

Wallace Steger Academy
Policy: Attendance Policy
Adopted: September 17, 2015
Revised: March 14, 2019



POLICY

Wallace Stegner Academy (the "School") is committed to providing a quality education for every student. The School firmly believes that consistent attendance teaches students responsibility. Students learn the value of being punctual and prepared. Frequent absences result in a loss of continuity of instruction. Also, frequent absences and tardiness prove disruptive for students, teachers, and staff. Excessive unexcused absences may lead to a student's permanent dismissal from the School.

Parents are expected to take a proactive role in ensuring their children attend school. We recommend families plan their vacation schedule around the existing School calendar. When possible, medical and dental appointments should take place outside of school hours and parents should notify the School in advance of any absence. Parents and students are responsible for obtaining homework or assignments for the time period which the student is absent.

The School intends for this policy to be consistent with the provisions of Utah's compulsory attendance laws, Utah Code Ann. §§ 53G-6-201 through 53G-6-208. The School will seek to accurately monitor and record attendance information, annually review attendance data, and consider revisions to the attendance policy and procedures to encourage student attendance.

The Principal will establish attendance procedures consistent with this policy and applicable law and will ensure that the policy and procedures are distributed to parents.

Signature:

 03/14/19
Sarah Vaughan, Board President Date

Administrative Procedures Attendance Procedures

These procedures are established in accordance with the Attendance Policy established by the School's Board of Directors.

Definitions

"Absence" means a student's nonattendance at school for one school day or part of one school day.

"Valid excuse" or "excused absence" means an absence resulting from:

- a) an illness, which may be either mental or physical;
- b) a death of a family member or close friend;
- c) a documented medical appointment;
- d) a family emergency;
- e) an approved school activity;
- f) a preapproved extended absence for a family activity or travel, consistent with school policy; or
- g) an absence permitted by an individualized education program or accommodation plan, developed pursuant to relevant law.

The Principal has the discretion to consider other absences as "valid excuses."

"Habitual truant" means a school-age minor who: (1) is at least 12 years old; (2) is subject to the requirements of Section 53G-6-202; and (3)(a) is truant at least ten times during one school year; and (b) fails to cooperate with efforts on the part of school authorities to resolve the minor's attendance problem as required under Section 53G-6-206.

"Truant" means absent from school without a valid excuse.

Attendance Requirements: Students are allowed a maximum of five (5) unexcused absences per year.

Excused Absences: An oral or written communication documenting a valid excuse must be received from the student's parents/guardian within one (1) business day of the absence in order for the absence to be excused. In the event of multiple consecutive absences, written communication must be received within one (1) business day of the student's return to school.

In the event of an unforeseeable illness or emergency, the School should be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

Excused absences may become unexcused if the Principal determines that absences have reached an excessive level and are adversely impacting the student's education.

Preapproved Extended Absence: A parent/guardian may request approval from the principal prior to a student's extended absence of up to ten (10) days per school year.

The Principal will approve the absence if the Principal determines that the extended absence will not adversely impact the student's education.

Make-up Work: Make-up work is permitted for students who have excused absences. The teacher will provide the student or the parent/guardian with any make-up work upon request. Make-up work must be completed within a reasonable time-frame as determined by the teacher.

Tardiness: A student is tardy if he or she is not in the assigned classroom when the late bell rings. In general, tardiness will be handled on an individual basis with the teacher. If a student is chronically tardy, then the student may be referred to the administration. Elementary students are allowed five (5) tardies per quarter. Middle school students are allowed three (3) tardies per class each quarter.

Notification of Absences and Tardies: In the event a student is absent, parents/guardians will be notified by phone on the day of the absence. Parents and students are responsible for tracking the total number of absences and tardies. Parents will be notified when their student reaches the 4th unexcused absence of the year. Parents of elementary students will be notified when their child is tardy for the 4th time during a given quarter. Parents of Middle School students will be notified if their child is tardy for the 2nd time in a class for the given quarter. If the maximum limit for unexcused absences or tardiness is reached, the principal will attempt to schedule a meeting with the parents to review the situation and will outline the appropriate corrective action.

