

## SECTION II: ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

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### ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE

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 days, 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 and the other with attendance for a student's final grade or course credit, are of special interest to students and parents.

#### **ATTENDANCE FOR CREDIT OR FINAL GRADE (PREKINDERGARTEN-GRADE 12)**

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student in kindergarten–Grade 12 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 or a final grade for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal that 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 or a final grade for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed the plan approved by the principal and the assistant superintendent, then the student will be referred to the Campus Attendance Committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or a final grade because of absences. See [Policy FEC \(LEGAL\)](#).

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the Campus Attendance Committee (CAC) will use the following guidelines:

- All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed as “Exemptions” 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.
- Absences incurred due to the student's participation in board-approved extracurricular activities will be considered by the CAC as extenuating circumstances if the student makes up the work missed in each class.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the CAC will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.
- The CAC will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student's absences.
- The CAC will consider whether the absences were for reasons for which the student or the student's parent could not exercise any control.
- The CAC 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 an opportunity to present any information to the CAC about the absences. See [Policy FEC](#) (LOCAL).

The student or parent may appeal the CAC's decision to the Board of Trustees by filing a written request with the Superintendent in accordance with [Policy FNG](#) (LOCAL). The actual number of days a student must be in attendance, in order to receive credit or a final grade, will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year. If credit has been denied due to excessive absences, then no credit or grade points can be earned; however, the attendance will be counted in "Total Course Credit Attempted."

#### **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE**

State law requires that a student from the ages of six (6) to nineteen (19) 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. See [Policy FEA](#) (LEGAL) and Texas Education Code 25.085.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 19th birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year. If a student 19 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the District may revoke the student's enrollment. After a student age 19 or older incurs a third unexcused absence, the District is required by law to send the student a letter explaining that the District may revoke the student's enrollment for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking a student's enrollment, the District may implement a truancy action improvement plan. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. Students who have enrolled in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school.

#### **DOCTOR'S VISIT**

If a student is temporarily absent from school and the student either began classes or returned to school on the same day as the appointment the absence can be coded as "medical", once the appointment has been properly documented. If the student has a medical appointment/visitation and never attends school on the day of the appointment, the absence will be coded as excused with proper documentation.

Per the current Student Attendance Accounting Handbook from the Texas Education Agency, a consultation over the phone or via video (telemedicine) is considered an appointment with a health care professional. An appointment with a school nurse will not count for Foundation School Program (FSP) funding as an appointment with a health care professional.

#### **DOCTOR'S NOTE AFTER AN ABSENCE FOR ILLNESS**

Upon return to school, a student absent for four or more 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. Notes must be turned in within five school days of the student's return to campus. Otherwise, the student's absence may be considered unexcused.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student's absence from school in order to determine whether the absence or absences will be excused or unexcused. See [Policy FEC](#) (LOCAL).

#### **DOCUMENTATION AFTER AN ABSENCE (ALL GRADE LEVELS)**

When a student is absent from school, the student—upon arrival or within five school days of returning to school—must submit a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law. All notes must describe the reason for the absence and include the parent's contact numbers. Parent notes may be sent by e-mail but must come from a parent's verified e-mail account

and be sent to the school's daily attendance clerk. If the student fails to bring a note or the parent does not send an e-mail as required within the five school-day period, the absence will be coded as unexcused" and will count against the student's official attendance record.

When a student does not return to school after being absent for more than 10 days and has not provided notification of the absences, all absences will be marked unexcused, and the student and parent may be subjected to truancy filing/intervention measures.

**Note:** Unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the District is **not** required to excuse an absence. Once coded as an unexcused absence, the coding will not be changed without administrative approval/authorization.

#### **DRIVER LICENSE ATTENDANCE VERIFICATION (SECONDARY GRADE LEVELS ONLY)**

For a student between the ages of 15 and 18 to obtain a driver license, written parental permission must be provided for the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) to access the student's attendance records and, in certain circumstances, for a school administrator to provide the student's attendance information to DPS. A verification of enrollment (VOE) and attendance form may be obtained from the office, which the student will need to submit to DPS upon application for a driver license.

