
Excused and Unexcused Absences - 3122

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided students. Daily attendance and active participation in each class are critical parts of the learning process. Students, at times, may appropriately be absent from class. The following principles shall govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district:

A. Excused Absences (School Day and Individual Class)

1. Excused absences are absences due to:
 - a. illness or a health condition,
 - b. a religious observance, when requested by a student's parent(s),
 - c. school-approved activities,
 - d. family emergencies,
 - e. required court proceedings,
 - * f. with prior administrator approval, family trips,
 - g. and, as required by law, disciplinary actions or short-term suspensions.

*Since high school coursework generates credit toward graduation, family vacations may only be excused in exceptional circumstances.

The principal or designee may only grant permission for a student's absence providing such absence does not adversely affect the student's educational process.

2. If an absence is excused, the student shall be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher. An exception is 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. A student shall be allowed one make-up day for each day of absence.
3. An excused absence shall be verified by the parent or guardian, the student if legally emancipated or at least eighteen (18) years of age, or school authority responsible for the absence. 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 (13) years old and older have the legal right to keep information about drug, alcohol or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen (14) years old and older legally have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

B. Unexcused School Day Absences

A school day absence is defined as non attendance for a majority, more than one half, of a school day.

1. An unexcused absence shall result in appropriate consequences as a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability. A student's grade shall be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent without excuse.
2. The school shall notify a student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one (1) unexcused absence within any calendar month during the school year. The notification shall include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.
3. A conference with the parent or guardian shall be held after two (2) unexcused absences within any month to determine what corrective measures should be taken to ameliorate the cause for the student's absences from school. If the parent does not attend the conference, the parent shall be notified of the steps the school has initiated to reduce the student's absences.
4. Not later than the student's fifth (5th) unexcused absence in any month the school shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements, or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010. A student may receive an in-house suspension, suspension, or expulsion for habitual truancy. Prior to a suspension or expulsion, the parent shall be notified in writing that the student has unexcused absences.

Excused and Unexcused Absences - 3122

5. If such action is not successful, the school 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 (7th) unexcused absence within any month or upon the tenth (10th) unexcused absence during the current school year.
6. All suspensions or expulsions shall be reported in writing to the superintendent within 24 hours after imposition.

C. Attendance Requirements for Children Under Eight (8) Years of Age.

Although compulsory attendance laws apply only to children who are at least eight (8) years of age up to eighteen (18) years of age (see policy 3121), students who are less than eight (8) years of age who have been enrolled in the district's schools are required to attend school, and their parents are responsible for ensuring that they attend.

D. Tardiness and Individual Class Absences

Unless properly excused, students are required to be in class each assigned class period and on time. A *tardy* becomes an *absence* if the student arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes late per instructional hour.

E. Partial Day Absence

Students who must leave the school during the school day must be properly checked out through the Attendance Office prior to leaving school (see 3124 and 3124P). Leaving without prior approval and without properly signing out will be cause for disciplinary action.

F. Class Absence Limit – Before Loss of High School Credit

1. Daily attendance and active participation in each class are vital to a comprehensive education. Therefore, in any semester, when a student accumulates the equivalent loss of eleven (11) instructional hours in a class, excused or unexcused, but excluding absences for religious observances, the student and parent/guardian will be notified that there has been a loss of credit in that subject. The student will remain in the class to allow for continued learning and the right to appeal. School-approved activities and discipline suspensions which require a student to miss class are not included. Pre-arranged and all other absences, excused and unexcused, are included.
2. An Attendance Appeals Committee composed of students, parents, teachers, and an administrator shall consider all appeals. The committee shall receive annual training and operate under common democratic principles. The purpose of the Attendance Appeals Committee is to maximize the daily attendance and learning of all students.
3. The committee will thoughtfully consider the appropriateness and circumstances of each absence.
4. The committee may choose to reinstate credit with or without conditions, or deny credit. Committee decisions will not be reconsidered. If credit is denied, a student will receive a "N.C." grade if s/he remains in the class and is a productive participant. Upon a teacher or student request, the student may be removed from class due to disruptive or nonproductive conduct and a "F" grade will be given.

G. Student/Parent Notification

Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents are necessary for the success of these policies and procedures a condensed version shall be disseminated each school year. The complete attendance policy and procedure are available to students and parents upon request.

