

## **ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE**

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day’s learning on the previous day’s, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student’s mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws—one dealing with the required presence of school-aged children in school, e.g., compulsory attendance, the other with how a child’s attendance affects the award of student’s final grade or course credit—are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

### **Compulsory Attendance**

#### Age 19 and Older

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 19th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. If a student 19 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester the district may revoke the student’s enrollment. The student’s presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See policy FEA.]

#### Between Ages 6 and 19

State law requires that a student between the ages of 6 and 19 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument.

A student will be required to attend any assigned accelerated instruction program, which may occur before or after school or during the summer, if the student does not meet the passing standards on the state assessment for his or her grade level and applicable subject area.

#### Prekindergarten and Kindergarten

Students enrolled in prekindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school and are subject to the compulsory attendance requirements as long as they remain enrolled.

### **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance**

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- mf* Religious holy days;
- mf* Required court appearances;
- mf* Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship;
- mf* Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, if the student comes to school or returns to school on the same day as the appointment. A

note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's return to campus.

- mf For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state,
  - An activity required under a court-ordered service plan; or
  - Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

As listed in Section 1 at Children of Military Families, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments.

### Secondary Grade Levels

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed.

## **Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance**

### All Grade Levels

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction, termed "accelerated instruction" by the state; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

### Age 19 and Older

After a student age 19 or older incurs a third unexcused absence, the district will send the student a letter as required by law explaining that the district may revoke the student's enrollment for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking a student's enrollment, the district may implement a behavior improvement plan.

### Between ages 6 and 19

When a student between ages 6 and 19 incurs unexcused absences for three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, the school will send a notice to the student's parent, as required by law, to remind the parent that it is the parent's duty to monitor his or her child's attendance and to require the student to come to school. The notice will also inform the parent that the district will initiate truancy prevention measures and request a conference between school administrators and the parent. These measures will include a behavior improvement plan, school-based community service, or referrals to either in-school or out-of-school counseling or other social services. Any other measures considered appropriate by the district will also be initiated.

If you have questions about your student and the effect of his or her absences from school, please contact the facilitator or any other campus administrator.

A court of law may also impose penalties against a student's parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the

student is absent without excuse from the school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If a student age 12 through age 18 incurs unexcused absences on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the district, in most circumstances, will refer the student to truancy court.

[See policy FEA(LEGAL).]

<b>Absences and Tardies</b>		
<b>Unexcused Absences:</b>		
3 unexcused absences	Skyward to generate a letter	
8 unexcused absences	Skyward to generate a letter	
	Letters to go out for each additional unexcused absence.	
<b>90% Rule:</b>		
5 absences in one semester		
10 absences in one semester		
Each additional absence	K-6 will be for the year with the 90% rule	
	7-12 will be per semester	
<b>Tardies: (Including arriving late or leaving early)</b>		
6 tardies	Skyward to generate letter	
9 tardies	Skyward to generate letter	
		Identified by pulling an absence occurrence report
12 tardies	File with the court	

### **Attendance for Credit Kindergarten Through Grade 12**

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, that allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed the plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. [See policy FEC.]

All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. In determining whether there were

extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- mf* If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed above at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered extenuating circumstances for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- mf* A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district.
- mf* In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- mf* The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- mf* The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.
- mf* The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- mf* The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit or a final grade.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the board by following policy FNG(LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

### **School Hours**

Supervision begins at 7:00 a.m. for all elementary campuses. Elementary

Campuses 7:30-2:30

Intermediate Campuses 8:15-3:30

Junior High Campuses 8:15-3:30 High

School Campuses 9:00-4:15

### **Official Attendance-Taking Time (All Grade Levels)**

The district must submit attendance of its students to Texas Education Agency (TEA) reflecting attendance at a specific time each day.

Official attendance is taken every day according to the start time at each campus.

A student absent for any portion of the day, including at the official attendance-taking time, should follow the procedures below.

### **Documentation after an Absence (All Grade Levels)**

On the day the student is absent, his/her guardian should call the attendance clerk in the school office or may enter a note in Skyward Parent Access. When a student is absent from school, the student—upon returning to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the

reason for the absence. After 3 school days, the absence will be considered unexcused if a note has not been received by the school office. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law. Faxed notes may be accepted if they contain all required information, including the parent/guardian signature. Emails will not be accepted.

Please note that, unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the district is not required to excuse any absence.

### **Doctor's Note after an Absence for Illness (All Grade Levels)**

Upon return to school, a student absent for more than five (5) consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school. Otherwise, the student's absence may be considered unexcused and, if so, would be considered to be in violation of compulsory attendance laws.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's absence from school in order to determine whether the absence or absences will be excused or unexcused.

[See policy FEC(LOCAL).]