

West Central CUSD #235
Absenteeism and Truancy Policy
Board Approved: November 16, 2022

The following attendance and truancy information is in the West Central 2022 – 2023 District Student Handbook. That information is presented to students at the start of the school year, provided to families either online or in print form (based on their preference) and available on our district website. The 2022 – 2023 District Student Handbook, including this Attendance and Truancy Policy, was approved by the Board of Education at their Regular Meeting on June 15, 2022.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Illinois law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school). Illinois law also requires that whoever has custody or control of a child who is enrolled in the school, regardless of the child's age, shall assure that the child attends school during the entire time school is in session.

There are certain exceptions to the attendance requirement for children who: attend private school, are physically or mentally unable to attend school (including a pregnant student suffering medical complications as certified by her physician), are lawfully and necessarily employed, are between the ages of 12 and 14 while in confirmation classes, have a religious reason requiring absence, or are 16 or older and employed and enrolled in a graduation incentive program.

Whenever students are absent, they miss valuable information and opportunities. The missed educational opportunity can never be entirely made up. Absences are noted on transcripts which are sent to colleges and employers. Employers and colleges note excessive absences negatively as do committees that award scholarships.

It is the feeling of the Board of Education, administration, and teaching staff that no student should be absent unless it is absolutely necessary. Regular and punctual patterns of attendance are expected of each student enrolled in the West Central School District. Absences and tardiness are to be kept at a minimum. The following attendance policies reflect this District's philosophy:

Notification of Absences

In the event of an absence, the student's parent/guardian is required to call the appropriate school office by 9:00 a.m. each morning the student is absent to explain the reason for the absence. If a call has not been made to the school by 10:00 a.m. on the day of a student's absence, a school official will attempt to call the home to inquire why the student is not at school. If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted, the student will be required to submit a signed note from the parent/guardian explaining the reason for the absence upon his/her return. Failure to do so shall result in an unexcused absence. The student has two days to clear the unexcused absence. Any unexcused absence not cleared after two (2) school days will remain an unexcused absence, and the penalties for an unexcused absence will apply. The principal, at his/her discretion, has the right to request a

written statement from a physician explaining the nature of the absence. Upon request of the parent/guardian, the reason for an absence will be kept confidential.

Absences fall into two categories:

A. Excused

- Illness (including mental or behavioral health of the student),
- Observance of a religious holiday or event,
- Death in the immediate family,
- Family emergency,
- Situations beyond the control of the student,
- Circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent/guardian for the student's mental, emotional, or physical health or safety,
- Attending a military honors funeral to sound TAPS,
- Up to five (5) days in cases where the student's parent/guardian is an active-duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support postings. The Board of Education, in its discretion, may excuse a student for additional days relative to such leave or deployment.
- Pre-arranged absences such as college visits, funeral attendance, doctor or dentist appointments and family vacations must be pre-approved by the Building Principal. One college visit day will be allowed to a student as a junior and two as a senior. These days must be approved in advance by the Guidance Counselor and the Building Principal. Students who must be absent for a dental or medical appointment must bring back an appointment card certifying the appointment was kept and a written request or a phone call from their parent or guardian must be on file prior to the absence. Students may not leave for appointments with another student even with a parental note except with siblings,
- Out of school suspensions,
- Other reasons as approved by the Building Principal.

The school may require documentation explaining the reason for the student's absence.

If a student's absence is excused as described above, he/she will be permitted to make up all missed work, including homework and tests, for *equivalent* academic credit. The student will be given a minimum of one school day for each day absent to complete and return the work.

Anticipated Absences

Anticipated absences may be approved if the following are met (These are considered excused absences.):

- Travel or other extended absences with parents/guardians and other emergencies as determined and defined by the principal.
- All make-up work is to be arranged prior to the student's absence. A student and the student's parent/guardian are responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's

teachers prior to any anticipated excused absences and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by the student prior to his or her return to school.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in an unexcused absence.

Any work assigned during the student's absence and not provided to the student prior to being gone, will be given to the student on his/her return and the student will be given a minimum of one school day for each day absent to complete and return the work.

B. Unexcused

All other absences are considered unexcused unless otherwise approved by the Building Principal.

Unexcused absences are detrimental to the learning process and are highly discouraged. Absences correlate more than any other factor with school failure or poor school performance. In order to encourage attendance, penalties for unexcused absences will be issued whenever they occur.

The student has two days to clear the unexcused absence. Any unexcused absence not cleared after two (2) school days will remain an unexcused absence, and the penalties for an unexcused absence will apply.

If a student's absence is unexcused as described above, he/she will be permitted to make up all missed work, including homework and tests, for *equivalent* academic credit. The student will be given a minimum of one school day for each day absent to complete and return the work.

Excessive Student Absenteeism

At 5 and 10 absences, including mental or behavioral health of the student), a warning letter will be sent to parents/ guardians concerning truancy issues. After 10 absences, either excused or unexcused, a Doctor's note or administration approval is required upon return to school. Students must present proof from a doctor within 2 school days upon returning. When a student reaches 3 unexcused absences, a warning letter will be sent from the ROE. When a student reaches 6 unexcused absences, a second letter will be sent from the ROE. At 9 unexcused absences, a truancy ticket will be issued. The third truancy letter will be issued after the 12th unexcused absence. After 15 unexcused absences, the students will receive notice of a hearing before a county Truancy Review Board to be convened by the Office of the Regional Superintendent. The last step in the process (if success is not attained after the hearing before the Truancy Review Board) will be a referral to the appropriate court for legal action. This step will be initiated by the Regional Office of Education.

Truancy

Student attendance is critical to the learning process. Truancy is therefore a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school and district.

Students who miss more than 1% but less than 5% or more of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause (a recognized excuse) are considered truants. Students who miss 5% or more of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause are chronic truants. Students who are chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue.

If chronic truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and district, with support from the Regional Office of Education, will take further action, including:

- Referral to the truancy officer
- Reporting to officials under the Juvenile Court Act
- Referral to the State's Attorney
- Appropriate school discipline

A student who misses 15 consecutive days of school without valid cause and who cannot be located or, after exhausting all available support services, cannot be compelled to return to school is subject to expulsion from school.

A parent or guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law.

Interventions, Support and Absenteeism Data Review

Interventions and Support - Throughout all steps of the attendance and truancy procedures, conferences are held with the student(s) and/or parent(s) to determine needs and supports that the District is able to help provide the family to reduce the absenteeism rate for the student. These supports may include:

- Student Interviews
- Parent Interviews
- District Counselor
- District Social Worker
- District School Psychologist
- Eagleview Behavioral Health
- Bridgeway Services
- ROE Truancy Team

Data Review Process – The district will review absenteeism data at the end of each semester, at a minimum. Trends in data will be analyzed to determine (additional) needs for the overall district, individual buildings and/or individual students and families.