

# 2900 Attendance

*Admission Washington County School District - Adopted 9-8-98; Revised 1-12-99; Revised 2-12-02; Revised 2-13-07; Revised 12-9-08; Revised 10-13-09; Revised 11-8-11; Revised 3-5-13; Revised 6-16-15; Revised 6-25-15*

## 1. Purpose & Philosophy:

The Washington County School Board believes that student learning and achievement is directly related to attendance. WCSD strives to make every effort to be in compliance with state law as well as work proactively together with parents, community resources; including the Fifth District Court to encourage the regular attendance of all Washington County students. The District believes this to be in the best interest of the students and the community. The Board, together with Washington County Schools, is committed to work in harmony with parents/guardian and to assist them with their responsibility to have their children in attendance at school.

## 2. Policy:

2.1. The "State Compulsory Education Requirements" (Utah Code, Section 53A-11-101) directs parents and schools as follows:

2.1.1. A person having control of a minor who has reached the age of six years, but has not reached the age of eighteen years, shall send the minor to a public or regularly established private school during the school year of the district in which the minor resides.

2.1.2. It is a class B misdemeanor for a person having control of a minor under subsection (1) to intentionally or recklessly fail to comply with the requirements of chapters 53A-11.

2.1.3. A local board of education shall report cases of willful noncompliance to the appropriate city, county, or district attorney.

2.2. Utah Code 53A-15-1501 Parental Rights in Education grants that the parent or guardian has the right to reasonable academic accommodations. The Washington County School district recognizes that the parent or guardian is the primary person responsible for the education of their student, and the school is in a secondary and supportive role to the parent or guardian. This includes the parent's right to excuse the parent's child from school.

2.2.1. Students are responsible for the completion of any work missed due to absence, regardless of the reason for the absence (excused, unexcused, truant).

2.3. As per Utah Code Section 53A-11-103, it is the duty of a school board, school district and principal to attempt to resolve attendance problems by:

- Expecting teachers to acknowledge and reward appropriate behavior in the area of attendance
- Working closely with parents in providing meaningful and consistent academic programming for their child
- Documenting an earnest and persistent effort on the part of the school to provide a meaningful education program, including the following steps, as reasonably feasible.
  - 1) Counseling of the minor by school authorities.
  - 2) Making any necessary adjustment(s) to the curriculum and schedule to meet special needs of the minor.
  - 3) Implementing other appropriate interventions (e.g. School of Life, make-up times) and considering alternatives proposed by the parent.
  - 4) Upon parent request, providing the parent with a list of resources to assist the parent in resolving the minor's attendance problems.
  - 5) Monitoring the school attendance.

- 6) Enlisting the assistance of community and law enforcement agencies as appropriate and reasonable feasible (e.g.: Voluntary participation in Attendance Mediation, St. George Police Department Student Resource Officers, Division of Child and Family Services, Child Protective Services).
- 7) Issuing a notice of compulsory education violation, by personal service or certified mail, to a parent of a school-age child if the school-age child is absent without a valid excuse, consistent with state law and school/District policy, *at least five times* during the school year. (See Attachment #3; Mandatory Parent Notification)
- 8) The notice of compulsory education violation shall contain requirements of Section 53A-11-101.5 including:
  - a. Stating that refusal to respond to the notice and subsequent follow-up is a class B misdemeanor; requesting parental involvement and support; and directing the parent of the school-age child to:
    - b. Meet with school authorities (designate specifically who), to discuss the school-age student's school attendance problems; and secure regular attendance by preventing the child from being absent without valid excuse five or more times during the remainder of the year.
- 9) Referring the student to the WCSD Dept. of Student Services.
- 10) The Student Services Department shall review the school's documentation if it is determined that reasonable efforts have been tried and failed, the department may proceed in referring/reporting the student/parent to the Office of the Washington County Attorney and/or Juvenile Court.

#### 2.4. Dissemination.

2.4.1. This policy will be posted in a prominent place at each school within the District. The policy will also be published in student registration materials; student, parent, and employee handbooks; on the school website, and in other appropriate school publications as directed by the Superintendent.

