

Students**Attendance****Absences and Excuses**

It shall be the policy of the Watertown Unified School District to encourage regular school attendance. Regular attendance is a responsibility that is shared by the student, parent, and school.

Student absenteeism has far-reaching negative consequences. The school attendance office shall determine daily which students enrolled in the school district are absent from school, and whether that absence is excused.

Excused Absences

In accordance with Wisconsin Statute 118.15(3)(b), students will be excused from school attendance by the designated attendance officer for the following reasons if such absence is with the knowledge and approval of the student's parent or legal guardian:

1. Personal illness (a medical excuse may be required for more than three consecutive days of illness)
2. Severe illness or death in the family
3. Religious observance
4. Impassable roads or extreme weather conditions
5. Required court appearance
6. Health appointments
7. College visits
8. Special cases at the discretion of the principal

Parent/guardian notification is required if the student is absent from school. In addition to the reasons above, and according to State Statute, 118.15(3)(c), a student who is excused in writing by his/her parent/guardian before an absence occurs will be excused from school. A parent/guardian may not excuse a student under this paragraph for more than 10 days per school year.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide a medical or other documented excuse for their son/daughter's absence whenever possible.

Students whose absence from school is excused by the attendance officer or parent will be provided with the opportunity to complete coursework assigned during the absence, as well as take any quarterly, semester or grading period examinations or other assessments.

Truancy

Students are considered truant if they are absent from class or school for all or part of a school day without an excuse approved by the attendance officer for reasons other than those stated above. Students are not considered truant when parent/guardian notification of an excused absence (refer to previous list) is given on the day of the absence or by 3:30 p.m. on the day of return to school.

According to state statute, a student is considered truant if he/she is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for all or part of one or more days in which school is held. A student is

considered habitually truant when he/she is absent without an acceptable excuse all or part of five or more days a semester.

The WUSD takes student attendance seriously, and when a student is absent for more than five days a semester or ten days a school year, the student will be considered truant if an acceptable medical excuse is not provided to the administration.

Unexcused tardiness to class or school that exceeds 20 minutes will be considered an incident of truancy. Excessive tardiness, when a student is late to school or class excessively for 20 minutes or less, may also be addressed as truancy.

The school principal/designee at each of the district's schools is designated the "School Attendance Officer" to deal with matters relating to school attendance, truancy, and request for program or curriculum modification. The School Attendance Officer will use appropriate discretion when determining incidents of truancy.

The School Attendance Officer:

1. Shall determine daily which students enrolled in the school are absent from school and whether that absence is excused or a truancy.
2. Shall annually, on or before June 15th, determine how many students enrolled in the school were absent in the previous year and whether the absences were excused. This information will be submitted to the district administrator who shall report such information to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
3. Shall notify the parent or guardian of a child who has been truant and direct the parent or guardian to return the child to school no later than the next school day. The notice under this paragraph must be given before the end of the second day after receiving knowledge of a truancy, and may be made in person by mail, or telephone call of which a written record is kept.

Repeated truancy shall be referred to the proper authorities for proceedings against a child under section 48.13(c) Wisconsin Statutes, or against a child's parent or guardian under section 118.15 Wisconsin Statutes, provided the school attendance officer can show evidence that appropriate school personnel have, within the school year during which the truanancies occurred:

1. Met with child's parent or guardian to discuss the child's truancy or have attempted to meet with the child's parent or guardian and been refused.
2. Provided an opportunity for educational counseling to the child to determine whether a change in the child's curriculum would resolve the child's attendance problem and have considered curriculum modifications under section 118.15(1)(d) Wisconsin Statutes.
3. Evaluated the child to determine whether learning problems may be the cause of the child's attendance problem and, if so, have taken steps to overcome the learning problem.

4. Conducted an evaluation to determine whether social problems may be the cause of the child's attendance problem and, if so, have taken appropriate action or made appropriate referrals.

District Interpretations

This policy shall constitute the district's truancy plan. It shall be reviewed and revised as necessary at least every two years as outlined in Section 118.162 – Wisconsin Statutes.

“Matters relating to school attendance”, is interpreted to include absences, requests to be excused, and requests for alternative programs.

“Evaluated” is interpreted to mean a review of the student's cumulative folder and permanent record with particular note to standardized tests, academic progress and anecdotal comments.

“Social problems” is interpreted to mean problems in the school, community or at home that require the intervention of a social worker.

Legal Reference:

Wisconsin Statutes:

Section 118.15
Section 118.16
Section 118.165
Section 118.162

Policy Approved: September 14, 1995

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