

EXCUSED AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

Definition of Absence

Absence from in-person learning

[WAC 392-401A-015](#) states the definition of an absence:

- 1) A student is absent from in-person instruction when they are:
 - A. Not physically present on school grounds; and
 - B. Not participating in the following activities at an approved location:
 - i. Instruction; or
 - ii. Any instruction-related activity; or
 - iii. Any other district or school-approved activity that is regulated by an instructional/academic accountability system, such as participation in district-sponsored sports.

Definition of absence from synchronous and asynchronous instruction

(1) A student is absent from synchronous online instruction when the student does not log in to the synchronous meeting/class. (2) A student is absent from asynchronous instruction when there is no evidence that the student accessed the planned asynchronous activity. (3) Evidence of student participation in asynchronous activities must occur daily, within a twenty-four-hour time frame of when the participation is planned or expected.

Daily attendance taking

The cooperative program will take daily attendance for all enrolled students whether the instructional modality is in-person, synchronous, or asynchronous. When instruction is synchronous online or asynchronous, secondary programs will take attendance daily in each course with planned instruction and elementary programs will take attendance at least twice a day.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Educators and administrators have a responsibility to monitor absences to determine if students and families need support. Students are expected to attend all assigned in-person classes each day or participate in all assigned remote instructional activities; except when there are necessary reasons for students to be absent. Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, the NWESD 189 will inform students and their parents/guardians of this expectation, the benefits of regular program attendance, the consequences of truancy, the role and responsibility of the NWESD 189 in regard to truancy, and resources available to assist the student and his/her parents/guardians in correcting truancy. The NWESD 189 will also make this information available online and will take reasonable steps to ensure parents/guardians can request and be provided such information in a language they can understand. Parents/guardians will be required to date and acknowledge review of this information online or in writing.

Excused Absences

Regular program attendance is necessary for mastery of the educational program provided to students of the NWESD 189. At times, students may be absent from class or not able to participate remotely. Program 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 NWESD 189:

- 1) Absences due to the following reasons are excused:
 - A) Physical health or mental health symptoms, illness, health condition or medical appointment (for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. Examples of symptoms, illness, health conditions, or medical appointments include, but are not limited to, medical, counseling, mental health wellness, dental, optometry, pregnancy, and behavioral health treatment (which can include in-patient or out-patient treatment for chemical dependency or mental health);
 - B) Family emergency, including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
 - C) Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
 - D) Court, judicial proceeding , court-ordered activity, or jury service;
 - E) Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
 - F) State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
 - G) Absence directly related to the student's homeless or foster care/dependency status;
 - H) Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
 - I) Absences due to suspensions, expulsions or emergency expulsions imposed pursuant to chapter 392-400 WAC if the student is not receiving educational services and is not enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107;
 - J) Absences due to student safety concerns, including absences related to threats, assaults, or bullying;
 - K) Absences due to a student's migrant status;

- L) An approved activity that is consistent with NWESD 189 policy and is mutually agreed upon by the program administrator or designee and a parent, guardian, or emancipated youth;
 - M) Absences due to the student's lack of necessary instructional tools, including internet access or connectivity.
- 2) In the event of emergency cooperative program closure due to COVID-19, other communicable disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other event when districts are required to provide synchronous and asynchronous instruction, absences due to the following reasons are excused:
- A) Absences related to the student's illness, health condition, or medical appointments due to COVID-19 or other communicable disease;
 - B) Absences related to caring for a family member who has an illness, health condition, or medical appointment due to COVID-19, or other communicable disease, or other emergency health condition related to cooperative program closures;
 - C) Absences related to the student's family obligations during regularly scheduled program hours that are temporarily necessary because of program facility closures, until other arrangements can be made; and
 - D) Absences due to the student's parent's work schedule or other obligations during regularly scheduled program hours, until other arrangements can be made;

The program administrator (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence. The NWESD 189 may define additional categories or criteria for excused absences.

- 1) 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; where reasonable, if a student misses a participation-type class, he/she may request an alternative assignment that aligns with the learning goals of the activity missed.
- 2) An excused absence will be verified by a parent/guardian, or an adult, emancipated or appropriately aged student, or program authority responsible for the absence. If attendance is taken electronically, either for a course conducted online or for students physically within the program, an absence will default to unexcused until such time as an excused absence may be verified by a parent/guardian 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 NWESD 189 keep the information confidential. Students thirteen (13) and older have the right to keep information about drug, alcohol or mental health treatment confidential. Students fourteen (14) and older have the same confidentiality rights regarding HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

- 3) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, in the event that a child in elementary school is required to attend school under RCW 28A.225.010 or 28A.225.015(1) and 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 NWESD 189 will schedule a conference or conferences with the parent/guardian and child at a time reasonably convenient for all persons included for the purpose of identifying the barriers to the child's regular attendance, and the supports and resources that may be made available to the family so that the child is able to regularly attend the program. To satisfy the requirements of this section, the conference must include at least one NWESD 189 employee such as a nurse, counselor, social worker, teacher, or community human services provider, except in those instances regarding the attendance of a child who has an individualized education program or a plan developed under section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, in which case the reconvening of the team that created the program or plan is required.

This conference is not required if the program has received prior notice or a doctor's note has been provided and an academic plan put in place so that the child does not fall behind.

