

## **WESD Attendance Policies**

School attendance is essential to every student's success, and absences can easily lead to academic trouble and create gaps in relationships with friends. WESD encourages all families to minimize absences. Families should get their children to school as often as possible, on time, and align vacations and appointments with the school calendar to avoid unnecessary absences. Each day missed at school is a missed day of instruction, a day of classroom interaction with students and teachers that cannot be recovered.

Research shows that missing 10 percent of the school year, or 18 days in a school year, negatively affects a student's academic performance. Poor attendance can affect students' reading proficiency as early as the end of third grade. Reading proficiency can affect learning in other subjects, and could result in the child being held back a grade. By 6th grade, chronic absence is a leading indicator that a student may drop out of high school. When students improve their attendance rates, they improve their academic prospects and chances for graduating.

### **What's the difference between truancy and chronic absenteeism?**

#### **Truancy (Unexcused Absences):**

The California Education Code ("Ed Code") states that a student is truant if that student:

- Is absent from school without an Ed Code-valid excuse three full days in one school year; or
- Is tardy or absent for more than a 30-minute period during the school day without an Ed Code-valid excuse on three occasions in one school year;
- Or any combination thereof. (Ed Code, 48260(a))

Ed Code 48260.5 requires public schools to notify parents when a child is truant. WESD will send notifications when a student accumulates 3, 6 and 10 unexcused absences, or accumulates 30 minutes or more of missed instruction, or any combination thereof. This notification is meant to promote communication between the home and the school. Parents are always encouraged to contact the school site when questions of school attendance arise.

#### **Chronic Absenteeism (Excused and Unexcused Absences):**

A "chronic absentee" is defined in Ed Code section 60901(c)(1) as "a pupil who is absent (both excused and unexcused) on 10 percent or more of the school days in the school year." Absences are tracked both for full-day absences and tardies (more than 30 minutes late or leaving early). WESD sends letters to families at the end of each trimester if their child is at risk of chronic absenteeism.

**Truancy (Unexcused Absences):**

Absences	District Actions
<p><i>Tier 1:</i></p> <p><i>3rd unexcused Absence, or unexcused Tardy beyond 30 minutes for the school year the school year</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A student’s third unexcused absence or unexcused tardy in excess of 30 minutes (or any combination thereof) will be followed up with a call from the school office.</li> <li>• The absence or tardy will be recorded in the student’s PowerSchool attendance.</li> <li>• An initial letter of truancy will be mailed home.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Tier 2:</i></p> <p><i>6th unexcused Absence, or unexcused Tardy beyond 30 minutes for the school year</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A student’s unexcused absences or tardies in excess of 30 minutes will be followed up with a call from the school office.</li> <li>• The absence or tardy will be recorded in the student’s PowerSchool attendance.</li> <li>• A 2nd letter of truancy will be mailed home.</li> <li>• Principal meeting or communication with parent/guardian to implement an attendance improvement plan and connect family with necessary services/resources.</li> <li>• The District may hold a Student Study Team meeting (SST).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Tier 3:</i></p> <p><i>10th unexcused Absence, or unexcused Tardy beyond 30 minutes for the school year</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A student’s unexcused absences or tardies in excess of 30 minutes will be followed up with a call from the school office.</li> <li>• The absence or tardy will be recorded in the student’s PowerSchool attendance.</li> <li>• A 3rd letter of truancy will be mailed home.</li> <li>• The District will require families to participate in a Student Study Team meeting (SST).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Additional Unexcused Absences or Unexcused Tardies</i></p>	<p>Students who are considered “chronically truant” by the District may be referred to the San Mateo County School Attendance Review Board (SARB).</p>

**Chronic Absenteeism (Excused & Unexcused Absences):**

Absences	District Actions
<p><i>At the end of Trimester 1, a student has 6 or more absences, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Excused absences</i></li> <li>● <i>Unexcused absences</i></li> <li>● <i>Unexcused tardies of 30 minutes or more</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A letter notifying that the student is at-risk for chronic absenteeism will be mailed home to families.</li> <li>● The District may hold a Student Study Team meeting (SST).</li> </ul>
<p><i>At the end of Trimester 2, a student has 12 or more absences, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Excused absences</i></li> <li>● <i>Unexcused absences</i></li> <li>● <i>Unexcused tardies of 30 minutes or more</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A 2nd letter notifying that the student is at-risk for chronic absenteeism will be mailed home to families.</li> <li>● Principal meeting or communication with parent/guardian to implement an attendance improvement plan and connect family with necessary services/resources.</li> <li>● The District may hold a Student Study Team meeting (SST).</li> </ul>
<p><i>At any time, a student has 15 or more absences, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Excused absences</i></li> <li>● <i>Unexcused absences</i></li> <li>● <i>Unexcused tardies of 30 minutes or more</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The District will require families to participate in a Student Study Team meeting (SST).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Additional Absences or Tardies</i></p>	<p>Students who are considered “chronically absent” by the District may be referred to the San Mateo County School Attendance Review Board (SARB).</p>

## FAQ:

### 1. How are absences categorized as excused or unexcused?

Parents are not able to decide if an absence is excused or unexcused; parents provide the notification and the reason, and the decision of whether the absence is excused, or unexcused, is determined by California Ed Code. Ed Code's strict and limited definitions of excused absences are listed below; any reason that is not on this list is unexcused. Note: absences are tracked both for full-day absences and tardies (more than 30 minutes late or leaving early).

