

# Franklin Pierce Schools Attendance Guide

## For Students and Families

Daily attendance is one of the most powerful predictors of school success and on-time graduation. Our goal is to have every student at school on time every day. We are asking for your help and partnership in getting your student to school every day. Whether you need to maintain your student's excellent attendance or improve future attendance, it will not only help your student be more successful this school year, but will prepare your student to do well in the future at college and at work.

Our goal is for students to miss nine (9) or fewer days during the school year. We understand students may miss some school; however, those times should be limited. Attendance is so important that each student's attendance data is transferred to his/her permanent records at the end of the school year. Attendance is also recorded on all students' transcripts. We hope the information below will help you understand our attendance policies and procedures.

Please feel welcome to contact your child's school or the district office if you have any questions related to attendance.

### **Valid Excuses for Absences**

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- Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
- Illness, health condition or medical appointment (including, but not limited to, medical, counseling, dental or optometry) for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible;
- Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
- Religious or cultural purpose including observance of a religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
- Court, judicial proceeding, or serving on a jury;
- Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
- State-recognized search and rescue activities consistent with RCW 28A.225.055;
- Absence directly related to the student's homeless status;
- Absences related to deployment activities of a parent or legal guardian who is an active duty member consistent with RCW 28A.705.010;
- Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action (e.g., short-term or long-term suspension, emergency expulsion); and
- Principal (or designee) and parent, guardian, or emancipated youth mutually agreed upon approved activity.

The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the above criteria for an excused absence.

### **Notifying the School to Excuse Absences**

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We miss your student when they are absent, and we value their contributions to our school. We ask you to help ensure that your student attends school regularly. If your student is going to be absent, please contact Mrs. Roberts at 298-4500. The attendance voicemail system is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If prior notice is not possible, you may call, send an e-mail, or written note upon the student's return to school.

Notification shall include:

1. Name of student
2. Name and contact information of person providing the excuse and his/her relationship to the student
3. Dates of absence
4. Reason for absence (see above for list of excusable absences)

Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) may notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation.

## **More than Seven Absences - 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Documentation is Required**

If a student has missed seven (7) days of school during a school year, our district requires third-party documentation to excuse all future absences, late arrivals, and early dismissals. Qualified third-party documentation includes a note from a doctor, dentist, therapist, psychologist, etc. which lists the specific dates of absence to be excused.

If you cannot take your child to the doctor, you may bring your child to the school health room. If the school nurse determines that your student is too ill to stay at school, the absence will be excused. If a parent or guardian chooses to take a student home after the school nurse determines the student should stay, the absence will be considered unexcused.

### **Elementary Schools – Excused Absences**

In elementary school, after five excused absences in any month, or ten or more unexcused absences in the school year, the school is required to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable time with at least one district employee. The purpose of the conference is to identify barriers and supports available to you and your student and to develop a plan for regular attendance. A conference is not required if a doctor's note has been provided or the absence was pre-arranged in writing and a plan was created so that your students does not fall behind academically. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan, the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.

### **Unexcused Absences**

Any absence from school is unexcused unless it meets one of the criteria above for an excused absence.

- **Parent Notification** - The school will notify the student's parent or guardian in writing or by telephone whenever the student has failed to attend school.
- As a means of instilling values of responsibility and personal accountability, a student whose absence is not excused will experience the consequences of his/her absence including progressive discipline. A student's grade may be affected if a graded activity or assignment occurs during the period of time when the student is absent.
- **Three unexcused absences in a month** – When a student has three unexcused absences in one month, state law (RCW 28A.225.020) requires we schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance. The district is obligated to develop a plan which may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of the student and reduce absenteeism. If the parent does not attend the conference, the parent will be notified of the steps the district has decided to take to reduce the student's absences.
- **Pierce County Juvenile Court Stay Petition** - Not later than the student's fifth unexcused absence in a month with an attendance contract, seventh unexcused absence in a month without an attendance contract, or tenth unexcused absence in a school year, the district is required to file a petition and affidavit with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010. The district, along with the juvenile court may also schedule a community truancy board or attendance summit meeting to reduce future absences.
- **Pierce County Juvenile Court Full Petition** - If above actions are not successful, the district will file a petition with the juvenile court alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010 by the parent, student or parent and student. The parent and student will be required to appear in the Pierce County Juvenile Court.

### **Late Arrival/Tardy**

- Students are expected to arrive in class on time. Teachers take attendance at the beginning of the class. If a student arrives after class begins, the student is required to acquire a tardy pass from the attendance office.
- Tardy is tardy - There is no differentiation between late arrival to school and late arrival to class. Unexcused tardiness will result in progressive discipline.
- A tardy will only be excused if third-party documentation is provided. For example: doctor note, tardy pass from school staff, etc. Excused tardiness will not count toward discipline related to tardiness.
- Parent notification is not acceptable as an excuse for tardiness.
- Remember, loss of class time = loss of learning.

### **Early Dismissal**

An early dismissal will be excused or unexcused using the same rules applied to absences.

## **Request for Planned Excused Absences**

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- Extended vacations during the school year or leaving school prior to the end of the school year are highly discouraged because students missing class lose essential instruction.
- The school principal (or designee) has the authority to determine if an absence meets the criteria for an excused absence. (FPSD Policy 3122 and 3122 P).
- Parents and students should understand that teachers cannot possibly pre-teach the lessons nor provide make-up assignments to cover all the material that will be missed.
- Pre-arranged absences may result in a lower class grade.
- WAC 392-121-108 states if a student is absent for more than 20 consecutive school days they must be unenrolled by the school, unless (a) a written agreement between the school and parent/guardian deems the absence will not cause a serious adverse effect upon the student's educational progress, or (b) the student is receiving home and/or hospital services.

A parent or guardian must request prior approval for an excused planned absence – forms are available in the school office and on our district website.