All currently enrolled student seeking a driver's license shall submit the Texas Department of Public Safety Verification of Enrollment and Attendance Form (VOE), signed by the parent, to the campus central office at least 10 days before it is needed. The District will issue a VOE only if the student meets class credit or attendance requirements. The VOE form is available at the [Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation](#).

Further information may be found on the Texas Department of Public Safety website at the [Texas Department of Public Safety](#).

#### **FAILURE TO REPORT ATTENDANCE ISSUES**

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student who is absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, 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 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 referral may be sent to the 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. If a student is absent without an excuse on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, or 5 total days or parts of days, he or she will receive a warning letter.

If a student is absent without an excuse on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period, or 5 total days or parts of days, he or she will receive a warning letter inviting the parent (Elementary School) or student and parent (Middle School, High School) to complete the District's online #Attend2Achieve Truancy Diversion Program (TDP). This course is offered in English and Spanish via Schoology. The TDP is a District-developed online information-based intervention program offered to parents and students as a preventative measure to educate parents/guardians and students who are experiencing attendance issues. The TDP provides parents and students truancy information (once during the school year), identifies available resources, and explains the consequences associated with unexcused absences.

#### **OFFICIAL ATTENDANCE-TAKING TIME**

The District must submit attendance of its students to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reflecting attendance at a specific time each day known as "snapshot". The District's official attendance snapshot is taken at the following times:

Elementary - 10:00 a.m.

James Reese CTE Center – 9:30 a.m.

Middle School - 10:15 a.m.

Progressive HS – 9:30 a.m.

High School - 10:00 a.m.

Because of public health concerns, instruction will vary; however, attendance will still be recorded in every class. FBISD is closely monitoring attendance-based instructional changes as they occur. Parents and students should stay abreast of the most updated information as FBISD attendance-taking protocols are subject to change throughout the school year.

### **PREPLANNED/ANTICIPATED ABSENCE**

Notes for preplanned or anticipated absences should be sent to the school principal or designee at least three school days before the absences occur to determine if the absences will be excused. Regardless of whether an absence is marked excused or unexcused, students will have an opportunity to complete any missed work 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. Teachers are not required to provide assignments or class work for students to complete during the time they are absent.

### **STATE ATTENDANCE EXEMPTIONS**

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. A student not actually on campus at the time attendance snapshot is taken may be considered in attendance for funding purposes if the student makes up missed work for one of the following reasons, per the TEA:

- Enrollment in and attending off-campus dual credit program
- Fulltime enrollment in Texas Virtual School Network courses
- Extracurricular or co-curricular activity that is approved by our school board
- Participation in a class provided by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired or the Texas School for the Deaf
- Misses school for the purpose of observing District-approved religious holy days
- In grades 6-12 and playing Taps at a Texas military honors funeral for a deceased veteran
- Attending a mandated, required court appearance
- In the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services
- Serving as a student early voting clerk
- Appearing at a governmental office to complete U.S. citizenship paperwork
- Participating in the student's own or parent's or guardian's U. S. naturalization oath ceremony
- Met with and attended a documented medical appointment for the student or the student's child
- Absences resulting from a serious or life-threatening illness or related treatment that makes a student's attendance infeasible, with certification by a physician.
- Visited an accredited institution of higher education during the student's junior or senior high school, up to two days
- Visited with a parent/stepparent/legal guardian who is an active-duty member of the uniformed services

- A student 17 years of age or older is pursuing enlistment in a branch of the U.S. armed services or Texas National Guard, provided the absence does not exceed four days and the student provides verification to the District of these activities
- Participating in an off-campus work-based learning opportunity
- Misses school for the purpose of visiting a driver's license office to obtain a driver's license or learner permit. The student must be enrolled in high school and 15 years of age or older. The student may not be excused for more than one day of school during the period the student is enrolled in high school for each purpose (obtaining a driver's license and obtaining a learner license).

\*Students and parents are encouraged to read full explanations of the aforementioned reasons per the most current edition of the [Student Attendance Accounting Handbook](#) located on the Fort Bend ISD Website, per the Texas Education Agency. (Numerous absences, whether excused or unexcused, may jeopardize a student's ability to receive credit or final grades for classes.)

