexcused. In such a case, a parent or guardian-approved absence would have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress, which would ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course. A student, upon the request of his/her parent/guardian, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property or otherwise involves the school to any degree.
- D. **Absence resulting from disciplinary actions.** As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure will have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments will be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
- E. **Extended illness or health condition.** If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school will arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practical. If the student is unable to do his/her schoolwork, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences fall into two categories:

- A. Submitting an excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined previously; or
- B. Failing to submit, whether by phone, e-mail or in writing, any type of excuse statement by the parent, guardian or adult student.
 - 1. Each unexcused absence will be followed by notification the parent or guardian of the student. A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.
 - 2. After three unexcused absences within any month, a conference will be scheduled between the parent, student and principal or designee. At such a conference the principal or designee, student and parent may consider:
 - a. Adjusting the student's program;

- a. Providing more individualized instruction; preparing the student for employment with specific vocational experience or both;
 - b. Transferring the student to another school;
 - c. Assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or,
 - d. Other interventions deemed to improve the students' attendance.
 - e. If the parent does not attend, the scheduled conference the conference can be conducted with the student and school official and the parent will be notified of the steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.
3. After the second unexcused absence and before the fifth unexcused absence the school will take data-informed steps to eliminate or reduce the child's absences.
- a. In middle and high school, these steps must include offering the application of the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment by a school district's designee under RCW 28A.225.026
 - b. Students and parents must agree to participate the WARNS or other assessment by signing a consent form.
 - c. Any student with an existing 504 plan or individualized education plan (IEP), these steps must include convening of the child's IEP or 504-plan team. If necessary and if consent from the parent is given, a functional behavior assessment (FBA) will be conducted to explore the function of the absence behavior and if appropriate, a behavior plan completed.
 - d. Any student, without an IEP or 504 plan, reasonably believed to have a mental or physical disability or impairment, will be brought to guidance team to consider an evaluation.

No later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements. The district will refer the student to a community truancy board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.

4. If the above action fails to correct the attendance problem, the following truancy petition procedure will apply only to students under the age of eighteen:
- 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, the district will file a petition with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, student or parent and student in accordance with the direction given by the juvenile court and the prosecuting attorney's office. The petition consists of written notification to the court alleging that:
- a. The student has unexcused absences in the current school year. While petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any one month, or ten or more unexcused absences in the current school year, a petition

may be filed earlier. In addition, unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district will be counted when preparing the petition;

- b. Attesting that actions taken by the school district have not been successful in Substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
- c. Court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student's absences from school.

The petition will include the student's name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity; and the names and addresses of the student's parents/guardians, whether the student and parent are fluent in English, whether there is an existing individualized education program (IEP), and the student's current academic status in school.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required. At the district's choice, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions. If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court shall grant the petition and enter an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determined by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to most likely cause the student to return to and remain in school while the student is subject to the court's jurisdiction. If the court assumes jurisdiction, the school district will periodically report to the court any additional unexcused absences by the student, actions taken by the school district, and an update on the student's academic status in school at a schedule specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three (3) months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

5. Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of his/her parent/guardian, in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence will be subject to corrective action in accordance with Policy 3241 and Procedure 3241P.

6. Students six or seven years of age, who have been enrolled in the district, are required to attend school and their parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents/guardians who wish to withdraw their children before the age of eight, and against whom no truancy petition has been filed, may withdraw the students from school. When a six or seven year old student has unexcused absences, the district will do the following:

- a. Notify the parent or guardian in writing or by telephone after one unexcused absence in any month.
- b. Request a conference with the parent or guardian and child to analyze the causes of the student's absences after two unexcused absences in any month (a regularly scheduled teacher-parent conference held within thirty days may substitute).
- c. Take steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences, including: adjusting the school program, school or course assignment; providing more individualized or

remedial instruction; offering enrollment in alternative schools or programs; or assisting in obtaining supplementary services.

- d. After seven unexcused absences in a month, or ten in a school year, the district will file a truancy petition.

Transfers

If a student transfers to the Bellevue School District from another school district during the school year, the Bellevue School District will request attendance records (including unexcused absences) and a copy of the WARNS or other assessment used to determine steps taken to reduce or eliminate unexcused absences and a history of any best practices or research based intervention attempted by the student's prior school.

If a student transfers from the BSD to another school district during the school year, the BSD will provide the abovementioned information with a request of records.

Tardies

Students are expected to be in class on time. This means that students are expected to be in their classrooms, in their seats, and ready for class at the beginning of the class. Students who show up late disrupt the teacher and the learning of others, and do not get the full value of the education being offered. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student may be referred to the principal or counselor and may be subject to corrective action.

Early Release

Students are expected to remain in class until the end of the class. This means that students are expected to be in their classrooms and engaged in the learning until the students have been dismissed by the teacher. Students who leave early disrupt the teacher and the learning of others, and do not get the full value of the education being offered. Secondary students--when a student leaves class or school early without permission or it becomes frequent or disruptive, the student may be referred to the principal or counselor and may be subject to corrective action.

Sanctions

All corrective actions and/or interventions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in accordance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment. (See Bellevue School District policy 3241, and procedure 3241P, *Classroom Management, Corrective Actions and/or Interventions*, and Procedure 3241.1P *Exceptional Misconduct*.)

Excessive Absences

If a student has excessive absences, a note from a medical/mental health professional may be required. If a student reaches 20 absences in a year (excused and unexcused) a petition may be

filed at the principal's discretion if interventions to improve the student's attendance have been attempted.

A student who is in elementary school and has five or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year, or ten or more excused absences in the current school year, the school will schedule a conference or conferences with the parent or child at a time reasonably convenient for all persons included unless prior notice has been given or a doctor's note has been provided and an academic plan is put into place, so the student does not fall behind.

The purpose of the conference is to identify:

1. the barriers to the student's regular attendance and
2. the supports and resource that may be made available to the family to improve the student's attendance

If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference day it to take place within 30 days of the absences, the school may schedule this conference on that day.

The conference must include at least one school district employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, human service specialist or family service specialist, except in those instances when a student has an IEP or 504 plan then a reconvening of the team that created the plan is required.

Absences and Student Athletes

Student athletes are expected to attend on days of practices and competitions. Coaches are provided with a daily printout of attendance to ensure their athletes are eligible to practice or compete based on the following:

- Students must attend a minimum of (5) classes for a 7-period schedule (Monday, Tuesday and Friday)
- Students must attend a minimum of (4) classes for a 6-period schedule
- Students must attend a minimum of (2) classes for a 3-period schedule (Wednesday)
- Students must attend a minimum of (3) classes for a 4-period schedule (Thursday) In rare, extreme and extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student, eligibility to practice or compete may be granted in advance, on a case-by-case basis.

Date: 8.14, 9.15, 8.17, 8.18