

## **ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE**

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education in order 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. There are two state laws dealing with attendance. The first law deals with the required presence of school-aged children in school, e.g., compulsory attendance. The second law covers how a child's attendance affects the awarding of a student's final grade or course credit.

### **Compulsory Attendance**

#### *Between Ages 6 and 18*

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 18 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.

### **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance**

#### *All Grade Levels*

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:

- Religious holy days
- Required court appearances
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship
- Documented health-care appointments or recognized services for the student or a child of the student. **(A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus)**
- For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state,
  - Mental health or therapy appointments; or
  - Court-ordered family visitations 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 I 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*

Absences of up to two days in a school year will also be considered an exemption for:

- A student serving as an early voting clerk, provided the district's board has authorized this in policy FEA(LOCAL), the student notifies his or her teachers, and the student receives approval from the principal prior to the absences, and
- A student serving as an election clerk, if the student makes up any work missed.
- An absence of a student in grades 6–12 for the purpose of sounding “Taps” at a military honors funeral for a deceased veteran will also be excused by the district.
- College Visits (Junior and Senior years only)
- Activities related to pursuing military enlistment (age 17 or older) with paperwork signed by the relevant military branch showing that the student's absence was related to enlistment.

### **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.

A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school, and the campus has attempted to offer interventions. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent without excuse from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, or
- Is absent without excuse on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

For a student younger than 12 years of age, the student's parent could be charged with an offense based on the student's failure to attend school.

If a student age 12 through age 17 violates the compulsory attendance law, both the parent and student could be charged with an offense.

[See policy FEA(LEGAL).]

### **Attendance for Credit or Final Grade (Kindergarten Through Grade 12)**

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student in kindergarten–grade 12 must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. 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 or a final grade for the class.

If a student attends less than 90 percent of the days a class is offered 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 or a final grade.

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the guidelines found in policies FEC and FM (LOCAL).

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

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 or a final grade will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

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

The district must submit attendance of its students to the TEA reflecting attendance at a specific time each day.

Official attendance is taken every day during the second instructional hour.

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

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

When a student is absent from school, the student upon arrival or return to school must bring a note signed by the parent, doctor or other service provider, that describes the reason for the absence. 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.

The campus will document in its attendance records for the student whether the absence is considered by the district to be excused or unexcused. Please note that, unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the district is not required to excuse an absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence.

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

Upon return to school, a student absent for more than four 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 school 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).]

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