

Hawthorn Academy
Policy: Attendance Policy
Adopted: September 8, 2021



Policy

Hawthorn 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 and tardiness 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 education laws, Utah Code §§ 53G-6-201 through 53G-6-208, as well as Utah Administrative Code Rule R277-607.

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.

Review

The School’s Board of Directors shall review this policy annually. The Board shall also annually review attendance data and consider revisions to this policy to encourage student attendance.

Administrative Procedures Attendance Procedures

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

Definitions

"Absence" or "absent" means the failure of a school-age child assigned to a class or class period to attend a class or class period. "Absence" or "absent" does not mean multiple tardies used to calculate an absence for the sake of a truancy.

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

- a) an illness, which may be either mental or physical, regardless of whether the school-age child or parent provides documentation from a medical professional;
- b) mental or behavioral health of the school-age child;
- c) a death of a family member or close friend;
- d) a scheduled family event or a scheduled proactive visit to a health care provider in accordance with Section 53G-6-803(5);
- e) a family emergency;
- f) an approved School activity;
- g) a preapproved extended absence for a family activity or travel, consistent with School policy; or
- h) an absence permitted by an individualized education program or Section 504 accommodation plan.

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

"Valid excuse" or "excused absence" does not mean a parent acknowledgement of an absence for a reason other than those described above.

"Habitual truant" means a school-age child who:

- (1) is in grade 7 or above and 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; or (b) fails to cooperate with efforts on the part of School authorities to resolve the school-age child's attendance problem as required under Section 53G-6-206.

"School-age child" means a minor who is at least six years old but younger than 18 years old and who is not emancipated.

"School day" means the portion of a day that school is in session in which a school-age child is required to be in school for purposes of receiving instruction.

"Truant" means a condition by which a school-age child, without a valid excuse, is absent for (a) at least half of the school day; or (b) if the school-age child is enrolled in a learner verified program, as that term is defined by the State Board of Education, the relevant amount of time under the School's Learner Validated Program Policy. A school-age child may not be considered truant under this policy more than one time during one day.

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.

Medical Documentation: The School may not require documentation from a medical professional to substantiate a valid excuse that is a mental or physical illness.

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 timeframe 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 school-age child who is in grades 1 through 6 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 meet;
3. State that it is a class B misdemeanor for the student's parent or guardian to intentionally or without good cause 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
4. 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 school-age 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 § 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.

Notice of Truancy

Consistent with Section 53G-6-203, the School may issue a notice of truancy to a school-age child who is in grade 7 or above, at least 12 years old, and is truant **at least five (5) times during the school year.**

A notice of truancy 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.

A notice of truancy will:

1. Direct the school-age child who receives the notice of truancy, and the parent/guardian of the school-age child, 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 school-age child and parent/guardian is required to meet.

A notice of truancy will be served on the parent/guardian by personal service or regular mail. The parent/guardian will have the right to appeal a notice of truancy in writing to the Principal within ten (10) days of being issued.

Referrals for Habitual Truancy

In accordance with Utah Code § 53G-8-211(4), the School shall refer a school-age child for prevention and early intervention youth services, as described in Section 62A-7-104, by the Division of Juvenile Justice Services for being a habitual truant if the school-age child refuses to participate in an evidence-based alternative intervention described in Utah Code § 53G-8-211(3)(b), including:

- a mobile crisis outreach team;
- a youth services 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)(b)(v).

The School may refer a school-age child who is a habitual truant to juvenile court or a law enforcement officer or agency if the student refuses to participate in an evidence-based alternative intervention described in Subsection 53G-8-211(3)(b) and fails to participate in prevention and early intervention youth services provided by the Division of Juvenile Justice Services as provided above.

A referral to juvenile court or a law enforcement officer or agency will include:

1. Attendance records for the student;
2. A report of evidence-based alternative interventions used by the School before the referral, including outcomes;
3. 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;
4. A report from the Division of Juvenile Justice Services that demonstrates the minor's failure to complete or participate in prevention and early intervention youth services as set forth in Utah Code § 53G-8-211(4); and
5. Any other information that the School considers relevant.