Excused and Unexcused Absences - 3122

Cross References:

Policy 3121	Compulsory Attendance
3200	Student Rights and Responsibilities
3230	Student Privacy
3300	Student Discipline
3305	Rules of Conduct, K-12
3306	Rules of Conduct, K-5
3320	Long-Term Suspension/Expulsion
3321	Short-Term Suspension
3342	Possible Consequences for Misbehavior, K-5
3342	Possible Consequences for Misbehavior, 6-12
3345	Procedural Due-Process

Legal References:

RCW 13.34.300	Failure to cause juvenile to attend school as evidence under neglect petition
28A.225	Compulsory School Attendance
WAC 180-16-215 (4)	Minimum 180 school day year--Five day flexibility--Students graduating from high school
180-40-235	Discipline--Conditions and limitations
180-40-260	Long-term suspension--Conditions and limitations

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers shall keep a record of absence and tardiness. A computerized message will contact households in the evening informing parents that their student(s) missed one or more periods that day. The message will also notify parents of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.

A. Excused absences (School Day and Individual Class)

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness:

1. Participation in a school approved activity

1) When a teacher requires the absence of a student from another class, the teacher will assume the responsibility to clear that absence. A STUDENT'S DECISION TO MISS A CLASS TO STUDY FOR A TEST OR TO COMPLETE AN ASSIGNMENT FOR ANOTHER CLASS IS NOT APPROPRIATE. 2) For in-building events involving a few students, such as lunch-time sales and activity set-ups, the requesting teacher will communicate with sending teachers PRIOR to having students miss class. 3) For field trips involving a number of students, an attendance list (both initial and final) will be provided to all staff by the sponsoring teacher as per building field trip procedures. 4) Conferences with counselors and administrators are school approved activities.

2. Absence due to illness or health condition, family emergencies or trips, observation of established religious holidays, and court appointments:

Students fourteen years old and older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease shall notify the school of their absence with a signed note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen years old and older may do the same for mental health, drug, or alcohol treatment, and all students have that right for family planning and abortion.

3. Pre-Arranged Absences

Pre-arranged absences are absences which are evaluated in advance. To obtain a pre-arranged absence, the student must:

- a. Get a prearranged absence form from the Attendance Office.
- b. Circulate the form among his/her teachers who will sign it and indicate to what extend the student's grade will be affected by the proposed absence.
- c. Have the parent/guardian sign the form.
- d. Return it to the Attendance Office one week prior to the absence.
- e. The Attendance Office will notify the parents/student if the absence will be excused according to the criteria above. In addition, major extenuating circumstances may be excused by an administrator through the pre-arrangement process.

Parents and students are responsible for evaluating the effect of the absence on the student's grade and progress and his/her standing with the attendance policy.

4. Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension are excused as required by law.

5. Absences for an extended illness or chronic health condition are excused. Please apply to the appropriate administrator or counselor.

Absences need to be verified by the parent or guardian and documented at home on a personal calendar. Parents should provide their students with a note or contact the Attendance Office by 7:00 A.M. of the day following an absence. After an absence, students are to report directly to the Attendance Office and then to class.

Assignments and/or activities not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness may be made up according to district policy. A student shall be allowed one make up day for each day of absence. Failure to punctually complete missed assignments will result in the loss of credit for those assignments. Students should note that not all types of work can be made up (special panels, guest speakers, etc.).

B. Unexcused School Day Absences

Unexcused absences fall into two categories: submitting a signed excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined above, or failing to submit any type of excuse statement signed by the parent, guardian, emancipated or adult student. This type of absence is also defined as truancy. School day absence is defined as non-attendance for a majority (more than half) of a school day.

1. Each unexcused absence shall be followed by a warning letter or telephone call to the parent of the student. Each written notice shall be in English or the primary language of the parent.
2. After two unexcused absences within any month, a conference shall be held between the parent, student and principal/designee.

3. Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the district shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements.
4. No later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year, 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.

A student's grade shall not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence. Any work due or assigned during an unexcused absence cannot be made up for credit.

C. Class Absence Limit/Loss Of Credit

1. In any semester, when a student accumulates the equivalent loss of eleven instructional hours, excused or unexcused, in a class, the student and parent/guardian will be notified that there has been a loss of credit. The student will remain in class during this time to allow for continued learning and the right to an appeal. School-approved activities and discipline suspensions which require a student to miss class do not count as one of these eleven absences. Pre-arranged and all other absences, excused and unexcused, are included. If these eleven absences have been caused by long-term extenuating circumstances or an extended chronic health condition, the parent should directly contact the appropriate administrator.

2. Students have the right to appeal loss of credit. Each appellant must appear before the Attendance Appeals Committee to account for his/her absences, and appeal for reinstatement of credit. The Attendance Appeals Committee will thoughtfully consider the appropriateness and circumstances of each absence. The committee will notify the student of its decision within three days of the hearing. Committee decisions will not be reconsidered. Acceptable absences are those defined in district policy as excused.

