

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

I. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A student whose seventh birthday falls on or before August 1, or September 15 if the child started kindergarten pursuant to an approved request under Wyo. Stat. § 21-3-110(a)(xxxviii) and who is under twenty-one years of age is considered to be of school age in Wyoming. *See* Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102(a) and Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-301. Sweetwater County School District Number One, State of Wyoming considers regular school attendance essential for success in school. Regular school attendance has a direct relationship to student achievement of performance standards, grades, social development, and advancement. Make-up work cannot completely substitute for the learning that occurs in a classroom environment. Therefore, enrolled students are required to be present for scheduled classes unless properly excused.

Attendance is compulsory for any school-age student residing in Wyoming who has not yet attained his or her sixteenth birthday or completed the tenth grade. *See* Policy File JEA. Every parent, guardian or person having control, or charge, of any student subject to Wyoming's Compulsory Attendance Act is required to send the student to school during the entire time that the public schools are in session; and every student subject to the Act is required to attend school. *See* Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102.

The Human Resources Director of the District and each building principal is hereby designated as an attendance officer. *See* Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-103. Each classroom teacher is required to maintain accurate, attendance records and report all student absences and tardiness to the building principal or designee.

An absence occurs when the student fails to be in attendance, at the place designated for the class, for a period of time exceeding five minutes beyond the starting time designated for the class.

A tardy occurs when the student fails to be in attendance, at the place designated for the class, within five minutes after the final starting time designated for the class, unless the tardy is excused by specific, written permission of an administrator or professional staff member of the District under procedures to be established by each school.

II. EXCUSED ABSENCES

Absences from class shall be excused only for necessary and important reasons at the discretion of the District attendance officers. Excused absences may result from one of two sets of circumstances, absences with prior notice or absences without prior notice.

For absences that occur with prior notice, such as family activities or vacations, professional appointments which cannot be scheduled after school hours, or other reasons prearranged by the parent or legal guardian and approved by the attendance officer, parents or legal guardians are requested to provide written notice

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to the school within a reasonable amount of time prior to the absence (a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours prior notice is recommended so teachers and students can prepare for the absence with work assignments).

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For absences that occur without prior notice, such as personal illness, hospital or emergency-room treatment, accident, serious personal or family problems, or other emergency situations that require that the student be absent, parents or legal guardians are requested to provide notice to the school each day the student is absent. Upon the student's return to school from an absence that occurs without prior notice, parents or legal guardians are required to provide notice and reason for the absence within forty-eight (48) hours of the student's return to school. Notice may be provided in writing, signed by the parent or legal guardian. Notice may also be provided by telephone, to the attendance officer or designee, by the parent or legal guardian.

In all situations, the parent or legal guardian shall request that the absence be excused by the attendance officer. Attendance officers have discretion to request further information from parents or legal guardians to verify requests for absences to be excused. The administrative determination of whether or not an absence shall be excused shall be at the discretion of the District attendance officers. The attendance officer shall not count students as absent for prearranged absences due to school activities held during the school day or prearranged conferences with professional school staff held during the school day.

At the secondary level, a maximum of 5 excused absences shall be allowed per class period in any one semester. At the elementary level, a maximum of 5 excused absences shall be allowed per attendance period in any one semester. Each absence beyond the 5 excused absences per semester will be unexcused. Exceptions are only authorized upon certification from a medical authority stating specific days to be excused from school, verified family emergency, or extenuating circumstances as determined by the District attendance officers.

A student whose absence is excused is permitted to perform make-up work or testing, without penalty, provided that the make-up work or testing is performed in the time and manner provided in each school's Student/Parent Handbook.

III. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

An absence which is not approved by parents or legal guardians or not excused by the attendance officer shall be considered an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences are also deemed as trancies which is defined as the willful and unjustified failure to attend school by one who is required to attend.

The student must follow the specific time line of makeup work as defined by each school's Student/Parent Handbook so that the student may remain prepared to master the curriculum. Except as specifically required by this Policy, parents or legal guardians will be notified, at the telephone numbers or addresses reported at the time of enrollment, of unexcused absences or trancies as provided in each school's Student/Parent Handbook. In addition, students with unexcused absences will be subject to disciplinary action as provided in each school's Student/Parent Handbook. A student with a total of 5 unexcused absences will be deemed to have demonstrated continued willful disobedience or open defiance of the

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authority of school personnel and be subject to intervention.

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A. Compulsory Attendance Age Students

The attendance officer shall provide a written notice to the parent or legal guardian of a student who has not yet attained his or her sixteenth birthday or completed the tenth grade upon the first occurrence of an unexcused absence or truancy. The notice shall notify the parent that the attendance of the student is required by law. Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-104(a)(ii).

