

EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the district will inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular school attendance, the consequences of truancy, the role and responsibility of the district in regard to truancy, and resources available to assist the student and their parents and guardians in correcting truancy. The district will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents can request and be provided such information in a language they can understand. Parents will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

Excused Absences

Regular school attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the district. At times, students may be appropriately absent from class. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness, including a record of excuse statements submitted by a parent/guardian, or in certain cases, students, to document a student's excused absences. The following principles will govern the development and administration of attendance procedures within the district.

A. The Following are valid excuses for absences:

1. Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
2. Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including but not limited to medical, counseling, dental or optometry);
3. Family emergency, including but not limited to a death or illness in the family;
4. Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
5. Court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury;
6. Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
7. State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
8. Absence directly related to the student's homeless status;
9. Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action. (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and
10. Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity.

The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

B. If an absence is excused, the student will be permitted to make up all missed assignments outside of class under reasonable conditions and time limits established by the appropriate teacher except that in participation-type classes a student's grade

may be affected because of the student's inability to make up the activities conducted during a class period.

- C. An excused absence will be verified by the parent/guardian; or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student; or school authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online or for students physically within the district, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent or other responsible adult. If a student is to be released for health care related to family planning or abortion, the student may require that the district keep the information confidential. Students thirteen and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

Unexcused Absences

- A. Any absence from school for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above for an excused absence.
- B. As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student whose absence is not excused will experience the consequences of his/her absence. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent.
- C. The school will notify a student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school after one unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences.
- D. A conference with the parent or guardian will be held after two unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The conference will determine what corrective measures should be taken to ameliorate the cause for the student's absences from school. If the parent does not attend the conference, the parent will be notified of the steps the district has decided to take to reduce the student's absences.
- E. Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month the district will enter into an agreement with the student and parents that establishes school attendance requirements, refer the student to a community truancy board or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.
- F. If such action is not successful, the district will file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, student or parent and student no later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the current school year.

- G. All suspensions and/or expulsions will be reported in writing to the superintendent within 24 hours after imposition.

The superintendent will enforce the district's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents is necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents and students annually.

Students dependent pursuant to Chapter 13.34, RCW

A school district representative or certificated staff member will review unexpected or excessive absences of a student who has been found dependent under the Juvenile Court Act with that student and adults involved with that student. Adults includes the student's caseworker, educational liaison, attorney if one is appointed, parent or guardians, foster parents and/or the person providing placement for the student. The review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, unplanned school transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, school adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and the student's unavoidable appointments that occur during the school day. The representative or staff member must proactively support the student's management of their school work.

Cross Reference:

Policy 3120	Enrollment
Policy 3230	Student Privacy
Policy 3240	Student Conduct Expectations and Reasonable Sanctions
Policy 3241	Classroom Management, Corrective Actions or Punishment

Legal Reference:

RCW 13.34.300	Relevance of failure to cause juvenile to attend school to neglect petition
RCW 28A.225	Compulsory school attendance and admission
WAC 392-400-325	Statewide definition of excused and unexcused daily absences

Management Resources:

Policy News, July 2016	
Policy News, June 2015	
Policy News, December 2011	Revision of Excused/Unexcused Definitions
OSPI Memorandum No. 052-11M	Unexcused Absence Definition

Revised: 092716

Revised: 082614

Revised: 100912

Revised: 022812

Revised: 102511

Revised: 021307

Revised: 041001

Revised: 052593

Revised: 121989

Adopted: 042583

Tahoma School District

Classification: Essential

EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day. School staff will keep a record of absence and tardiness including a call log and/or a record of reason for absence submitted by a parent/guardian or, in certain cases, students, to document a student's absences.

Excessive absence violations

If a student is absent (either excused or unexcused) or tardy 10% of the school year to date, parents will receive notification from the school. On the third instance of a 10% violation an attendance contract is initiated and a medical excuse may be required.

Excused absences

The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness. Assignments and/or activities not completed because of an excused absence or tardiness may be made up in the manner provided by the teacher.

- 1. Participation in school-approved activity or instructional program.** To be excused, this absence must be authorized by a staff member and the affected teacher must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
- 2. Absence due to:** illness, health condition, medical appointment, family emergency, religious purposes, court, judicial proceeding or serving on a jury; post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview; State recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055; and directly related to the student's homeless status. When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail or written note and to provide the excuse for the absence. If no excuse is provided with the notification, or no notification is provided, the parent/guardian will submit an excuse via phone, e-mail or written note upon the student's return to school. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation. Students fourteen years old or older who are absent from school due to testing or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease will notify the school of their absence with a note of explanation, which will be kept confidential. Students thirteen years and older may do the same for mental health, drug or alcohol treatment; and all students have that right for family planning and abortion.