If credit is denied, a "N.C." grade will be assigned if the student comes to class and is productive. A "F" grade will be assigned if the student does not come to class and act in a productive manner. A "N.C." grade will not be factored into a student G.P.A., whereas a "F" grade will be included.

Upon teacher or student request, the student may be removed from class due to disruptive or nonproductive conduct. The student will then be assigned to In-House Suspension or receive a modified schedule.

D. Tardiness

Students are expected to be in class on time. Consequences for tardiness are progressive and begin at the level of the classroom teacher. A tardy becomes an absence if the student arrives more than fifteen minutes late. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student shall be referred to the principal. If counseling, parent conferencing, or disciplinary action is ineffective in changing the student's attendance behavior, he/she may be assigned to In-House Suspension or receive a modified schedule.

E. Partial Day Absence

Students who must leave the school during the school day must check out through the Attendance Office prior to leaving school providing a telephone call or note. Leaving without signing out will be cause for disciplinary action.

F. Truancy

Truancy is defined as absence without permission of parent/guardian or school personnel.

Excused and Unexcused Absences – 3122P

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Teachers shall keep a record of absence and tardiness. A computerized message will contact households in the evening informing parents that their student(s) missed one or more periods that day. The message will also notify parents of the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.

A. Excused Absences (School Day and Individual Class)

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness:

1. Participation in an alternative school-approved activity: 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.
2. Absences due to illness, health condition, family emergency, religious purposes, or court appointments: The parent is expected to notify the school office by 7:00 AM of the day following the absence or send a signed note of explanation with the student upon his/her return to school. Adult students eighteen (18) years of age or older and emancipated students (those over sixteen (16) years of age who have been emancipated by court action) shall notify the school office of their absences with a signed note of explanation. Students fourteen (14) years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease shall notify the school of their absence with a signed note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen (13) 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 may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday.
3. Pre-arranged absences are absences which are evaluated in advance. To obtain a pre-arranged absence, the student must get a pre-arranged absence form from the Attendance Office and circulate the form among his/her teachers, who will sign it and indicate to what extent the student's grade will be affected by the proposed absence. The parent shall sign the form and return it to the Attendance Office one week prior to the absence. The Attendance Office will notify the parents/student if the absence will be excused according to policy criteria. In addition, major extenuating circumstances may allow an administrator to excuse an absence through this pre-arrangement process. However, in participation-type classes the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. In such a case, an adverse effect on the student's educational progress may include a lower grade or loss of credit. Parents and students are responsible for evaluating the effect of the absence on the student's grade and progress and his/her standing with the attendance policy. An absence shall not be approved if it causes a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress.
4. Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension: As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure or students who have been placed on short-term suspension shall have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they are denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments shall be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
5. Extended illness or health condition: If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school shall 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.
6. Excused absence for chronic health condition: Students with a chronic health condition which interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance or participation program. The student and his/her parent shall apply to the principal or counselor for a Section 504 accommodation plan. A limited program shall be written which includes the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program shall be approved by the building 504 team. Staff shall be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information shall be respected at the parent's request.

Excused and Unexcused Absences – 3122P

Absences need to be verified by the parent or guardian and documented at home on a personal calendar. Parents should provide their students with a note or contact the Attendance Office by 7:00 A.M. of the day following an absence. After an absence, students are to report directly to the Attendance Office and then to class.

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 student shall be allowed one make up day for each day of absence. Failure to punctually complete missed assignments will result in the loss of credit for those assignments. Students should note that not all types of work can be made up (special panels, guest speakers, etc.).

B. Unexcused School Day Absences

Unexcused absences fall into two categories: submitting a signed excuse which does not constitute an excused absence as defined previously, or failing to submit any type of excuse statement signed by the parent, guardian, or student if at least eighteen (18) years of age or legally emancipated. This type of absence is also defined as truancy. Absence is defined as non-attendance for a majority (more than half) of a school day.

1. Each unexcused absence shall be followed by a warning letter or telephone call to the parent of the student. Each written notice shall be in English or the primary language of the parent.
2. After two (2) unexcused absences within any month, a conference shall be held between the parent, student and principal/designee. At such a conference, all parties shall consider: adjusting the student's program; providing more individualized instruction; preparing the student for employment with specific vocational experience; transferring the student to another school; assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence, or imposing other corrective actions that are deemed to be appropriate.
3. Not later than the student's fifth (5th) unexcused absence in a month, the district shall enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements, or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010. Additional types of remediation such as peer counseling and/or school discipline may be attempted.
4. No later than the seventh (7th) unexcused absence within any month or upon the tenth (10) unexcused absence during the current school year, 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. The petition consists of written notification to the court alleging that:
 - a. The student has at least five (5) or more unexcused absences within any month during the current school year or ten (10) or more unexcused absences in the current school year;
 - b. 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.
 - d. Additionally, the petition shall include the student's name, age, school and residence, and the names and residences of the student's parent(s).

