

## **Ashland High School Attendance Policies Questions and Answers**

The Ashland School Board has made two changes to the attendance policy in the past two years for all students in the school district. This handout is meant as a way to answer many of the questions that parents have presented to school administrators in the past two school years.

The first policy change is that a student is not allowed to miss more than 10 days of school (part or all) in a school year unless there is sufficient documentation as per board policy (this can be found on the district web page). That means parents can excuse their child for illness or for personal reasons up to ten times in a school year without any verification of the absence required by the office.

The second policy change is that a parent/guardian has two school days from the date of the absence to excuse the absence or the absence will automatically be unexcused unless the absence can be verified as a doctor, dentist, counseling, etc. appointment.

One other attendance policy language that is often misunderstood by students is that “students are not permitted to leave the school property during the school day unless their parent/guardian has pre-arranged an exit in writing, by phone, or in person with the principal or designee.” In other words, students must have office approval in advance and **sign out in the office prior to leaving the building**. This policy language will be addressed several times in this Q&A.

Q: Why were these changes made?

A: The School Board and Administration felt that these changes will result in a more consistent approach to student attendance throughout the district and also meet our goal to improve overall student attendance K-12 . It will also help students prepare for life after high school when they start their careers and will need to let their managers/bosses/etc. know in advance when they can't be at work, when they need to leave work, and that there is a limit to the number of days someone can take off work in a year for either medical, illness, or personal reasons.

Q: Where can I view my child's attendance?

A: Your child(ren)'s attendance can be found by accessing the Skyward program through the district website. All parents are encouraged to check their child(ren)'s attendance [and grades] on a regular basis to ensure that there isn't an issue that needs to be resolved in a timely manner. If you are not connected to Skyward yet or have forgotten your username and password, please call the school for assistance.

Q: I don't have a computer or internet access at home. How will I check on my child's attendance then?

A: Any time a student is absent unexcused, an automated call will be made from the school to inform you of the absence. Please ensure that the school has your correct contact information. Skyward can be viewed on any device at any location that has internet access, including any public library—it doesn't have to be accessed from your home.

Q: What is the definition of truancy in the state of Wisconsin?

A: A student is considered an habitual truant if he/she is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of five or more days on which school is held during a school semester or as described in Board policy 5200.

Q: I received a truancy letter in the mail indicating my child was absent unexcused for two days; one day from a month ago and the other from two weeks ago. My child was sick both of those days. Can I call and excuse those days?

A: No. A parent has two school days to excuse any absence.

Q: What if those two days were for doctor appointments?

A: When the office gets documentation from the doctor's office that your child was seen on those two days, then the absences will be changed to excused.

Q: What are the acceptable ways for parents to excuse their child(ren)?

A: A phone call or in person is preferred, but notes from parents are also acceptable.

Q: My child gets sick during the day, leaves the building and grounds and later gets in touch with me after leaving. If I call the office will it will be excused?

A: No. Any student that is sick should report to the Nurse's Office immediately. Should the child be cleared to leave due to illness, the school nurse will let the office know so the absence is marked excused. If a student leaves the building and grounds without the school nurse and/or office approval, the absence will be considered unexcused and disciplinary consequences may be assigned. We must get parent/guardian approval BEFORE the student leaves the building.

Q: If I call to say my child is needed at home for personal reasons or to go to work, will this be excused?

A: Provided your child has not already missed ten school days (part or all) in the school year for personal or illness reasons, the answer is yes. If a parent has already received the "10 day" letter, then the answer is no.

Q: I excused my child for 2 class periods one day and 2 class periods another day for personal reasons. Isn't this considered a ½ day of excused absences?

A: No. This is considered two days of excused absences because the language reads "part or all of a day". This is why parents and students need to be careful with how many times a child is excused from school for part of a day for personal reasons because they can add up fast.

Q: My child skipped a class on three different days. How many days does this count towards the five day allowance per semester under the truancy language ?

A: It counts as three days because the language reads "part or all of a day".

Q: What happens if my child has an extended illness causing him/her to miss more than ten days in a semester?

A: Communication with the attendance officer and school nurse is the key in these situations so it does not fall into truancy status. We are always willing to work with families provided we are aware of the situation.

Q: My child does not have an Honors Pass to leave during lunch but it is OK with me for my child to leave. Can my child leave during those times?

A: Provided you give your child a note or call the office PRIOR to your child leaving, then yes it would be OK to do so. Your child would need to come to the office BEFORE leaving the building to get a blue colored pass in order to be excused. Any student leaving the building or grounds without coming to the office first to get a pass may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Q: Should I wait until my child reaches 10 days of absences because of either doctor/dentist/ortho/etc. appointments to bring the documentation into the office?

A: No—please bring that documentation in EACH time your child has an appointment at a clinic.

Q: Do family vacations or college visits count towards the 10 days allowed each semester?

A: No—provided the office is notified prior to the vacation or college visit and the student returns with documentation from the college visited.