### 3. Definitions and Explanations:

3.1. Tardy: A tardy is defined as reporting to class after the bell to start class has sounded.

3.1.1. Tardy rationale. Tardiness not only hinders a student's ability to profit from instruction at the beginning of class, but it interrupts the work of the other students who made the effort to be on time. Research is abundantly clear that punctual students perform better in school and at work.

3.1.2. Each school is required to establish a uniform tardy policy for the school - to include consequences. Each school's tardy policy will be included in the school's handbook. All tardies will be recorded on PowerSchool. Individual teachers are directed to develop academic incentives for promptness. If the student has a valid excuse he/she may not be penalized for missing and must have an opportunity to make up participation activities.

3.1.3. It is the responsibility of the student and/or parent(s) to monitor tardies on PowerSchool, through progress reports, and by communication with the teacher. A tardy may be excused by a parent when an emergency situation results in a student arriving at school late. For secondary students, a student may not be excused for tardiness **between** classes.

3.2. Absences. An absence is defined as any time a student is not in attendance in the classroom to which he or she has been assigned. In order for an absence to be considered an excused absence, the school must be notified by the parent in a timely manner, consistent with state law and this policy.

3.2.1 A parent will be notified by automated phone or e-mail every time the parent's student is absent without excuse. A parent is responsible to provide the school with a current phone number. Parents are encouraged to monitor their student's attendance from this notification on, and are invited to call the attendance secretary at the school as often as necessary to improve the student's attendance.

3.2.2. Excused absence. Pursuant to a **WRITTEN** request, a parent has the right to excuse a student from attendance for a scheduled family event, or scheduled proactive visit to a health care provider without requiring a note from the provider. For such an absence to be "excused," (1) the parent must provide the written statement at least one school day prior to the scheduled event, and (2) the student must agree to make up course work for the missed school days consistent with the school/district policy. In addition a valid excuse means: illness (including chronic or medical need), family emergency, both of which may be excused via phone, in person or note within a reasonable timeframe not to exceed one week after the absence; an approved school activity; an absence permitted by a school age minor's individual education plan or 504 plan; or any other excuse established by the school district; such as: office excused (if student is detained in the office by school administration); court/detention absences; or homebound.

3.2.2.1. Excused absence status will not be considered when calculating excessive absenteeism unless it affects the student's academic performance. If absenteeism becomes so excessive that it impacts the student's ability to progress educationally and/or is affecting the student's academic performance, the absences may be considered and the school *may* provide opportunities for students to make up lost time and assignments; such as: lunch-time or after school make-up.

3.2.2.2. Illness or accident: A student who is absent for health-related reasons for a period of five (5) or more consecutive days, who is undergoing surgery, or who has been injured in an accident, qualifies for immediate homebound services. School work will be collected for the parent to pick up or an alternative educational program may be developed.

3.2.2.3. Chronic illness. Chronic health problems may or may not interfere with attendance at school and learning in the classroom. It is extremely important that parents notify the school concerning health-related problems that their students may have. Documentation from a health care provider is required in validating the seriousness of the chronic illness. If the chronic illness hinders a student's attendance, the parent is invited to meet with a school administrator to formulate an individual attendance plan that will meet the student's needs. It is the responsibility of the parent to schedule such a meeting.

3.2.3. Unexcused absence, excessive excused absences or truancy situations. An unexcused absence is any absence that is not excused consistent with the definitions and provisions of this policy. A parent, teacher, or a school administrator may request a conference to discuss the attendance of a student whom they deem to have an excessive number of absences; or follow the additional steps outlined in 2.3. of this policy. Such interventions would precede a referral to the Washington County 5th District Courts.

3.2.4. Chronic absenteeism. Student misses ten (10) percent or more school days.

3.3 Absences will be assigned the following marks on PowerSchool:

- T - Tardy
- E - Excused Absence
- X - Unexcused Absence
- S - Truant

M - Medical/Chronic Illness

F - Flu

H - Homebound

C - Court/Detention

A - School Related Activity

O - Office Excused

#### 4. Definitions & Procedures Applicable to Only Secondary Schools:

4.1. Truancy. A school-age minor who is enrolled in a public school shall attend the public school in which the school-age minor is enrolled. When a student is absent from the assigned class, without parental or school knowledge and this absence does not meet the standard of an excused or exempt absence, that student is considered truant. Administration must meet with parents and the student to make reasonable efforts to resolve the attendance problems as outlined in WCSD Policy 2.3.