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If a student with a disability is experiencing attendance issues, the student's ARD committee or Section 504 committee will be notified, and the committee will determine whether the attendance issues warrant an evaluation, a reevaluation, and/or modifications to the student's individualized education program or Section 504 plan, as appropriate.

### **TRUANCY ENFORCEMENT/DIVERSION PROGRAM**

FBISD will enforce the Texas compulsory attendance laws as follows:

- Automated phone calls will be placed to parents or guardians notifying them when a student has been marked as absent. It is the parent or guardian's responsibility to ensure that he/she provides current and up to date contact information to the school.
- All students will be issued a warning letter and request for conference when attendance records reflect that the student has absences without an excuse on three days or parts of days in a four-week period or five or more days or parts of days in the same school year.
- After a student has been issued a warning notice, the campus will begin implementation of Truancy Prevention Measures for the student.
- Each campus will provide truancy intervention measures for students who exhibit attendance issues in order to develop a plan to improve the student's overall attendance.
- After a student receives five total unexcused absences, the student and parent will be invited to attend the Truancy Diversion Program (TDP). The Truancy Diversion Program (TDP) is an information-based intervention program offered to parents and students as a preventative measure to intervene 1) before students receive a referral to court; and 2) to educate parents/guardians and students who are experiencing truancy problems about the consequences associated with unexcused absences. In addition, the program identifies available and appropriate resources for families who are experiencing issues that may be contributing to a student's truancy. Opportunities to complete the TDP program are offered throughout the school year; however, students and parents may participate in the program once during that school year. The program is offered online. Information about the program can be found at [www.fortbendisd.com/TDP](http://www.fortbendisd.com/TDP).
- If a student fails to attend school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year and those absences have been verified by the campus as unexcused, students 12 and older may be referred to the appropriate authority in Fort Bend County. At this point, the court could also file a criminal complaint against parents who contribute to the non-attendance of their child, regardless of the child's age.

For more information regarding truancy and TDP, contact Student Affairs.

#### **WITHDRAWAL GUIDELINES AND COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE**

Students who are withdrawn for an extended period of days, then return to re-enroll at their campus must show proof of enrollment in an educational program during their absence.

When a student is absent from school, the student—upon arrival or within five school days of returning to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent’s permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older or is an emancipated minor under state law. All notes must describe the reason for the absence and include the parent’s contact numbers. Parent notes may be sent by e-mail but must come from a parent’s verified e-mail account and be sent to the school’s daily attendance clerk. If the student fails to bring a note or the parent does not send an e-mail as required within the five school-day period, the absence will be coded as an unexcused and will count against the student’s official attendance record.

**Note:** Unless the absence is for a statutorily allowed reason under compulsory attendance laws, the District is not required to excuse any absence. Once coded as an unexcused absence, the coding will not be changed without the approval of a campus principal.

## **COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS**

Usually, student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or principal. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the District has adopted a standard complaint [Policy](#) at [FNG](#) (LOCAL) in the District’s policy manual. A copy of this policy may be obtained in the Department of Student Affairs or on the District’s website at [Fort Bend ISD](#), under Student Affairs. For a formal complaint, the student or parent should provide a written [Policy FNG](#) (LOCAL) complaint form to the Department of Student Affairs.

In most circumstances involving a complaint with a campus or staff member, the student or parent shall be expected to discuss the matter with the staff member before requesting a conference with the appropriate administrator.

Before initiating a formal complaint regarding a campus or staff member, parents are encouraged to resolve concerns by scheduling an informal conference with the appropriate administrator. Announcement of a decision in the student’s or parent’s presence shall constitute communication of the decision. However, if the informal conference does not resolve the issue, then the formal complaint process should be initiated.

#### **FILING A COMPLAINT**

Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, by electronic communication, including email and fax, or by U.S. Mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the Department of Student Affairs (DSA) by the close of business on the deadline. Filings submitted by electronic communication shall be timely filed if they are received by the close of business on the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the electronic communication. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline and received by the DSA no more than three days after the deadline.

#### **SCHEDULING CONFERENCES**

The District shall make reasonable attempts to schedule conferences at a mutually agreeable time. If a student or parent fails to appear at a scheduled conference, the District may hold the conference and issue a decision in the student’s or parent’s absence.