Grounds for an Appeal: Students who believe that all or part of their absences and/or tardies should be considered excused may provide a written request to the administrator to review their case.

Notice of Compulsory Education Violation

The School may issue a "notice of compulsory education violation" to a parent/guardian of a student who is under the age of fourteen (14) if the student is truant at least five (5) times during the school year.

This notice shall:

1. Direct the parent/guardian to meet with School authorities to discuss the student's attendance problem and cooperate with the principal and Board to secure regular attendance by the student;
2. Designate the School authorities with whom the parent is required to
3. meet;
4. State that it is a class B misdemeanor for the student's parent or guardian
5. to intentionally or recklessly fail to meet with the designated school authorities to discuss the student's attendance problems, or fail to prevent the student from being truant an additional five (5) more times during the remainder of the school year; and
6. Be served on the parent/guardian by personal service or certified mail.

If School personnel have reason to believe that, after a notice of compulsory education violation is issued, the parent or guardian has failed to make a good faith effort to ensure that the child receives an appropriate education, the issuer of the compulsory education violation shall submit to the Division of Child and Family Services the report required by Utah Code Subsection 53G-6-202(8) (also in accordance with the School's Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy).

Truancy Intervention Program

The School's Truancy Intervention Program is established to encourage good attendance and to facilitate the processing of chronically truant students through evidence-based alternative interventions or the juvenile court. Those efforts will include documented earnest and persistent efforts to resolve a student's attendance problems as follows:

- Annual notification of the School's attendance policies will be provided to the parents of all students at the time of registration.
- When a student's attendance is negatively affecting the student's learning, the classroom teacher will notify the student and/or the student's parent(s) of the concern. The teacher will set up a conference with the student and/or the student's parent(s) to identify and resolve any problems that prevent the student from attending school. The student's progress will be monitored.
- If meeting with the student and parent(s) does not adequately address the problems and the student's learning continues to suffer, then the school counselor or principal will work with the teacher and parent(s) in finding a solution to the problems that are preventing the student from attending to his/her learning. Efforts to resolve the problems may include, but are not limited to, the following: making adjustments to the curriculum or the schedule, counseling of the student by school authorities, considering alternatives proposed by the parent, or providing the parent with a list of community resources to help the family.
- The principal may consult with a parent/guardian to determine if mitigating circumstances such as medical or psychological problems indicate the use of intervention methods for resolving the attendance problems.
- In the event that the preceding interventions fail, a certified letter will be sent to the parent(s) requesting a formal meeting with the administrator to resolve the attendance problems. A copy of the letter and mailing certificates will be kept by the School.
- The principal will notify the student and a parent/guardian of the actions the School may take should the student be truant in the future.

Habitual Truancy Citation

Consistent with Section 53G-6-203, a habitual truancy citation may be issued to a student who is a habitual truant.

Habitual truancy citations will only be issued after the School has made earnest and persistent efforts to resolve student attendance problems, which efforts may include those set forth above.

Habitual truancy citations will be served on the parent/guardian by personal service or certified mail. The parent/guardian will have the right to appeal a truancy citation in writing to the principal within ten (10) days of being issued.

The School will refer a student to whom a habitual truancy citation has been issued to juvenile court if the student refuses to participate in an evidence-based alternative intervention described in Subsection 53G-8-211(3)(a), including

- a mobile crisis outreach team;
- a receiving center operated by the Division of Juvenile Justice Services;
- a youth court or comparable restorative justice program; or
- other evidence-based interventions created and developed by the School or other governmental entities as set forth in Subsection 53G-8-211(3)(a)(v).

A court referral will include a recommended disposition containing the following: [a] documentation of attendance and academic achievement; [b] documentation of school efforts to improve attendance; [c] copies of truancy citations, including all mailing certificates; [d] a report of evidence-based alternative interventions used by the School before referral, including outcomes; [e] the name and contact information of the School representative assigned to actively participate in the court process with the student and the student's family; and [f] student background as requested by the prosecuting agency.