

ABSENCES / ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is vital to success and enables a student to make the most of his or her education. Attendance can help your child keep up with his or her school work, perform better on tests, benefit from teacher-led and school activities, and build each day's learning on the previous day. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). Therefore, it is a responsibility of both the school and the parent to cooperate and encourage students to establish good attendance. District attendance officers may be used to encourage regular attendance. Texas state laws dealing with 1) compulsory attendance and 2) attendance for course credit are briefly addressed as follows:

Attendance for Credit

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, which allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or did not complete a plan approved by the principal, the student will be referred to the campus attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances, as described above, for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. [See Board Policy FEC(LOCAL)]

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the campus Attendance Review Committee will use the following guidelines:

All absences will be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If make-up work is completed, absences for the reasons listed at Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance will be considered days of attendance for this purpose.

A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district. For a student transferring into the district after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.

In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will ensure that the decision is in the best academic interest of the student.

The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.

The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student's parent could exercise any control.

The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.

The student or parent will be given the opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit.

The student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Trustees by filing a written request with the superintendent in accordance with Board Policy FNG(LOCAL). The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit depends on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

Driver's License Attendance Verification – For a student between the ages of 16 and 18 to obtain a driver license, the Texas Department of Public Safety must be provided written parental consent to access the student's records for purposes of verifying 90 percent attendance for credit for the semester. NOTE: The VOE form will only be provided to those students who meet the 90 percent attendance requirement as specified above within two (2) school days from the date of the request.

Compulsory Attendance

State law requires that a student between the ages six (6) 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 and is subject to compulsory attendance laws, if the student is under 21 years old. In addition, if a student 18 or older has more than five (5) 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 Board Policy FEA(LOCAL)]

A student in grades 3-8 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 assessment for his or her grade level and applicable subject area.

Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences. These include the following activities and events:

- o Religious holy days
- o Required court appearances
- o Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship (HB 192)
- o Service as an election clerk (SB 1134); and
- o Documented health-care appointments, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (HB 192)

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two (2) days related to visiting a college or university may be considered an exemption, provided the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed (HB 2542).

Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent from school without permission from any class, required special program such as additional special instruction, termed "accelerated instruction" by the state; or from required tutorials, will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law (truant) and subject to

disciplinary action (i.e., Saturday detention and/or truancy charges being filed as appropriate).

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 student and the parent may be filed in a court of law if the student:

Is absent on three (3) or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, or
Is absent from school on ten (10) or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.

If the student is over age 18, the student's parents shall not be subject to penalties as a result of their child's violation of state compulsory attendance law. [See Board Policy FEA(LEGAL)]

The definition of truancy consists of students failing to attend school during school hours. A student who is tardy to class may be assigned to detention hall. Repeated instances of tardiness will result in more severe disciplinary action, in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Students who are habitually late in arriving to school at the start of school each day may have truancy consequences imposed.

Texas Education Code (25.095) Warning Notices – A school district shall send a truancy warning notice to a student's parent in writing if the student accumulates unexcused absences totaling 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year or totaling three (3) or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

Texas Education Code (25.093) Parent Contributing to Nonattendance – If a warning is issued as required by Section 25.095, the parent with criminal negligence fails to require the child to attend school as required by law, and the child has absences for the amount of time specified under Section 25.094, the parent commits an offense.

Texas Education Code (25.094) Failure to Attend School – An individual commits an offense if the individual fails to attend school, without an excused reason, on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year or on three (3) or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

Examples of Extenuating Circumstances

Required screening, diagnosis, and treatment for Medicaid-eligible students

Attending a required court appearance (court documentation required)

Playing Taps at a funeral

A student visiting with his or her parent due to a parent's leave or deployment activities

Appearing at a governmental office to complete paperwork required in connection with the student's application for US citizenship or taking part in a US naturalization oath ceremony

Temporary absence (student must attend school part of the day) of a student diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder on the day of the student's appointment with a health care practitioner to receive generally recognized service for persons with autism spectrum disorder including applied behavioral analysis, speech therapy, and occupational therapy

Absence required by State or local welfare authorities (i.e., CPS, mandated non-custodial parent visits)

Pre-approved college visits [up to two (2) absences during the student's high school junior and senior year; these absences will count against allowed absences for exam exemptions]

Unforeseen or unavoidable incident requiring immediate attention in which either incident is typically a one-time occurrence

Three (3) Most Common Excused Absences

Student Illness

Death of Immediate Family Member of Student (Includes Grandparents)

Health Care Appointments (if entire day is missed)

PLEASE NOTE: Family/personal vacation/visits scheduled during regular schools days are not acceptable absences – these absences will be counted as unexcused absences regardless of the number of days missed.

Medical (Doctor's) Note After An Absence Due to Illness

Upon return to school, a student absent for more than five (5) consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's extended absence from school, thereby clearing the student to return to school.

