

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 whether conducted in person or virtually, unless properly excused.

Attendance is compulsory for any school-age student residing in Wyoming who has not yet attained their sixteenth birthday or completed the tenth grade. *See* Policy File JEA and Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102. 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 are hereby designated as an attendance officer. *See* Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-104. Attendance officers are expected to counsel with students, parents, guardians or custodians and teachers; and to investigate the causes of unexcused absences, habitual truancy, and willful absenteeism. 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 ten 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.

Adopted: 1977
Revised: 01/08/1997;
06/23/2003; 03/08/2004;
09/12/2007; 12/10/2007;
07/17/2019; 08-09-202; 06-12-2023

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 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).

For absences that occur without prior notice, such as personal illness injury, or the health care needs of the student, or a death or serious illness in the student's family, 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 district communication systems 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. In addition, students participating in the annual state fair held under Wyo. Stat. § 11-10-101 as an exhibitor shall be considered as participating in a cocurricular activity program and the student's absence shall be defined as an excused absence. Wyo. Stat. § 21-3-110 (a)(xxxix).

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. Truancy is an unexcused absence which indicates a willful and premeditated violation of this Policy.

The student must follow the specific timeline of makeup work as defined by each school's Student/Parent

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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 in the student information system, of unexcused absences or trancies as provided in each school's Student/Parent Handbook.

In addition, students with unexcused absences or truancy violations may be subject to disciplinary action, such as, but not limited to detention, Saturday school, or suspension from school, as provided in each school's Student/Parent Handbook.

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 their 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), Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102, and local board policies pursuant to Wyo. Stat. § 21-3-110(a)(xxxix).

A child who disobeys reasonable and lawful demands of the child's parent, guardian, custodian, or other proper authority to attend school, if required under Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102 (Wyoming's Compulsory Attendance Act) and as defined in board policy pursuant to Wyo. Stat. § 21-3-110(a)(xxxix), is deemed a "habitual truant." Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-101(a)(ii).

"Willful absenteeism" means exceeding the limit of unexcused absences as defined by the board of trustees pursuant to Wyo. Stat. § 21-3-110(a)(xxxix) when the excess absences are the result of the parent's, guardian's, or custodian's willful failure, neglect, or refusal to require a student's regular attendance at school in accordance with Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102. Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-101(a)(vii)

"Neglect" means a failure or refusal by those responsible for the child's welfare to provide adequate care, maintenance, supervision, education or medical, surgical or any other care necessary for the child's well-being. "Neglect" for purposes of education includes "willful absenteeism." Wyo. Stat. § 14-3-202IaO(vii).

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.

If, after the first notice of unexcused absence is sent, the student has four additional unexcused absences, in continued violations of Wyo. Stat. § 21-4-102 or local board policy, which the attendance officer reasonably believes are due to "habitual truancy"; "willful absenteeism" or "neglect" as defined above, then the attendance officer shall notify the Board of Trustees and the Sweetwater County Prosecuting Attorney who may initiate proceedings in the interest of the child under the Child Protection Act Wyo. Stat. § 14-3-401 et se., or the Children in Need of Supervision Act, Wyo. Stat. § 14-6-401 et seq., as appropriate.

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Revised: 01/08/1997;
06/23/2003; 03/08/2004;
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07/17/2019; 08-09-202; 06-12-2023

Any parent, guardian, or custodian of a student who willfully fails, neglects or refuses to comply with provisions of Wyoming's Compulsory Attendance Act may be punished by not more than ten (10) days of community service and subject to proceedings under the Child Protection Act, Wyo. Stat. § 14-3-401 et seq., or the Children in Need of Supervision Act, Wyo. Stat. § 14-6-401 et seq., or both.

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
- 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 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.

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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.

If the intervention team determines an 'I' (Incomplete) is needed to give a student sufficient time to show proficiency towards a standard(s), due to excessive absences, an 'I' shall be recorded for the grade for the length of time determined by said team. During the intervention window, the 'I' is not factored into the grade pointaverage (GPA) for 7-12. At the completion of the intervention period, the 'I' is replaced with the corresponding grade that is earned. The final grade will be factored into the GPA for 7-12.

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

