



DISTRICT ATTENDANCE POLICY

Dear Parent/Guardian,

FOLLOWING WASHINGTON LAW –BECCA BILL

This year, West Valley is making a special effort to ensure that all children fully benefit from their education by attending school regularly. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Your child can start building this habit in preschool so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your child will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Children can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a child may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other children and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a child is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

We miss your child when they are gone and we value their contributions to our school. We would like you to help ensure that your child attends regularly and is successful in school. If your child is going to be absent, please contact your building secretary.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that children are absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your child face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. Please contact Marcia Glenn at 509-340-7167 if you have any questions or concerns. We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your child is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they were absent, and to identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your child attend school.

SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as Washington State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance, called the Becca Bill, requires children from age 8 to 17 to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program. Children that are 6- or 7-years-old are not required to be enrolled in school. However, if parents enroll their 6- or 7-year-old, the child must attend full-time. Youth who are 16 or older may be excused from attending public school if they meet certain requirements. <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225>

We, West Valley School District, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your child has an unexcused absence.

If your child has two unexcused absences in one month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with you and your child to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance.

The district is obligated to develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your child and reduce absenteeism.

In elementary school after five excused absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences in the school year, the school district is required to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable, reasonable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your child. A conference is not required if your child has provided a doctor's note, or pre-arranged the absence in writing, and the parent, child and school have made a plan so your child does not fall behind academically. If your child has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan the team that created the plan need to reconvene.

If your child has five unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences within the school year, we are required to file a petition with the Juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws. The petition may be automatically stayed and your child and family may be referred to our West Valley School District Community Truancy Board, or you and your child may need to appear in Juvenile Court If your child continues to be truant you may need to go to court.

In West Valley School District we have established the following policy on attendance that will help you ensure your child is attending regularly. At West Valley School District our policy is that any child that is absent from school 5 days in a month or 10 in a year, will be scheduled to appear in front of our West Valley Community Truancy Board and a petition with a stay attached will be filed with juvenile court. A child that transfer to our district from another school district that have a truancy order for absences will result in a court hearing scheduled or their choice could be revoked. See West Valley School Board Policy No. 3122.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Set a regular bed time and morning routine.

- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day school starts and make sure your child has the required immunizations.
- Don't let your student stay home unless they are truly sick.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your child's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your child at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your child about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your child's teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful after school activities, including sports and clubs.

Sincerely,



Dr. Gene Sementi
Superintendent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures in West Valley School District.

Parent or Guardian Signature:

_____ Date _____