

ATTENDANCE POLICIES 2014-2015

Philosophy

It is the philosophy of the Weatherford Independent School District and the State of Texas that regular student attendance is essential to increased academic achievement and success. Developing habits of punctuality, self-discipline, and responsibility are expected of all students. It is important that communication and cooperation between the home and school be established. Parents are encouraged to check with the school when in doubt as to their child's attendance or punctuality. School attendance is required for most students by state law.

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day's learning on the previous day's, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws, one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for a student's final grade or course credit, are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

Compulsory Attendance

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 18 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 18th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. In addition, if a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester the District may revoke the student's enrollment. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See Policy FEA.]

Students enrolled in prekindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school. State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument. A student will be required to attend any assigned accelerated instruction program, which may occur before or after school or during the summer, if the student does not meet the passing standards on the state assessments for his or her grade level and/or applicable subject area.

Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days;
- Required court appearance;
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship;
- Service as an election clerk;
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus; and

- For student in conservatorship (custody) of the state;
- Mental health or therapy appointments; or
- Court-ordered family visitations or any other court-ordered activity provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

As listed in the student handbooks in Section I at **Accommodations for Children of Military Families**, absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments.

Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction (termed —accelerated instruction‖ by the state) assigned by a grade placement committee and basic skills for ninth graders; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, or
- Is absent on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

For a student younger than 12 years of age, the student's parent could be charged with an offense based on the student's failure to attend school. If a student age 12 through age 17 violates the compulsory attendance law, both the parent and student could be charged with an offense. [See Policy FEA(LEGAL).]

Other specifics about student attendance can be found in the handbook for students.

Tardies

Student tardiness is considered a disruption and shall not be tolerated. Guidelines regarding tardies, including exceptions, can be found in the *Campus Student Handbook*. Failure to comply with the guidelines shall result in disciplinary action.

Decisions on Absences/ Discipline Management Techniques

The decision of determining excused or unexcused absences shall be the responsibility of the principal or designee and any absence, regardless of the number, shall be considered and dealt with on its own merit. Violations of attendance policies may result in disciplinary action, including, but not limited to: parent conferences, detentions, make-up hours, required tutorials, loss of privileges, in-school suspension, placement in Discipline Alternative Education Program, referrals to a law enforcement agency, and/or referrals to courts.

Makeup Work

Students shall have makeup privileges for excused absences. It is the responsibility of the student to secure assignments missed, and make up all work according to time allotted by the teacher or make-up policies outlined in the student handbook. Failure to complete assignments according to the guidelines will result in no credit for such assignments. Parents and students should understand that certain types of school work cannot be assigned to home because of teacher explanations needed by the student.

Students who miss school without having an excused absence shall not receive credit for work missed during the unexcused absence period. No make-up work for credit shall be allowed for schoolwork missed because of such unexcused absence. No credit shall be given for grades taken during periods with unexcused absences.

Denial of Credit/Promotion for Excessive Absences

Students in grades 1-8 shall not be promoted if he/she has been in attendance fewer than 90% of the 175 school days (18 or more absences). Students in grades 9-12 who do not maintain 90% attendance in each class per semester may not receive credit for the semester course. Attendance is recorded for each grading period and is reported on the student's report card.

Appeals Process

Parents of students who have accumulated more absences than allowed for class credit or promotion may present a written appeal for extenuating circumstances to the Attendance Review Committee appointed by the principal and authorized by the Board. After the review of all pertinent documents and information, the campus Attendance Review Committee may grant a student the opportunity to regain credit by meeting designated requirements. Students whose petitions for credit are denied may appeal the Campus Attendance Committee's decision, in writing, to the Superintendent or designee within five days of the attendance committee hearing. Responsibility for requesting consideration of extenuating circumstances rests with the student and his/her parent.