

SECTION II: OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

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Topics in this section of the handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child has a question about a specific school-related issue. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact the campus office.

ABSENCES / ATTENDANCE

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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. There are truly no days it is ok for a student to be absent. 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 compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit—are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

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Attendance Enforcement; Persons Age 19 or Older

Under §25.085(e), a person who voluntarily enrolls in or attends school after the person's 19th birthday is required to attend each school day for the entire period the program of instruction for which the student is enrolled is offered. This requirement is not enforceable through §25.093 or Chapter 65, Texas Family Code. However, if the person has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the school district may revoke the person's enrollment for the remainder of the school year subject to certain conditions.

Between ages 6 and 19

State law requires that a student between the ages of six 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 pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are required to attend school and are subject to the compulsory attendance requirements as long as they remain enrolled.

EXEMPTIONS TO COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

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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;
- Required military participation for students at least 17 years of age
- Documented health-care appointments, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus; and
- **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 I at **Accommodations for 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. Authorized by the board under policy FEA (LOCAL)

An absence will also be considered an exemption if a student 17 years of age or older is pursuing enlistment in a branch of the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the absence does not exceed four days and the student provides verification to the district of these activities.

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 of trustees 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.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

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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 campus facilitator or any other campus administrator.

A court of law may also impose penalties against a student's parent 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 school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If a student ages 12–18 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).]

ATTENDANCE FOR CREDIT OR FINAL GRADE (K-12)

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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 attendance committee 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 a plan approved by the attendance committee, 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 policies at FEC.]

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance will be considered extenuating circumstance for purposes of attendance for credit or the award of a final grade.
- The committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.

- 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.
- District transfer students attendance will be monitored closely and may be grounds for loss of ability to attend WISD if absences are excessive.
- The attendance committee may file on students that have more than 3 unexcused absences in a 4 week period for failure to attend school.

PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW WHEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

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Each and every day a student is absent from school, *parents are required to contact the Attendance Office to report the student's absence.* Students who are absent must bring a written statement signed by a parent/guardian stating the reason for the absence and present it to the Attendance Clerk at least 15 minutes before school starts on the day they return to school or within 3 days of the absence. Parent notes must be written and signed by the parent or doctor's office. In the event parental contact is not made and/or a note is not received, the absence is not excused.

Written verification for all absences is required regardless of verbal verification for attendance audit purposes. For students who have excessive absences, the administration may take legal action against the parent or guardian.

Absences will only be excused if the student provides written documentation and the absence is for the following reasons: doctors note, legal matters with a note from the appropriate authority, a verifiable death or serious life-threatening illness in the immediate family. Any other circumstances must be approved by the principal.

After three consecutive days of absence, a student must provide a written doctor's note or see the school nurse for evaluation.

A written parent's note will be accepted for excused absences through the third consecutive day of absence and then a written doctor's note will be required.

DRIVER LICENSE ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION

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For a student between the ages of 16 and 18 to obtain a driver license, you must present to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) a Verification of Enrollment and Attendance (VOE Form CDD-104). This VOE form verifies the applicant is enrolled in a public school and has met at least the minimum attendance requirement of 90 percent in each class they are enrolled in for the semester. The VOE form is required for original and renewal applicants under the age of 18, and the student can obtain this form from the school Attendance Office. VOE forms are valid for 30 days after issuance in the spring and fall semesters and for 90 days during the summer.

LEAVING CAMPUS (ALL GRADE LEVELS)

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Please remember that student attendance is crucial to learning. We ask that appointments be scheduled outside of school hours as much as reasonably possible. Also note that picking up a child early on a regular basis results in missed opportunity for learning. Unless the principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the school day. State rules require that parental consent be obtained before any student is allowed to leave campus for any part of the school day. The district has put the following procedures in place in order to document parental consent:

- For students in elementary and middle school, a parent or otherwise authorized adult must come to the office and sign the student out. Please be prepared to show identification. If the student returns to campus during the same day the documentation regarding the reason for the absence will be required.
- For students in high school, the same process will be followed. If the student's parent will authorize the student to leave campus unaccompanied, a note provided by the parent must be submitted to the main office in advance of the absence, no later than two hours prior to the student's need to leave campus. A phone call received from the parent may be accepted, but the school may ultimately require a note to be submitted for documentation purposes. Once the office has received information that the student's parent consents to the student leaving campus, a pass will be issued to the student to hand to his or her teacher with the necessary information. The student must sign out through the main office and sign in upon his or her return, if the student returns the same day. If a student is 18 years of age or is an emancipated minor, the student may produce a note on his or her own behalf.

Documentation regarding the reason for the absence will be required.

- If a student becomes ill during the school day and the school nurse or other district personnel determines that the student should go home, the nurse will contact the student's parent. Unless directed by the parent to release the student unaccompanied, the parent or other authorized adult must follow the sign-out procedures as listed above. If a student is allowed to leave campus by himself or herself, as permitted by the student's parent, or if the student is age 18 or is an emancipated minor, the nurse will document the time of day the student was released. Under no circumstances will a child in elementary or middle school be released unaccompanied by a parent or adult authorized by the parent.

*** Students are not authorized to leave campus during regular school hours for any other reason, except with the permission of the principal.**

Students who leave campus in violation of these rules will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

ATTENDANCE SUPPORT PROCESS

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Each campus has an attendance committee who review all student absences in excess of 10% of any 4 week, semester of 6 month period both excused and unexcused. The committee may advise additional student support services and/or truancy prevention measures based on their review. Parents may also ask to meet with a committee member for questions about attendance or to seek support for a student's attendance.

TARDIES

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Many students go through a school term without ever being tardy (late) to class. For others, the habit of getting to class late has become a problem and wastes valuable class time. To have classes move smoothly with few disruptions, it is important for students to be on time. A student who is tardy will be subject to disciplinary action. The following rules apply:

1. Students are considered tardy if they are not in the classroom when the bell sounds.
2. Acceptable tardy excuses will be those granted by the teacher or administrator.
3. Car trouble, flat tires, waking up late, etc. are not valid excuses for first-period tardiness.
4. Students will be subject to disciplinary action upon the receipt of a second tardy. These will be cumulative throughout all classes within a six-week period.