A parent/guardian may request that a student be excused from attending school in observance of a religious holiday. In addition, a student, upon the request of his/her parent/guardian, may be excused for a portion of a school day to

participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property. A student shall be allowed one makeup day for each day of absence.

- 3. Absence for parental-approved activities.** This category of absence will be counted as excused for purposes agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian when parent and student complete the pre-arranged absence request form prior to the absence. Absence from school has adverse effects on a student's educational progress. In participation-type classes, (e.g., certain music and physical education classes) the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from class. The Tahoma School District has a rigorous curriculum and most learning experiences are difficult to replicate without a student being in class. Some experiences, like science labs, field experiences, classroom discussions, team collaboration, etc. are difficult, and often impossible, to replicate after the rest of the class has had that experience. In such a case, absence may have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress which would ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course.

For students on attendance contracts, their pattern of school attendance has demonstrated that absences are interfering with making adequate academic progress. For these students, pre-arranged parent-approved absences are NOT counted as excused.

Pre-arranged absence requests for students with a pattern of chronic absence in the prior two years, or warning level (9-17 days absent per year) or chronic absence (18 or more days per year) in the current school year, or students who are demonstrating significant struggle with academic achievement currently (D or F grades in two or more classes in grades 6-12 or level 1 overall achievement in two or more core content areas at elementary) the administrator will indicate the absence is not recommended but will be authorized and recorded as excused.

A student, upon the request of his/her parent/ guardian, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted on school property or otherwise involve the school to any degree.

- 4. Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension.** As required by law, students who are removed from a class or classes as a disciplinary measure or students who have been placed on short-term suspension, shall have the right to make up assignments or exams missed during the time they were denied entry to the classroom if the effect of the missed assignments shall be a substantial lowering of the course grade.
- 5. Extended illness or health condition.** If a student is confined to home or hospital for an extended period, the school shall arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practicable. If the student

is unable to do his/her schoolwork, or if there are major requirements of a particular course which cannot be accomplished outside of class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.

- 6. Excused absence for chronic health condition.** Students with a chronic health condition which interrupts regular attendance may qualify for placement in a limited attendance and participation program. The student and his/her parent/guardian will apply to the principal or counselor, and a limited program will be written following the advice and recommendations of the student's medical advisor. The recommended limited program will be approved by the principal. Staff will be informed of the student's needs, though the confidentiality of medical information will be respected at the parent/guardian's request.

Required conference for elementary school students

If an elementary school student has five or more excused absences in a single month during the current school year or ten or more excused absences in the current school year, the district will schedule a conference or workshop with the student and their parent(s) at a reasonably convenient time. The conference or workshop are intended to identify barriers to the student's regular attendance and to identify supports and resources so the student may regularly attend school.

The conference must include at least one school district employee, such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher or community human service provider, and may occur on the same day as the scheduled parent-teacher conference, provided it takes place within thirty days of the absences. If the student has an Individualized Education Program or a Section 504 Plan, the team that created that program must reconvene. A conference is not required if prior notice of the excused absences was provided to the district through a parent requested pre-arranged absence form or if a doctor's note has been provided and a plan is in place to ensure the student will not fall behind in their coursework.

Unexcused absences

An "unexcused absence" means that a student has failed to attend the majority of hours of periods in an average school day.

Unexcused absences occur when:

1. The parent, guardian or adult student submits an excuse that does not meet the definition of an excused absence as defined above; or
2. The parent, guardian or adult student fails to submit any type of excuse statement, whether by phone, e-mail or in writing, for an absence. School absences not cleared within 48 hours of the absence will recode automatically in the student information system to an unexcused absence (truancy).

Each unexcused absence within any month of the current school year will be followed by a letter or phone call to the parent/guardian informing them of the consequences of additional unexcused absences. The school will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language in which the parent is fluent. A student's grade will not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.

After two unexcused absences within any month of the current school year, a conference or workshop will be held between the principal or designee, student and parent to analyze the causes of the student's absenteeism. If a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference is scheduled to take place within thirty days of the second unexcused absence, the district may schedule the attendance conference on the same day.

The district may designate a staff member to apply the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) and, where appropriate, provide the student with best practice or research-based interventions consistent with WARNS. As appropriate, the district will also consider:

- adjusting the student's course assignments;
- providing the student more individualized instruction;
- providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;
- requiring the student to attend an alternative school or program;
- assisting the parent or student to obtain supplementary services; or
- referring the student to a community truancy board.

If the student's parent/guardian does not attend the conference or workshop, the conference may be conducted with the student and school official. However, the parent will be notified of the steps taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.

Transfers

In the case of a student who transfers from one district to another during the school year, the sending district will provide to the receiving district, together with a copy of the WARNS assessment and any interventions previously provided to the student, the most recent truancy information for that student. The information will include the online or written acknowledgment by the parent and student.