Under California Education Code section 48205, a pupil shall be excused from school if the absence is:

1. Due to the pupil's illness, including an absence for the benefit of the pupil's mental or behavioral health.
2. Due to quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
3. For the purpose of having medical, dental, optometrical, or chiropractic services rendered.
4. For the purpose of attending the funeral services of a member of the pupil's immediate family, so long as the absence is not more than one day if the service is conducted in California and not more than three days if the service is conducted outside California.
5. For the purpose of jury duty in the manner provided for by law.
6. Due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child for whom the student is the custodial parent, including absences to care for a sick child (for which the school shall not require a note from a doctor).
7. For justifiable personal reasons, including, but not limited to, an appearance in court, attendance at a funeral service, observance of a holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion, attendance at religious retreats, attendance at an employment conference, or attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization, when the pupil's absence is requested in writing by the parent or guardian and approved by the principal or a designated representative pursuant to uniform standards established by the governing board.
8. For the purpose of serving as a member of a precinct board for an election pursuant to Section 12302 of the Elections Code.
9. For the purpose of spending time with a member of the pupil's immediate family who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Ed Code Section 49701, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support

position. Absences granted pursuant to this paragraph shall be granted for a period of time to be determined at the discretion of the superintendent of the school district.

10. For the purpose of attending the pupil's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen.

11. Authorized at the discretion of a school administrator, as described in subdivision (c) of Section 48260.

\* For purposes of this section, attendance at religious retreats shall not exceed four hours per trimester.

\*"Immediate family," as used in this section, means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.

## **2. What happens if my child's absence is defined as excused?**

Students are given the opportunity to make up schoolwork missed due to an excused absence. Please work with your child's teacher directly to make arrangements for make-up work.

## **3. What happens if my child's absence is defined as unexcused?**

Schools are not required to provide an opportunity to make up schoolwork missed. Examples of unexcused absences include travel for any reason not defined as excused by Ed Code; vacation, parents' business trips, travel for visa renewal purposes, etc. are not excused per Ed Code.

## **4. When do I need a doctor's note to excuse health related absences?**

The District is allowed to require a note from a licensed medical provider or physician in order to excuse health-related absences. The District is likely to ask for a doctor's note in the following circumstances:

- When a student has had 5 consecutive days of health absences;
- Cases of chronic absenteeism, where the student is absent the equivalent of 10% or more of the school year for health reasons;
- When there is a pattern of health-related absences immediately before or after a weekend or school break;
- When the District is otherwise concerned about a student's truancy or absenteeism

Under certain circumstances, parents may be asked to consult a physician and to provide a written note from a doctor indicating that the student is no longer contagious and may return to school.

## **5. My child is sick, should I send them to school?**

In the post-Covid era, we are shifting back to previous recommendations. For the safety and protection of all, students should not attend school with any of the symptoms listed below. If a student is at school with these symptoms, the parent/guardian will be called to pick up the student.

- Productive cough that disrupts normal activity
- Yellow or green nasal discharge
- Fever of 100 degrees or higher. Students who have been ill with a fever need to be fever-free, without the use of medication, for 24 hours before returning to school
- Eyes that are red, swollen, crusting, or draining
- Untreated, draining ears or earache
- Diarrhea or vomiting. Keep student home for 24 hours before returning to school
- Severe nausea
- Severe sore throat
- Toothache or any other severe pain
- Skin rash needs to be cleared by doctor before returning to school
- Childhood communicable disease or Covid - contact the district nurse - [akeane@woodsideschool.us](mailto:akeane@woodsideschool.us)

## **6. What should I do if I receive an attendance letter for my child?**

Parents are encouraged to follow the suggestions and/or instructions contained in the letter. Excessive absences are frequently an indicator of other problems. If your student is frequently absent, or is refusing to go to school, please contact your school for support; the school will partner with you and provide strategies and available resources to address the problem. In particularly difficult cases, the school may enlist the district nurse or support staff, or provide a referral to the School Attendance Review Board (SARB) to deliver interventions to assist families in re-engaging the student to return to school.