Parent's Note after an Absence

When a student must be absent from school for any reason, the student must bring a note by no later than the second (2nd) school day upon returning from the absence. Handwritten notes must be signed and dated by the parent. All notes must describe the reason for the absence and include parent's contact numbers. The aforementioned parent notes may be sent via e-mail, but must come from a verified parent's e-mail account and be sent to the child's teacher(s) as well as the school's daily attendance clerk. If the student fails to bring a note or the parent does not send an e-mail note as noted above within the two (2) school-day period, each day of absence will be coded as an unexcused absence and will negatively impact the student's official attendance record. Note: Once coded as an unexcused absence, the coding will not be changed, unless the absence was found to be marked in error at the campus level. Please contact your child's ADA clerk and/or the building principal if you have documentation to show the unexcused absence was marked in error at the campus level (copy of documentation must be provided to the school). Unexcused absences may result in a truancy warning letter or citation. Note: Issuance of a truancy citation will result in a mandated court appearance by the parent or guardian and/or student. It is important to remember that an excuse note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older, married, or emancipated by a court of law.

Preplanned/Anticipated Absence

Notes for preplanned or anticipated absences should be sent to the school principal at least three (3) school days before actual absences occur in order to determine whether or not the absences are considered excused. This is asked so that parents will have information that will assist them in making a decision as to whether or not the student will actually be out of school on the anticipated dates. If a student should leave school from the nurse's office for the remainder of a school day, the parent or guardian of the student should ensure that the attendance clerk is notified in writing of the student's departure from school. Whether an absence is marked excused or unexcused, students will have an opportunity to complete any worked missed upon their return to school. The number of days given to make up work assigned during an absence will be equal to the number of days missed. Note: Teachers are not required to provide assignments or class work for students to complete during the time they are absent.

Tardiness/Truancy Enforcement

A student who is late to class ten (10) minutes or less may be assigned to detention hall for being tardy. Repeated instances of tardiness will result in a more severe disciplinary action, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. Note: The definition of truancy consists of students failing to attend school during school hours; therefore, students habitually late in arriving to school at the start of school each day may have truancy consequences imposed.

Regular and consistent attendance is essential to achieving academic success. Consequently, a primary goal of the FBISD Truancy Unit is to encourage regular and consistent attendance of all students. Therefore, when a student accumulates a prohibited amount of unexcused absences, the compulsory attendance laws as stated above, must be enforced. The FBISD will enforce the compulsory attendance laws in the following manner:

- All students will be issued a warning notice when attendance records reflect that the student has absences without an excuse on three (3) or more days or parts of days within a four-week period;

- Automated phone calls will be placed to parents or guardians notifying them when students are absent as well as when a truancy warning notice has been issued. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to ensure that he/she provide current and up to date contact information to the school;

- After a student has been issued a warning notice and his/her attendance record reflects that he/she has three (3) additional absences without excuse within a four-week period, the student will be issued a second (2nd) warning notice and referred to the FBISD Truancy Diversion Program (TDP) in lieu of being issued a citation.

The TDP is a privilege and not a right. The TDP is an information-based program designed as 1) an alternative to a court referral and 2) to educate parents or guardians and students, who are experiencing truancy problems, as to the consequences associated with unexcused absences. In addition, the program identifies available and appropriate resources for families who may be experiencing issues that may be contributing to a student's truancy. The TDP

will be offered to students and parents with truancy issues once during each school year;

The student's and parent's or guardian's attendance in the TDP is required on the scheduled program date(s) at the scheduled time(s) in order to avoid the district filing of a citation for unexcused absences of three (3) or more days or parts of days without an excuse within a four-week period. Attendance officers shall consider extenuating circumstances referenced above if a student and/or parent or guardian is unable to attend the TDP scheduled referral date/time;

- If a student fails to attend school on ten (10) or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year prior to attending the TDP and those absences have been verified by the campus as unexcused, the student and/or parent or guardian will be issued a citation and referred to the appropriate court regardless of whether the TDP has been completed. In such a case, the student and parent or guardian must appear on the scheduled court date at the scheduled time and location regardless of whether they are in the process of completing or have already completed the TDP. A student, parent or guardian who fail or refuse to attend the TDP or who does not complete the TDP will be issued a citation. If a student's unexcused absences are sporadic, it is possible that a warning notice or TDP referral may not be issued; however, a citation for ten (10) or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year within six (6) months can be issued without a warning notice or TDP referral.

- Once a student and parent or guardian have been afforded the opportunity to attend the TDP, the student, parent or guardian will receive a truancy citation for future violations of the compulsory attendance laws.

Parents are strongly encouraged to register for the FBISD Parent Portal which will allow for the monitoring of a student's attendance to insure accuracy and to take appropriate action when necessary. Since citations are issued based on the attendance data coded in a student's electronic file, both parents or guardians and students should address any and all questions concerning marked unexcused absences with the appropriate campus administrator or campus principal without delay.