Not later than a student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the district will:

- a. enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes school attendance requirements,
- b. refer the student to a community truancy board; or
- c. file a petition to juvenile court (see below).

Community Truancy Board

A “community truancy board” means a board established pursuant to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between a juvenile court and the school district and composed of members of the local community in which the student attends school. The district will enter into an MOU with the juvenile court in King County to establish a community truancy board prior to the 2017-2018 school year.

The district will designate and identify to the juvenile court (and update as necessary) a staff member to coordinate district efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including outreach and conferences, coordinating the MOU, establishing protocols and procedures with the court, coordinating trainings, sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices. The district will also identify a person within each school to serve as a contact regarding excessive absenteeism and truancy and assisting in the recruitment of community truancy board members.

Not later than a student’s **seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year, or a tenth unexcused absence during the current school year**, if the district’s attempts to substantially reduce a student’s absences have not been successful and if the student is under the age of seventeen, the district will file a petition and supporting affidavit for a civil action in juvenile court.

Petition to juvenile court

The petition will contain the following:

1. A statement that the student has unexcused absences in the current school year. (District Note: While petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any one month, or ten or more unexcused absences in the current school year, a petition may be filed earlier. Unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school will be counted when preparing the petition);
2. An attestation that actions taken by the school district have not been successful in substantially reducing the student’s absences from school;
3. A statement that court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the school district to reduce the student’s absences from school;
4. A statement that RCW 28A.225.010 has been violated by the parent, student or parent and student;
5. The student’s name, date of birth, school, address, gender, race and ethnicity; and the names and addresses of the student’s parents/guardians, whether the student and parent are fluent in English, whether there is an existing individualized education program (IEP) and the student’s current academic status in school;

6. A list of all interventions that have been attempted, a copy of any previous truancy assessment completed by the student's current school district, the history of approved best practices intervention or research-based intervention(s) previously provided to the student by the district, and a copy of the most recent truancy information document signed by the parent and student.
7. Facts that support the above allegations.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required. At the district's choice, it may be represented by a person who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

If the allegations in the petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court shall grant the petition and enter an order assuming jurisdiction to intervene for a period of time determined by the court, after considering the facts alleged in the petition and the circumstances of the student, to most likely cause the student to return to and remain in school while the student is subject to the court's jurisdiction.

If the court assumes jurisdiction, the school district will periodically report to the court any additional unexcused absences by the student, actions taken by the school district, and an update on the student's academic status in school at a schedule specified by the court. The first report must be received no later than three (3) months from the date that the court assumes jurisdiction.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures will be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding discipline or corrective action. (See policy 3241 Classroom Management, Discipline and Corrective Action.)

Elementary Pre-Arranged Excused Absence Request

Absences may be excused with prior approval by the building dean or principal. Teachers will work with students on a reasonable timeline for work completion. The student is responsible for completing work assigned by the teacher for make-up. Families are encouraged to schedule family trips during non-school dates. It is very difficult to make up lost instructional time. At elementary, absences that lead to accumulation of 5 or more absences in a month, without prior approval, will result in parents needing to attend an attendance conference or workshop and creation of an academic plan. (Second Substitute House Bill 2449)

Step 1: Absence Information

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Dates of Absence: _____ Number School Days to be Missed: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Step 2: Review the Academic Plan for Pre-Arranged Absences

Please review the attached academic plan for pre-arranged absences. The plan has been developed to assist parents in keeping their child on track in understanding expectations and making up missed work in a timely way.

Please Note: All absences may adversely affect academic progress.

Step 3: Parent Verification

By signing below I am stating that I am aware that this absence could adversely affect my student's academic progress, and that it is my student's responsibility to make up all assigned work within the deadlines established by his/her teacher. I understand that some classroom activities may be impossible to replicate and for my student to make up. While there may be some work available for my child to work on during their absence including projects, assignments in process, reading, and math fluency practice, I also understand that work missed may be compiled during the absence and available when the student returns. Students with access to on-line assignments and class work should be completing that during their absence if possible.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Step 4: Administrator Review of Attendance Year to Date and for Prior School Years

Administrator Approval for Pre-Arranged Excused Absence

Pre-Arranged Excused Absence is: Approved Not Recommended

Administrator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Per board policy and procedure 3122P pre-arranged excused absence requests for students with a pattern of chronic absence the prior two years, with warning level (9-17 days absent per year) or chronic absence (18 or more days absent per year) in the current year, or students who are struggling in school (level 1 in two or more overall content areas at elementary) the administrator will not recommend the absence, however will authorize as excused.

Academic Plan for Absences

Since it is challenging to replicate all of the learning experiences that happen during each school day, your child's absences will take some careful planning with your teachers when they return from the absence.