Unexcused Absences

- 1) Any absence from the program for the majority of hours or periods in an average school day is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above or in administrative procedure for an excused absence.
- 2) A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent and that absence is not excused.
- 3) The program will notify a student's parent/guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend the program after one (1) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year. The notification will include the potential consequences of additional unexcused absences. The program will make reasonable efforts to provide this information in a language the parent/guardian understands.
- 4) The program will hold a conference with the parent/guardian after three (3) unexcused absences within any month during the current school year. The conference will analyze the causes of the student's absences and develop a plan that identifies student, program, and family commitments to reduce the student's absences from the program. If the parent/guardian does not attend the conference, the program official may still hold the conference with the student. However, the program will notify the parent/guardian of the steps the NWESD 189 has decided to take to eliminate or reduce the student's absences.
- 5) Between the student's second and seventh unexcused absence, the program must take the following data-informed steps:
 - A) Middle and high school students will be administered the Washington Assessment of the Risks and Needs of Students (WARNS) or other assessment.

- B) These steps must include, where appropriate:
- i. providing an available approved best practice or research-based intervention, or both, consistent with the WARNS profile or other assessment;
 - ii. if an assessment was applied, adjusting the child's program or course assignment;
 - iii. providing more individualized or remedial instruction;
 - iv. providing appropriate vocational courses or work experience;
 - v. referring the child to a community truancy board;
 - vi. requiring the child to attend an alternative school or program, or;
 - vii. assisting the parent/guardian or child to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the cause or causes for the absence from the program.
- C) For any child with an existing individualized education plan or 504 plan, these steps must include the convening of the child's individualized education plan or 504 plan team, including a behavior specialist or mental health specialist where appropriate, to consider the reasons for the absences. If necessary, and if consent from the parent/guardian is given, a functional behavior assessment to explore the function of the absence behavior shall be conducted and a detailed behavior plan completed. Time should be allowed for the behavior plan to be initiated and data tracked to determine progress.

Not later than the student's seventh (7th) unexcused absence in a month the NWESD 189 will notify the cooperative member school district sending the student for NWESD 189 services so the cooperative member school district may enter into an agreement with the student and parents/guardians that establishes program attendance requirements, refer the student to a community engagement board, or file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010.

- 6) If such action is not successful, the cooperative member district sending the student to the NWESD 189 will be responsible for filing a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent/guardian, student or parent/guardian and student no earlier than the seventh (7th) unexcused absence within any month during the current school year and not later than the fifteenth absence during the current school year.

The Special Programs Assistant Director will enforce the NWESD 189's attendance policies and procedures. Because the full knowledge and cooperation of students and parents/guardians is necessary for the success of the policies and procedures, procedures will be disseminated broadly and made available to parents/guardians and students annually.

Tardies and Disciplinary Actions

- 1) Students shall not be absent if:
- A. They have been suspended, expelled, or emergency expelled pursuant to chapter 392-400 WAC;
 - B. They are receiving educational services as required by RCW 28A.600.015 and chapter 392-400 WAC; and

- C. The student is enrolled in qualifying "course of study" activities as defined in WAC 392-121-107. Course of study activities do not include sending homework packets home.
- 2) A full day absence is when a student is absent for fifty percent or more of their scheduled day.
- 3) A NWESD 189 program shall not convert or combine tardies into absences that contribute to a truancy petition.

A student shall be considered absent if they are on program grounds but not in their assigned setting.

Tiered response system for student absences

WAC 392-401A-045 requires:

- A. NWESD 189 programs are to implement minimum requirements of a multitiered system of support for attendance to address barriers to student attendance, provide timely interventions and best practices to reduce chronic absenteeism and truancy. Multitiered systems of support include: Monitoring daily attendance data for all students who are absent, whether the absence is excused or unexcused;
- B. A process to contact families and verify current contact information for each enrolled student that includes multiple attempts and modalities in the parent's home language;
- C. Differentiated supports that address the barriers to attendance and participation that includes universal supports for all students and tiered interventions for students at-risk of and experiencing chronic absence, including cooperative program and/or residence district attendance or engagement teams, connecting to community resources, and community engagement boards; and
- D. A process for outreach and reengagement for students who have been withdrawn due to nonattendance and there is no evidence that the student is enrolled elsewhere. This outreach and reengagement process must include:
- i. A cooperative program and/or resident district point person/people to maintain the list, keep it updated, and coordinate the outreach;
 - ii. Cooperative program or resident district staff assigned to conduct the outreach and attempts at reengagement in coordination with community partners or other programs;
 - iii. Multiple methods of communication and outreach in a language or mode of communication that the parent understands including phone calls, texts, letters, and home visits;
 - iv. Referral to community-based organizations;
 - v. Documentation of the attempts to reach the student and family; and
 - vi. Follow the required steps to address unexcused absences in chapter 28A.225 RCW, including early communication to parents, holding parent conferences and administering a truancy screener to understand the underlying reasons for the absences, and providing evidence-based or best practice interventions, even if the student has been withdrawn due to nonattendance.

Students dependent pursuant to Chapter 13.34, RCW

NWESD 189 and cooperative member district representative(s) 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, parents/guardians, foster parents and/or the person providing placement for the student. The review will take into consideration the cause of the absences, unplanned transitions, periods of running from care, in-patient treatment, incarceration, program adjustment, educational gaps, psychosocial issues, and the student's unavoidable appointments that occur during the program day. The NWESD 189 and cooperative member district representative(s) must proactively support the student's management of his/her academic work.

Migrant Students

The NWESD 189, parent/guardian and student are encouraged to work to create an Extended Absence Agreement with the program to decrease the risk of an adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

First Reading:	04/25/01	Reference:
Second Reading:	05/23/01	RCW 13.34.300
Reviewed:	01/24/07	RCW 28A.225
Revised:	08/24/11	RCW 28A.310.180
Revised:	08/17/16	WAC 392-401A
Revised:	08/16/17	Cross Reference:
Revised:	10/24/18	Policy 3230
Revised:	10/28/20	Policy 3240
Revised:	08/25/21	Policy 3241
Revise:	08/22/22	