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; Revised 8-8-23; Revised 9-9-24

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," "Truancy" regulations, and "Duties in promoting regular attendance" (Utah Code, Sections 53G-6-202, 53G-6-203, 53G-6-206) direct parents and schools as follows:

2.1.1. The parent/guardian of a school-age child shall enroll and send the school-age child to a public or regularly established private school during the school year of the district in which the minor resides unless the school-age child is exempt from enrollment under Section 53G-6-204 or 53G-6-702.

2.1.2. It is a class B misdemeanor for a person having control of a minor who is under 12 years old and in grades 1 through 6 under subsection 2.1.1 to intentionally or recklessly fail to comply with the requirements of chapters 53G-6.

2.1.3. A designee for the local board of education shall report violations of this section to the appropriate city, county, or district attorney.

2.2. Utah Code 53G-6-204 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 section 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 Truant: Means a school-aged child is absent for at least half the school day without a valid excuse. A student cannot be considered truant more than one time per day.

3.3. Valid excuse: Means that parents/guardians communicate to the school 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 any of the following conditions:

- A physical or mental illness or injury (regardless of whether documentation from a medical professional is provided);
- mental or behavioral health of the child;
- a family death or emergency;
- an approved school activity;

- an absence permitted by the student's IEP/504;

- a scheduled family event or proactive visit to a health care provider if the parent communicates with the school before the scheduled absence and the student agrees to make up course work for school days missed by the end of the grading period.

"Valid excuse" does not mean a parent acknowledgement of an absence for a reason other than those listed above.

3.4 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 not 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.

3.5. 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

W Over 20 Minutes Tardy

E Excused Absence

X Unexcused Absence (If the unexcused absence is for at least half of the school day, the student is truant)

S Skipped Class

M Medical/Chronic Illness (Excused Absence)

F Flu (Excused Absence)

H Homebound (Excused Absence)

A School Related Activity (Excused Absence)

O Office Excused (Excused Absence)

Z Suspended (Out of School)

I Suspended (In School)

4. Procedure

As per Utah Code Section 53G-6-206, it is the duty of a school board, school district and principal to implement school-based interventions, including restorative practices, as reasonably feasible that are designed to create trusting relationships, improve attendance, improve academic performance, and reduce negative behavior referrals, and are designed to help minors take responsibility for and repair their behavior, including the following:

• Monitor student attendance

• Provide counseling to the minor by school authorities

• Make adjustments to schedule or curriculum

• Provide academic support and/or executive function skills instruction

• Consider alternate parent proposals

• Mentorship programs

• Provide a list of community resources available to assist parents (available at the district website https://www.washk12.org/counseling/parent-resources/)

• Inform parents about voluntary participation in Truancy Mediation (students in grades 7-12)

• Issue notice of truancy (Section 53G-6-203) or compulsory education violation (Section 53G-6-202) to the school-age child's parent if the school age child has been truant at least ten times during the school year

5. Definitions & Procedures Applicable to Secondary Schools (Grades 7-12 and age 12-17)

5.1. Truancy. A school age child who is in grade 7 or above and 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 for at least half of the school day and this absence does not meet the standard of an excused absence (see section 3.3), that student is considered truant.

5.2. If the student has been truant at least ten times during the school year, the school may issue a notice of truancy to the student's parent or guardian by personal service or registered mail that shall direct the school-age child and the child's parent/guardian to:

- Meet with school authorities to discuss the school-age child's truancies;

- Cooperate with the school in securing regular attendance by the school-age child.

Schools shall establish a procedure for a school-age child or parent/guardian to contest a notice of truancy.

5.3. If, after meeting with school authorities and being provided with school-based intervention (see Section 4), a school-age child is truant an additional ten times, the school-age child is then considered “habitually truant” and shall then be referred to an evidence-based alternative intervention, including:

(i) a mobile crisis outreach team;

(ii) a youth services center, as defined in Section 80-5-102;

(iii) a youth court or comparable restorative justice program;

(iv) an evidence-based alternative intervention created and developed by the school or school district;

(v) an evidence-based alternative intervention that is jointly created and developed by a local education agency, the state board, the juvenile court, local counties and municipalities, the Department of Health and Human Services.

5.3.1. A school-age child is also considered habitually truant if the child fails to cooperate with efforts on the part of school authorities to resolve the school-age child's attendance problem as required under Section 53G-6-206.

5.4. If the minor is alleged to be habitually truant, a school administrator or school resource officer may refer the minor to a law enforcement officer or agency or court if:

(i) the minor was previously alleged of being habitually truant at least twice during the same school year; and

(ii) the minor was referred to an evidence-based alternative intervention, or for prevention and early intervention youth services as described in section 5.3 for at least two of the previous habitual truancies.

(iii) the minor refuses to participate in interventions and is truant again.

5.5. 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, they shall 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 (Section 53G-6-208).

6. Definitions & Procedures Applicable for Elementary Schools (Grades 1-6 or under age 12)

6.1. A school age minor under the age of 12 or in grades 1-6 must comply with the requirements of compulsory education as per Utah Code 53-G-6-202, including the steps outlined in policy.

6.2. Truancy: a school age minor is considered truant when the minor is absent for at least half of the school day without a valid excuse (see section 3.3). A student may only be considered truant one time per day. If the student has been truant at least ten times during the school year, the school may issue a notice of compulsory education violation to the parent/guardian by personal service or registered mail that shall direct the school-age child and the child's parent/guardian to:

- Meet with school authorities to discuss the school-age child's truancies;
- Cooperate with the school in securing regular attendance by the school-age child; and
- Prevent the school-age child from being truant (absent without a valid excuse) ten or more times during the remainder of the school year.

The notice of compulsory education violation shall also designate the school authorities with whom the parent is required to meet and shall state that it is a class B misdemeanor for the parent/guardian to intentionally or without good cause: (1) fail to meet with the designated school authorities to discuss the school-age child's school attendance problems; or (2) fail to prevent the school-age child from being truant ten or more times during the remainder of the school year.

Schools shall establish a procedure for a school-age child or parent/guardian to contest a notice of truancy.

6.3. If, after being served with a notice of compulsory education violation, a parent/guardian intentionally or without good cause fails to meet with the school authorities to discuss the school-age child's school attendance problems, fails to prevent the child from being truant ten or more times during the remainder of the school year, or fails to make a good faith effort to ensure that the school-age child receives an appropriate education, the schools shall report violations to the county attorney or to the Division of Child and Family Services:

- Identifying information of the school-age child and parent;
- the longest number of consecutive days the child has been absent;
- the longest number of consecutive days the child has been truant;
- percentage of school days the child has been absent or truant;
- whether the child has made adequate educational progress;
- whether the child is two or more grade levels below the age group expectations in one or more basic skills; and
- whether the child is receiving special education services or systematic remediation services.

Mandatory: Mandatory Parent Notification Letter.pdf

Form 96 - Elementary Violation of Compulsory Education (Grades 1-6)

Form 97 - Secondary Violation of Compulsory Education (Grades 7-12)