Here are some steps to take:

1. Large projects or assignments that are in progress may be appropriate for the student to work on while absent from school. In addition daily reading or math fluency practice is also appropriate for completion during the absence.
2. Contact your student's teacher(s) upon return from the absence to request work that can be made up at home in a timely manner. Teachers will communicate timelines for make-up work.
3. Coach your child to get the work turned in after the absence, following the timelines communicated by the teacher.
4. Discuss the importance of good attendance with your child.
5. If there were projects that cannot be completed at home, ask your teacher (upon your child's return from the absence) for alternative ways to practice the skills that they have missed.

Our goal is for all students to have good attendance (missing 8 or fewer days in a year) and for no student to have chronic absence (missing 18 or more days in a year). To support good attendance please follow these tips:

1. Schedule appointments outside of the school day.
2. Plan vacations during school breaks.
3. Make sure that your child is at school on time and stays the full school day.
4. If your child appears ill, use the following checklist to determine how to handle it:
 - a. Vomiting and fever over 100 = Keep them home until vomiting and/or fever have stopped for 24 hours.
 - b. Provide a doctor's note when necessary.
 - c. If minor sniffles, connect with your school nurse for advice.

We deeply appreciate that you are so willing to partner closely with us. We care about each of our students at <school name>.

If you have questions or need additional guidance you may contact one of us.

Name of Current Truancy Program Director
Attendance Family Advocate
Truancy Program Director
Phone
e-mail

Dean of Students / Assistant Principal
Title
Phone
e-mail

Middle School Pre-Arranged Excused Absence Request

Absences may be excused with prior approval by a building administrator. Teachers will work with students on a reasonable timeline for work completion. The student is responsible for completing work assigned by the teacher for make-up. Families are encouraged to schedule family trips during non-school dates. It is very difficult to make up lost instructional time. Please submit the form at least one week prior to the planned absence.

Step 1: Absence Information

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Dates of Absence: _____ Number School Days to be Missed: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Please Note: All absences may adversely affect academic progress.

Step 2: Parent Verification

By signing below I am stating that I am aware that this absence could adversely affect my student's academic progress, and that it is my student's responsibility to make up all assigned work within the deadlines established by his/her teacher. I understand that some classroom activities may be impossible to replicate and for my student to make up. While there may be some work available for my child to work on during their absence including projects, assignments in process, reading, and math fluency practice, I also understand that work missed may be compiled during the absence and available when the student returns. Students with access to on-line assignments and class work should be completing that during their absence if possible.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Step 3: Administrator Review of Attendance and Grades Year to Date and for Prior School Years Administrator Approval for Pre-Arranged Absence

Pre-Arranged Excused Absence is: Approved Not Recommended

Administrator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Per board policy and procedure 3122P pre-arranged excused absence requests for students with a pattern of chronic absence the prior two years, with warning level (9-17 days absent per year) or chronic absence (18 or more days absent per year) in the current year, or students who are struggling in school (level 1 in two or more overall content areas at elementary) the administrator will not recommend the absence, however will authorize as excused.

High School Pre-Arranged Excused Absence Request

This form is recommended for 1-2 day absences and required for 3+ days. Please submit at least one week prior to planned absence. Requests submitted after an absence will not be approved.

Step 1: Absence Information

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Dates of Absence: _____ Number School Days to be Missed: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Step 2: Sign Up for an Attendance Report

A sign-up sheet can be found in the attendance office. Reports are printed daily following 3rd and 6th periods.

Step 3: Teacher Signatures

Teacher: Please initial to indicate you are aware of this upcoming absence Student is responsible for making up missed work by the deadlines set by teachers	Period 1	Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
	Teacher initials					
	Current grade					

Please Note: All absences may adversely affect academic progress.

Step 4: Parent Verification

By signing below I am stating that I am aware that this absence could adversely affect my student's academic progress, and that it is my student's responsibility to make up all assigned work within the deadlines established by his/her teacher. I understand that some classroom activities may be impossible to replicate and for my student to make up. While there may be some work available for my child to work on during their absence including projects, assignments in process and reading, I also understand that work missed may be compiled during the absence and available when the student returns. Students with access to on-line assignments and class work should be completing that during their absence if possible.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Forms can take up to 72 hours for processing, so please submit at least 1 week in advance of absence. Student must attach his/her absence report prior to submission to the attendance office for Administrator signature. Parents should review the attendance report prior to submission of this form for administrator approval.

Step 5: Administrator Review of Attendance and Grades Year to Date and for Prior 2 School Years

Pre-Arranged Excused Absence is: Approved Not Recommended

Administrator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Per board policy and procedure 3122P pre-arranged excused absence requests for students with a pattern of chronic absence the prior two years, with warning level (9-17 days absent per year) or chronic absence (18 or more days absent per year) in the current year, or students who are struggling in school (level 1 in two or more overall content areas at elementary) the administrator will not recommend the absence, however will authorize as excused.