

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

POLICY:

The Lake Stevens School District considers regular and punctual attendance to be a necessary part of student learning. It is the District's desire to instill a sense of responsibility in each student that will carry over into the world of work. Students are expected to attend all assigned classes each day and to be in class on time. The District shall establish procedures for taking and recording attendance, verifying the nature and type of absenteeism, and notifying parents. In addition, the District's Attendance and Tardy Policy shall be implemented in conformance with state regulations to the effect that:

1. Parents of any child eight years of age and under eighteen years of age shall cause such child to attend school; and such child shall have the responsibility to and, therefore, shall attend for the full time when school may be in session unless:
 - The child is enrolled in an approved private school,
 - The child is enrolled in an educational center as provided for in Chapter 28A.205.RCW, or
 - The child is receiving home-based instruction, or
2. The student is sixteen years of age or older and:
 - Is regularly and lawfully employed and either has parent permission or is emancipated pursuant to Chapter 13.64 RCW,
 - Has already met graduation requirements, or
 - Has received a Certificate of Educational Competence (GED).

Parents of any child six or seven year old who have enrolled the child in school shall cause the child to attend school for the full time when such school shall be in session, unless the child is formally withdrawn from enrollment by the parents. Exceptions may be granted by the Superintendent in the following situations:

- The student is physically or mentally unable to attend school,
- The student is attending a residential school operated by the Department of Social and Health Services, or
- The student's parents have requested a temporary absence for purposes agreed to by the District and which will not cause a serious adverse effect on the student's educational process.

Any law enforcement officer authorized to make arrests can take a truant child into custody without a warrant and must then deliver the child to the parent or to the school.

The District shall not require enrollment for either (1) a minimum number of semesters or trimesters or (2) a minimum number of courses in a semester or trimester which exceeds the enrollment time or courses necessary for a student to meet established course, credit, and test requirements for high school graduation.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures shall be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment. (See Policy No. 5100.1, 5100.2).

Cross References:

Board Policy No. 5100: Student Rights and Responsibilities
 5100.1: Secondary Discipline
 5100.2: Elementary Discipline
 6002: Home/Hospital Instruction
 6003: Home-Based Instruction

Legal References:

AGO 1980 No. 6 Truancy—Enforcement of compulsory attendance law
 RCW 28A.225.010 Attendance mandatory—Age-Exceptions
 RCW 28A.225.015 6 or 7 year olds-Unexcused absences-Petition
 RCW 28A.225.080 Employment permits
 RCW 28A.225.090 Court orders-Penalties-Parents' defense
 WAC 180-51-020 Additional local standard

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PROCEDURES:

1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- 1.1 **Excused Absence.** The following are valid excuses for absences and tardiness.
 - 1.1.1 Participation in school-approved activity. To be excused this absence must be authorized by an administrator or staff member and the affected teacher(s) must be notified prior to the absence unless it is clearly impossible to do so.
 - 1.1.2 Absence due to religious purposes. A parent 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, may be excused for a portion of a school day to participate in religious instruction provided such is not conducted upon school property.
 - 1.1.3 Absence due to illness, health condition, or family emergency. Absence due to illness, a health condition, or a family emergency may be excused upon the receipt of written or verbal explanation by the parent/guardian or adult/emancipated student within three school days of the absence.

At the discretion of the principal or his/her designee, written documentation may be required. Absence not documented by a parent/guardian explanation via signed note, telephone call or in-person contact within three days of the student's return may be deemed "unexcused."

Whenever possible the parent is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence and send a signed note of explanation with the student upon his/her return to school. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action)

may be permitted to notify the school office of their absence with a signed note of explanation only with parent approval.

1.1.3.1 Extended illness or health condition. If a student is confined to home or a hospital for an extended period, the school shall arrange for the accomplishment of assignments at the place of confinement whenever practical. If the student is unable to do his/her schoolwork, or if there are major requirements of a particular course that cannot be accomplished outside of class, the student may be required to take an incomplete or withdraw from the class without penalty.

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

1.1.4 Absence for parental-approved activities. This category of absence shall be counted as excused for purposes agreed upon in advance by the principal and the parent. An absence may not be approved if it will cause a serious adverse effect on the student's educational progress.

1.1.5 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.

1.2 Designated school staff shall determine all absences as excused or unexcused within three school days of the student's return to school. Absences may be verified through communication with the parent/guardian in one of the following methods: receipt of note of

explanation; explanation provided through in-person contact; or telephone call to/from parent/guardian.

1.3 **Unexcused Absence/Tardy**. Unexcused absences or tardiness fall into two categories.

1.3.1 Parent, guardian, or adult student submits a signed excuse or delivers an explanation by telephone or in-person which does not constitute an excused absence/tardy defined previously, or

1.3.2 Parent, guardian, or adult student fails to submit any type of signed excuse or deliver an explanation by telephone or in person. This type of absence is also defined as truancy.

1.4 **Tardy**. Arriving after the class is scheduled to begin is considered to be tardy.

2. SCHOOL WORK AND GRADING

2.1 **Excused Absence/Tardy**. A student shall be allowed one day for each day of excused absence to make up class work, assignments, or exams missed during his/her absence. The opportunity for making up missed work assignments, tests, and examinations, and other educational opportunities shall be provided by the teacher(s). However, due to the participatory nature of many classes, the student may not be able to achieve the objectives of the unit of instruction as a result of absence from the class. In such a case, absence may have an adverse effect on the student's educational progress that may ultimately be reflected in the grade for such a course.