4.1.1. The local school board may impose administrative penalties on a school-age minor who is truant. The board may authorize a school administrator, an administrator's designee, or a law enforcement officer acting as a school resource officer to issue notices or citations of truancy to school-age minors who are at least 12 years old. Prior to issuance of a notice or citation, truancy prevention and intervention must be attempted and proven unsuccessful, including those described in Section 2.3. The school must notify parents through mail or personal service. The notice must inform the parent of the opportunity to contest the truancy; as well as include the procedure for doing so. No agent of the school may issue a habitual truancy citation:

- Until a student has been truant at least 5 times.
- To a school-age minor who is less than 12 years of age.
- If the student has at least a 3.5 cumulative grade point average and the student is 16 years of age or older.

4.1.2. The parent shall have the right to appeal a notice of truancy in writing to the building level administrator within ten (10) days of being issued.

4.1.3. A student who is issued a truancy notice may be referred to juvenile court and is subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.

#### 5. Definitions & Procedures Applicable for Only Elementary Schools.

5.1. A school-age minor under the age of 14 must comply with the requirements of compulsory education as per Utah Code 53A-11-101.5, including the steps outlined in this Policy 2.1 - 2.4.

5.2. Parental refusal to comply with the actions taken by school authorities alone does not constitute educational neglect consistent with Utah Code 78A-6-319. In order for educational neglect to be considered by the courts, the following may be used for evidence:

- The child has failed to make adequate educational progress, and school officials have complied with the requirements of 53A-11-103; and
- The child is two or more years behind his/her age group expectations in one or more basic skills and is not receiving special education services or systematic remediation efforts; and
- The child has been absent from school without good cause, for **more than 10 consecutive school days or more than 1/16 of the applicable school term** (typically between 3.5 and 4 days)

5.3. For student ages 14 and younger, to further promote and instill early positive attendance patterns additional steps shall be completed, including sending a Courtesy Parent Notification letter from the

classroom teacher or school counselor via telephone, email, mail or in person. (See Attachment: Courtesy Parent Notification)

5.3.1. In addition, when a student has accumulated several unexcused absences during the school year, the school will contact parents by: telephone, text, e-mail, mail, or in person. An attendance summary will be provided which includes excused, unexcused absence and tardy totals (See Attachment: Parent Notification with Compulsory Education Requirements). The notice to the parent shall direct the parent to meet with school authorities to discuss the child's school attendance problems and direct the parent to cooperate with school personnel to secure regular attendance by the child. The notice shall provide the parent with the names or titles of the school personnel with whom the parent is directed to meet. The notice shall tell the parent that it is a class B misdemeanor for the parent to intentionally or recklessly fail to meet with school personnel to resolve the problems or fail to prevent further absences without valid excuse by the child.

5.3.2. If the parent does not attend the meeting, or if the meeting with the parents does not resolve the problem and the student accumulates no less than a total of five (5) unexcused absences, a certified or hand delivered letter home shall be sent to the child's home. The notice shall: (1) describe the problem, (2) describe necessary corrective action, (3) explain attendance mediation options, (4) direct the parents to meet with school personnel to discuss strategies to improve student's attendance, and (5) inform the parent(s) that if the situation is not corrected a referral may be sent to the 5<sup>th</sup> District Court for violation of compulsory education. (See Attachment: Mandatory Parent Notification)

5.3.3. If the parent does not meet with designated school personnel or resolve the child's attendance problems following receipt from the certified letter or signed receipt of Mandatory Parental Notification Letter, school personnel shall complete the referral form (See Attachment: Referral for Violation of Compulsory Education & Request for Court Action), **attach all required documentation** and submit this packet to the Washington County School District Director of Student Services for review, possible resolution and/or referral to the Office of the Washington County Attorney for violation of compulsory education.

[Attendance Letter 1: Courtesy Parent Notification](#)

[Attendance Letter 2: Parent Notification of Excessive Absences with Compulsory Education Requirements](#)

[Attendance Letter 3: Mandatory Parent Notification for Violation of Compulsory Education and/or Truancy](#)

[Referral for Violation of Compulsory Education & Request for Juvenile Court Action](#)