A student's grade shall not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence. However, any work due or assigned during an unexcused absence cannot be made up for credit.

C. Attendance Requirements for Children Under Eight (8) Years of Age.

Although compulsory attendance laws only apply to children who are at least eight (8) years of age up to eighteen (18) years of age (see policy 3121), students who are less than eight (8) years of age who have been enrolled in the district's schools are required to attend school, and their parents are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents who wish to withdraw their children before the children are eight (8) years old and against whom no truancy petition has been filed, may withdraw the students from school. When a student who is less than eight (8) years old has unexcused absences, the district shall do the following:

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Issaquah School District

Last Revised:

Page 2 of 4

Excused and Unexcused Absences – 3122P

1. Notify the parent or guardian in writing or by telephone after one (1) unexcused absence in any month.
2. Request a conference with the parent or guardian and child to analyze the causes of the student's absences after two (2) unexcused absences in any month (a regularly scheduled teacher-parent conference held within thirty days may substitute).
3. Take steps to eliminate or reduce the student's absences, including: adjusting the school program, school, course assignment; providing more individualized or remedial instruction; offering enrollment in alternative schools or programs; or assisting in obtaining supplementary services.
4. After seven (7) unexcused absences in a month, or ten (10) in a school year, the district shall file a truancy petition.

D. Tardiness and Individual Class Absences

Unless properly excused, students are required to be in class each assigned class period and on time. Consequences for tardiness are progressive, beginning at the level of the classroom teacher. A *tardy* becomes an *absence* if the student arrives more than fifteen (15) minutes late per instructional hour. When a student's tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive, the student shall be referred to the principal. If counseling, parent conferencing, or disciplinary action is ineffective in changing the student's attendance behavior, he/she may be assigned to In-House Suspension or receive a modified schedule.

E. Partial Day Absence

Students who must leave the school during the school day must be properly checked out through the Attendance Office prior to leaving school (see 3124 and 3124P). Leaving without prior approval and without properly signing out will be cause for disciplinary action.

F. Class Absence Limit Before Loss Of High School Credit

1. In any semester, when a student accumulates the equivalent loss of eleven (11) instructional hours in a class, excluding absences for religious observances, the student and parent/guardian will be notified that there has been a loss of credit. The student will remain in class during this time to allow for continued learning and the right to an appeal. School-approved activities and discipline suspensions which require a student to miss class do not count as one of these eleven absences. Pre-arranged and all other absences, excused and unexcused, are included. If these eleven absences have been caused by long-term extenuating circumstances or an extended chronic health condition, the parent should directly contact the appropriate administrator.
2. Students have the right to appeal loss of credit. Each appellant must appear before the Attendance Appeals Committee to account for his/her absences, and appeal for reinstatement of credit. The Attendance Appeals Committee will thoughtfully consider the appropriateness and circumstances of each absence. The committee will notify the student of its decision within three (3) days of the hearing. Committee decisions will not be reconsidered. Acceptable absences are those defined in district policy as excused.

The Attendance Appeals Committee shall be composed of the following members: four (4) students, two (2) parents, two (2) teachers and one (1) administrator each serving one year terms. The committee will begin operation during the third week of the second and fourth quarters of each school year or as soon as necessary each semester. All decisions will be made by majority vote. The committee will have two (2) officers: a chairperson and a secretary. A quorum of five (5) will be necessary to conduct business. Appropriate training will be provided all members annually.

Excused and Unexcused Absences – 3122P

If credit is denied, a “N.C.” grade will be assigned if the student comes to class and is productive. An “F” grade will be assigned if the student does not come to class and act in a productive manner. A “N.C.” grade will not be factored into a student G.P.A., whereas a “F” grade will be included.

Upon a teacher or student request, the student may be removed from class due to disruptive or nonproductive conduct. The student will then be assigned to In-House Suspension or receive a modified schedule.

G. Forgery

Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of his/her parent, in order to wrongfully qualify for an excused absence shall be subject to the same corrective action that would have occurred had the false excuse not been used. In addition, corrective action for the falsehood will also be imposed.

H. Adult and Emancipated Students

Adult students are students eighteen (18) years of age or older. Emancipated students are students at least sixteen (16) years of age who have been emancipated by the court. Prior to the assumption of full responsibility for attendance and all other school functions by the adult or emancipated student, it is strongly recommended that a parent/student conference with an administrator be held.

I. Conformance With State And District Regulations

All actions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures shall be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment.