



**Washington County School District**  
121 West Tabernacle Street  
Saint George, Utah 84770  
435-673-3553

# District Policy 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; Revised 10-11-16; Revised 10-10-17*

---

### 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 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 designee for the local board of education shall report qualifying cases of willful noncompliance to the appropriate city, county, or district attorney involving minor's ages 14 and under.

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 for valid reasons as per 3.3.

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). Students with absences prior to the midterm week will be allowed to submit completed make-up work through the midterm grading period. Students with absences following the midterm week will be allowed to submit completed make-up work through the end of the current grading period.

The school is encouraged to provide opportunities for students to make up lost time and assignments; such as: lunchtime or after school make-up.

2.2.2. 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; and follow procedures as per policy.

### 2.3. Policy Dissemination

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. 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.

3.1.1. 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 and are invited to call the attendance secretary at the school as often as necessary to improve the student's attendance.

3.2 Chronic absenteeism: Student misses ten (10) percent or more school days. Excessive absences (whether excused or unexcused) are calculated into federal, state, and district chronic absenteeism reports.

3.2.1. Chronic absenteeism which affects the student's academic performance and educational progress will prompt interventions as per policy procedures.

3.3. Excused absence: The school shall record an excused absence for valid reasons, as listed below, when the parent/guardian:

3.3.1. Submits a written statement at least one school day before a scheduled family event (including an extended absence) or a scheduled proactive visit to a health care provider if the student agrees to make up course work for school days missed for the scheduled absence in accordance with this policy 2.2.1.

3.3.2. Excuses the student for illness or for a family emergency (such as a family death), both of which may be excused via phone, in person or by note within a reasonable timeframe as determined by the individual school, but not to exceed one week after the absence.

3.3.2.1. 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.

3.3.2.2. 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.

3.3.3. Additional valid excused absences include: an approved school activity; an absence as permitted by a school age minor's Individual Education Plan (IEP) 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.

3.3.4. Excused absence status will not be considered with regards to implementing the required interventions; unless the excused absenteeism becomes so excessive that it impacts the student's ability to progress educationally and/or is affecting the student's academic performance at which point the school may provide interventions as per policy procedures.

3.4. Unexcused absence: Any absence that is not excused consistent with the definitions and provisions of this policy. The school must provide interventions as per policy procedures.

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

3.5.1. 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.

3.5.1.1. 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.

3.5.1.2. 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.

3.6. 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. Procedure**

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 documenting an earnest and persistent effort on the part of the school to implement school-based restorative practices, as reasonably feasible, which limit referrals to court and are designed to help minors take responsibility for and repair their behavior, including the following:

- Monitor student attendance
- Provide school/teacher acknowledgement and reward of appropriate behavior in the area of attendance
- Provide counseling to the minor by school authorities

4.1. At five unexcused absences, issue a mandatory 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 (Attachment Mandatory Parent Notification).

The notice of compulsory education violation shall contain requirements of Section 53A-11-101.5 including:

- a. Statement that refusal to respond to the notice and subsequent follow-up, including intentionally or recklessly failing to meet with the designated school authorities to discuss the minor's attendance or failing to prevent the minor from being absent without valid excuse five more times throughout the remainder of the school year, is a class B misdemeanor;
- b. Statement requesting parental involvement and support;
- c. Statement directing the parent of the minor to meet with school authorities to discuss the school-age student's school attendance problems; and cooperate in securing regular attendance;
- d. Designation of school authorities with whom the parent is required to meet.

4.1.1. After the mandatory notice has been received, it is required that the designated school authority meet with the parent and continue to work closely with the them in providing meaningful and consistent academic and behavioral programming for their child and considering alternatives proposed by the parent.

- May provide articles, information and research regarding the negative impact that excessive absenteeism (whether excused or unexcused) is having or may have on the student's academic

performance, progress and graduation.

- Make any necessary adjustment(s) to the curriculum and schedule to meet special needs of the minor
- Provide the parent with a list of resources to assist them in resolving the minor's attendance problems, including enlisting the assistance of community agencies as appropriate; such as: voluntary participation in Attendance Mediation through Juvenile Justice; Division of Child and Family Services; and others as listed on the Washington County Child and Family Public Resource Guide or Parent Resources on the WCSD Website:

[http://counseling.washk12.org/site\\_file/counseling/files/public\\_resource\\_guide2011.jpg](http://counseling.washk12.org/site_file/counseling/files/public_resource_guide2011.jpg)

[http://counseling.washk12.org/site\\_file/counseling/files/wash\\_county\\_resource\\_list\\_july2014.pdf](http://counseling.washk12.org/site_file/counseling/files/wash_county_resource_list_july2014.pdf)

4.2. After meeting with the parents and after implementing and documenting interventions, if the student is then absent without valid excuse five or more times during the remainder of the year, for students under the age of 14, make a referral to the WCSD Dept. of Student Services.

- The referral shall be reviewed and if it is determined that reasonable efforts have been tried and failed, the department shall proceed in referring/reporting the parent/student to the Office of the Washington County Attorney.

4.3. When a student has chronic absences (10% of the total days missed) whether excused or unexcused which are affecting his educational performance, to further promote and instill positive attendance patterns an optional courtesy/nudge letter may be sent explaining the correlation between attendance and academic achievement and educational progression, graduation rates, as well as an illustration comparing the individual student's attendance vs. students school-wide, state-wide or nationally.

## **5. Definitions & Procedures Applicable to Only Secondary Schools**

5.1. Truancy. A school age minor who is at least 12 years old and 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.

Truancy is a status offense, i.e.: a noncriminal school-based action prohibited by minors. The minor may not be referred to law enforcement or court, however, may be referred to alternative school-based interventions, including restorative justice programs.

5.1.1. Habitual truant: A school-age minor is at least 12 years old and is truant at least 10 times during one school year.

5.2. Restorative Justice Programs: are school-based programs which are designed to enhance school safety, reduce school suspensions, and limit referrals to court, and more specifically with regards to compulsory education are designed to help minors take responsibility for their behavior/attendance. Restorative justice programs address the root cause of the behavior and are intended to help students stay in school and deal with their challenges in a healthier and more constructive way.

Examples of restorative justice programs include: Mobile Crisis Outreach Team (MCOT) (i.e.: a Division of Juvenile Justice service for minors or families of minors experiencing behavioral health or psychiatric

emergencies); Division of Juvenile Justice Receiving Center/Youth Services; Utah Youth Court (i.e.: an alternative to juvenile court for first-time offenders intended to provide youth with the resources to make better decisions); Truancy Support Centers; or comparable school-based programs which may provide support for the parents and the truant minor through counseling and community programs.

5.3. Taking a Truant Minor into Custody: An individual, such as a peace officer (sheriff or police officer), or school administrator may take a minor into custody if there is reason to believe the minor is a truant minor and release and return the minor to the principal of the minor's school of enrollment. Without unnecessary delay, the minor's parents must be notified.

If it is not appropriate to return the minor to school release the minor into the parent's custody. If the parent cannot be contacted, or is unable or unwilling to accept custody, ensure the student's safety and well-being by placing the child with an alternative restorative justice program. If none of the options mentioned are available the minor shall be referred to the Division of Child and Family Services. A minor taken into custody may not be placed in a detention center or other secure confinement facility.

5.4. Issuing Notices: Truancy prevention and intervention, such as those described in policy, must be attempted and proven unsuccessful, at which point the local school board may impose administrative penalties on a school-age minor who is at least 12 years old and who is truant at least five times during the school year. 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 of truancy to the minor. However, nothing prohibits the local school board or school district from taking action to resolve a truancy problem with a school-age minor who has been truant less than five times, provided that the action does not conflict with the requirements; i.e. interventions/restorative practices. (UCA 53A-11-101.7)

5.4.1. The school must notify parents through mail. The notice must inform the parent of the opportunity to contest the truancy. 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.

## **6. Definitions & Procedures Applicable for Only Elementary Schools**

6.1. 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 as per policy.

6.2. 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)

[Mandatory: Mandatory Parent Notification Final.pdf](#)

Referral for Violation of Compulsory Education & Request for Juvenile Court Action (for students 14 and under)