

In May 1995, the Governor signed new provisions to the Compulsory School Attendance law with clear expectations for students, parents, and School Districts for returning truant students to school. Through a coordinated effort, regular school attendance can be achieved and issues contributing to truant behavior can be addressed.

A clear District-wide attendance policy is in place. Students, parents, and schools must work together to correct any truancy problems a student is experiencing.

- ❖ Students do not learn when they are absent from school. They miss critical instruction for understanding key concepts and fall behind quickly in completing assignments.
- ❖ Schools and parents/guardians share a responsibility to assure that students attend classes unless there is a good reason not to do so.
- ❖ Schools must intervene quickly whenever a student has an unexcused absence.
- ❖ The court system is a final, but necessary, step to return some students who have become truant to regular class attendance. Court action may be against the parents or guardians if the court determines that they are the cause of the student's unexcused absences.

You may notify your child's school about your child's excused absence by telephone or in a written note. Please remember to include the reason why your child is absent in your telephone call or note.

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### **The Compulsory Attendance law applies to:**

**Students between the ages of 8 and under 18, as well as 6 and 7 year olds who are enrolled in a public school program, unless:**

- ❖ Incapable of attendance due to medical or mental reasons.
- ❖ 16 and above, and regularly employed with the permission of a parent/guardian to work in lieu of attending school.
- ❖ Has met the educational requirements (GED, or other means found acceptable to the Superintendent)

Children found to be in violation of the Compulsory Attendance law may be subject to a truancy petition filed with the Superior Court. The Court may order a child to attend school, and if the child willfully violates the Court's order, the Court may take whatever actions necessary to insure compliance and regular school attendance. These may include community service or detention in the Juvenile Detention Facility.

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### **Schools are required to:**

- ❖ **Take daily attendance and notify parents/guardians after the first and second unexcused absence.**
- ❖ **Schedule a conference to meet with the student and parent to address truant behavior after 2 or more unexcused absences.**
- ❖ **Take steps to correct the problem in an effort to determine why your child is not attending school and to help develop a plan to insure your child's regular attendance.**
- ❖ **File a truancy petition with the Superior Court if the child has 7 truant days in a calendar month, or 10 truant days during the school year.**

Schools who fail to comply with the Compulsory Attendance law may lose state monies or support.

### **Parents are required to have their school-age children enrolled in an educational program and to take steps to insure regular daily school attendance.**

Parents or guardians who fail to comply with the Compulsory Attendance law may also be subject to a truancy petition filed with Superior Court. Parents may be fined up to \$25.00 per day for each day of their child's unexcused absences.

Additional sanctions imposed by the Court might include community service for the parent or guardian of the child.

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The following District definitions of excused and unexcused absences are for students at all ages:

### **Excused Absences:**

- ❖ Unplanned absences are excused when your child's personal illness or injury, or the illness, injury or death of a family member, prevents your child from attending school, and you notify the school within 48 hours of the absence. The school may require a note from your child's doctor if your child is absent due to illness or injury for an excessive number of days before excusing those absences.
- ❖ Planned absences are excused when you submit a request to the principal or assistant principal at least three school days before the start of the planned absence, usually for a family trip, doctor or dentist appointment, or religious holiday or other special one-time event. The school may require your child to complete missed assignments and/or make other academic assignment for extended planned absences.
- ❖ Absences due to short-term discipline of your child are excused on District attendance records.

### **Unexcused Absences:**

- ❖ All other absences are considered unexcused, including absences caused by the student or parent oversleeping, student missing the bus, transportation problems, student needed for

babysitting, student job requirements, religious instruction, etc.

- ❖ Absences by long-term suspended and expelled students for whom space is available in a reentry program, but who do not enroll and attend, are unexcused.
- ❖ A parent's request to "excuse my child's absence" without a stated reason or with a reason that does not meet the above criteria for excused absences will cause the child's absence to remain unexcused.

The Compulsory Attendance law requires that Districts file petitions with the Juvenile Court for all students who have seven (7) or more unexcused absences in a month or ten (10) or more unexcused absences in a school year. The petition asks that the court compel the child to attend school.

If a petition has been filed, the court may set a date and time for a hearing and require that you and your child attend. The court may, in certain circumstances, request that you and your child attend a Truancy Workshop (class) prior to a court hearing. The court may also require additional interventions prior to scheduling a hearing.

Once a court hearing occurs and a court order is issued to a child and/or parent/guardian, the District is required to report additional unexcused absences to the court. The court may hold a hearing to determine if you or your child has willfully violated the court's order to attend school. If this occurs, your child will be appointed an attorney to represent him/her at any hearing dealing with a violation of the court's order.

As previously noted, the court may take whatever steps are necessary to insure regular school attendance by the child.

The key to any/all court action hinges on your child's attendance. In order for the school to assist you with addressing the truant behavior, your assistance is necessary. When your child's school contacts you, we are asking for your cooperation with helping us

form a team dedicated to the needs of your child's educational success.

Please reply to any school notification in a prompt manner. Students in secondary education programs may lose credit in their classes after as few as 10 absences, whether excused or unexcused. By prompt intervention, truancy can be corrected and educational success facilitated.

If you have questions about your child's attendance record, or are in need of a report on your child's educational progress, please call your child's school.

If you are in need of any additional information in regard to truancy issues, or if you have received a copy of a truancy petition filed by the Truancy Office and have questions about either the petition or the court process, please contact Truancy Office staff at 252-0825.

Your child's school administrator or the Truancy Office staff may also be able to provide you with additional information to assist you if you are having problems with your child that go beyond typical school attendance issues.

#### POLICY

*The Seattle School District provides Equal Educational Opportunity without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, sex, handicap/disability or sexual orientation. The Seattle School District is an Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action employer and employs individuals without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, handicap/disability or sexual orientation.*

*The District complies with all applicable State and Federal laws, including but not limited to, Title VI, Title VII, Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), RCW 49.60, Law Against Discrimination, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and RCW 28A.640, "Sex Equality," and covers, but is not limited to, all District programs, courses, activities (including) extracurricular activities, services, access to facilities, etc.*

*The Title IX Officer and 504 Coordinator with the overall responsibility for monitoring, auditing, and ensuring compliance with this policy is: John Yasutake, Manager, Affirmative Action Office, 815 Fourth Avenue North, Seattle, WA 98109-1116. Phone (206) 298-7175.*



### Seattle School District

## **“Becca Bill” Implementation of Washington State’s Compulsory Attendance Law (28A.225 RCW)**

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