2.2 **Unexcused Absence/Tardy**. A student shall be allowed no opportunity to make up missed work assignments, tests, and examinations, and other educational opportunities.

3. ATTENDANCE/TARDY REGULATIONS AND SANCTIONS

Teachers shall keep a record of absence and tardiness and shall establish reasonable conditions to permit students to make up work. Course procedures will explicitly state the makeup work policy. When attendance is part of grading criteria, it shall be noted in the official course description.

Whenever possible, the parent is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence and send a signed note of explanation with the student upon his/her return to school. Adult and emancipated students

shall notify the school office of the reason for their absence with a signed note of explanation.

All sanctions imposed for failure to comply with the attendance policies and procedures shall be implemented in conformance with state and district regulations regarding corrective action or punishment. (See Policy Nos. 5100.2, 5100.2.)

3.1 **Excused absences.** A student shall be allowed one day for each day of excused absence to make up class work, assignments, or exams missed during his/her absence.

3.2 **Unexcused absences of students eight years and older.** Enrolled students eight years of age and older whose unexcused absences reach the figures (numbers) outlined below will receive the following sanctions:

3.2.1 **Notification.** Each unexcused absence from class or school shall be followed by notice in writing or by telephone to the parent of the student. The purpose of such notification will be to apprise the home of possible consequences of further absences. Each notice shall be in English or in the primary language of the parent. A student's grade shall not be affected if no graded activity is missed during such an absence.

3.2.2 **Parent Conference.** After two unexcused absences within any month, a conference shall be held between the parent, student, and principal. At the conference, the principal, student, and parent shall consider adjusting the student's program; providing more individualized instruction; preparing the student for employment with specific vocational preparation or specific vocational experience, or both; transferring the student to another school; assisting the student to obtain supplementary services that might eliminate or ameliorate the causes of absence; or imposing other corrective actions that are deemed appropriate.

3.2.3 **District Involvement.** Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month, the District shall enter into an agreement with the student and parent(s) that establishes school attendance requirements, refers the student to a community truancy board, or files a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, the student, or the parent and the student.

If the above action fails to correct the attendance problem, the student shall be declared a habitual absentee. The principal or designee shall interview the student and his/her family and prescribe corrective action that may include suspension for the current semester and expulsion.

No later than the seventh unexcused absence within any month during the current school year or upon the tenth unexcused absence during the school year, the District shall 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. Unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district shall be counted for all purposes in this procedure. The petition consists of written notification to the court alleging that:

- A. The student has unexcused absences in the current school year. Petitions must be filed if the student has seven or more unexcused absences within any month during the current school year or ten or more unexcused absences in the current school year, but a petition may be filed earlier. Unexcused absences accumulated in another school or school district shall be counted for all purposes in this procedure;
- B. Actions taken by the District have not been successful in substantially reducing the student's absences from school; and
- C. Court intervention and supervision are necessary to assist the District to reduce the student's absences from school.

Additionally, the petition shall include the student's name, age, school, and residence and the names and residences of the student's parents. The petition must include facts that support the allegations made in the petition, must generally request relief available under the statute, and must describe what the court might order.

Petitions may be served by certified mail, return receipt requested, but if such service is unsuccessful, personal service is required.

The petition may be filed by a school district employee who is not an attorney at hearings related to truancy petitions.

- 3.2.4 False evidence. Any student who presents false evidence, with or without the consent of his/her parent(s), in order to

wrongfully qualify for an excused absence, shall be subject to the same corrective action that would have occurred had the false excuse not been used.

3.3 Unexcused Absences of Six- and Seven-Year-Olds

Students six or seven years of age who have been enrolled in the district are required to attend school and their parents are responsible for ensuring that they attend. Parents who wish to withdraw their child before the child is eight years old and against whom no truancy petition has been filed, may withdraw the student from school. A six- or seven-year-old student whose unexcused absences reach the figures outlined below will trigger the following actions:

- 3.3.1 Notification. The parent or guardian shall be notified in writing or by telephone after one unexcused absence from class or school in any month.
- 3.3.2 Parent Conference: After two unexcused absences in any month, a staffing may be held to review the reasons for the child's absences, and a conference with the parent or guardian and the student shall be requested (a regularly scheduled teacher-parent conference held within thirty days may substitute). The purpose of the conference will be to analyze the cause(s) of the student's absences and to write a plan of action listing the steps that will be taken to eliminate or reduce the student's absences. Steps listed may include, but are not limited to, adjusting the school program, school, course assignment; providing more individualized or remedial instruction; offering enrollment in alternative schools or programs; or assisting in obtaining supplementary services.
- 3.3.3 Follow Through. The plan of action prepared at the conference will be implemented.
- 3.3.4 Truancy Petition. After seven unexcused absences in a month, or ten in a year, the District shall file a truancy petition.

4. APPEAL PROCESS

A student who has been expelled for attendance violations may petition the Superintendent for reinstatement. Such a petition may be granted upon presentation of a firm and unequivocal commitment to maintain regular attendance.