If, after the first notice of unexcused absence is sent, the student has a second unexcused absence, which the attendance officer reasonably believes was due to the willful neglect or failure of the parent, legal guardian, or person having custody of the student, then the attendance officer shall make and file a complaint against the parent, legal guardian, or person having custody of the student with the Sweetwater County Prosecuting Attorney. Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-104(a)(ii). A parent, legal guardian, or person having custody of a student who willfully fails, neglects or refuses to comply with provisions of Wyoming's Compulsory Attendance Act may be found guilty of a misdemeanor and be subject to a fine or imprisonment in the county jail or both. Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-105.

A student who accumulates five or more unexcused days of absences in any one school year shall be referred to the board to be declared habitual truant. For purposes of this provision, unexcused absences from individual classroom periods in secondary schools or partial days of unexcused absences in elementary schools equal to five times the number of periods or partial days in the student's daily schedule (excluding seminary or work/study) shall equal five, unexcused days of absences.

B. Non-Compulsory Attendance-Age Students

Those students who are sixteen years of age or older or who have completed the tenth grade are considered non-compulsory attendance-age students. Upon the fifth unexcused absence, the building principal or designee will schedule a conference with the student, the student's parents or legal guardians, and appropriate professional staff.

Potential consequences of failure to attend school will be addressed, including potential disciplinary or legal proceedings. Information will be sought from the student and from the parents or legal guardians regarding intervention strategies, including performance contracts, to improve school attendance. Further unexcused absences shall result in such action as may be deemed by the building principal to be in the best interests of improving the student's attendance.

If a student has five (5) or more unexcused absences in any one (1):

- semester course increment in grades 7-12

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- per semester in grades K-6

The principal or designee will contact parents/guardians to schedule a mandatory intervention meeting. Each school will develop an action plan as soon as possible following the 5th unexcused absence for the class/es with the identified attendance concerns. Parents/guardians will have one (1) calendar week to

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arrange for the intervention meeting upon receipt of notification from the school. After reasonable attempts have been made to schedule the intervention meeting, the intervention meeting may be held without parent/guardian involvement.

Note:

1. School sponsored absences will not count against the student. EG: athletics, activities, field trips, academic competitions, performances, productions, etc.
2. Medical absences that are excused by a healthcare professional will not count against the student.
3. Student absences for organized sports and activities that are not offered by SSD#1 will not count against the student if the student's grades satisfy the same eligibility criteria as any school-sanctioned activity. Each principal or designee will identify the process for communicating, notifying and executing this category of absence.
4. In situations with extenuating circumstances, parents/guardians may petition the attendance official for additional excused absences.
5. 504 or IEP teams may consider exceptions to the policy. The plan for how exceptions apply must be incorporated into the individual student's plan.

The school will identify an intervention action team to guide the developed interventions for the student. The intervention team may include the principal or designee, counseling support staff, teacher, parent/guardian and the student.

If conditions of the intervention are not met, and an additional three (3) unexcused absences are accrued this will result in the following actions:

- The County Attorney's office shall be notified of the student's habitual truancy as required by Wyo. Stat. 21-4-107, to begin proceedings in the interest of the child under the Juvenile Court Act.
- If a student who has not attained their sixteenth birthday, or has not completed the tenth grade, has excessive absences and the attendance officer reasonably believes the excessive absences are due to the willful neglect of the parent or guardian, the attendance officer shall provide a written notice to the parent or guardian-specifying District and state compulsory attendance regulations. Pursuant to Wyoming Statute the attendance officer shall file a complaint against the parent or guardian with the proper legal authorities due to the willful neglect of the parent or guardian.
- In grades 9-12 a student with eight (8) unexcused absences will not earn credit in the course/s identified, unless the student qualifies for a credit appeal process as an additional intervention. The credit appeal process will encourage continued class attendance and creates an opportunity for the student to regain course credit. If the student does not qualify or chooses to not participate in the credit appeal process, the student will earn an 'F' for the letter grade and factored into the grade point average (GPA).

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An 'I' (Incomplete) is recorded for the letter grade if a student qualifies for a credit appeal process. During the intervention window of the credit appeal process, the 'I' is not factored into the grade point average (GPA). At the completion of the credit appeal process window the 'I' is replaced with the corresponding letter grade that is earned. The final letter grade will be factored into the GPA.

LEGAL REFS.: Stat. § 21-4-102(a) and Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-301. Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-104(a)(ii).
Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-105.

CROSS REFS.: JED JEFB, Released Time for Religious Instruction

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