



September 2015

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The state Compulsory School Attendance Law (28A.225 RCW) has very strict expectations for student attendance at school. This law requires that your child(ren) attend(s) all classes every day unless they have an excused absence. Attendance is important to your child's academic achievement.

Setting and maintaining a family expectation that your child(ren) will go to school every day is one of the most valuable things you can do to ensure they graduate from high school. Students who are absent from school for any reason have difficulty keeping up with classroom instruction. They miss essential instruction for understanding key concepts and they quickly fall behind in completing assignments.

The following Seattle School District definitions apply to students at all ages:

**Excused Absences:**

- Unplanned absences are excused when your child's personal illness or injury, or the illness, injury or death of a family member, prevents your child from attending school. The school may require a note from your child's doctor before excusing absences if your child is absent due to illness or injury more than 10 days.
- Planned absences are excused when you submit a request to the principal or assistant principal at least three school days before the start of the planned absence, usually for a doctor or dentist appointment, or religious, or other special one-time events. Long-term absences or a succession of long-term absences may affect whether your child will be promoted. Absences for longer than twenty consecutive school days may result in your child being dropped from school enrollment.
- Absences due to short-term discipline of your child are excused on District attendance records unless your child is under court order to attend school without additional truancies or behavior problems.

**Unexcused Absences:**

- All other absences are considered unexcused, including absences caused by the student or parent oversleeping, student missing the bus, transportation problems, student needed for babysitting or translating for parents, student job requirements, disputes about student assignment, etc.
- Absences by long-term suspended and expelled students for whom space is available in the reentry program, but who do not enroll and attend, are unexcused.
- Family vacations or family trips during regular school days are not excused.

You may notify your child's school about your child's excused absence by telephone or in a written note unless your child's school requires a specific method of notification. Normally, excuses need to be received within two school days.

Excessive excused absences and tardies have an adverse effect on students' academic progress as well. Research shows that students who miss a lot of school in any year for any reason are more likely to drop out of high school. The Truancy Office will be paying close attention to students who exceed twenty (20) excused absences in a school year. Similarly, elementary students who arrive late to school and miss 15 or more minutes of core instructional time for ten or more days in a school year will be subject to school-based and central interventions, and may be subject to a truancy petition.

Respectfully,

Ruth McFadden, Manager, Truancy Office

**Truancy Office**

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