

Whitharal ISD Attendance Information

Attendance Matters

The school is working to improve attendance. Your student's attendance directly affects school funding in large amounts and directly impacts your student's success in school. You must consider two factors for attendance: funding and credit for classes. The school loses funding for unexcused and some excused absences. 90% compulsory attendance is the state requirement for students. Your student must attend 90% of each semester. The school, when looking at transfers, considers a much smaller number. Regular attendance in all grades is a strong predictor of grade-level performance. Attending school regularly helps students feel better about school—and themselves. Start building this habit in preschool so they learn that attending school on time and daily is essential.

- Starting in kindergarten, missing about 18 days, or 10 percent of the school year, can make it harder to learn to read. That equates to missing just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Students frequently absent in kindergarten are less prepared than their peers for first grade and often need help reading at grade level through elementary school.
- Absences add up in elementary school. Research shows that missing 18 days in a school year or two days every month can result in lower test scores and possible retention in later grades.
- By sixth grade, chronic absenteeism is one of the three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By freshman year, attendance predicts graduation rates better than eighth-grade test scores.

What do I do when my child is absent from school?

Send a signed note with your child to the school as soon as he/she returns. All absences must be verified in writing by a parent/guardian. All notes must be received within five days of the absence.

All notes should include the student's full name, date(s) of the absence(s), reason for the absence, parent/guardian signature and contact information, and current date.

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Do doctor's or parent notes count toward the ten days for truancy?

Contact your student's school office for the policy on the number of parent notes that will be accepted. Students may still have to make up days once they pass ten days. With proper medical notes, the school will consider your student's absences at the end of the year when renewing transfers and awarding promotion/graduation. A medical appointment is normally excused but the student has to be here part of the day. For example: If the student's appointment is at 2:00 in Lubbock and the student does not come in the morning the absence will still count as an absence. Time will be made up before and after school. Saturday school is not an option unless approved by the principal.

What about when my student has an early dismissal, event days, or days that are different from regular school days?

Checking your child out of school before the end of the school day counts as "leaving early" and counts toward the ten unexcused absences for truancy. A medical note will excuse these absences.

Why did the campus mark my child's absence as unexcused even though I sent a note or called to say that he/she would be out?

- The parent/student should have turned in the note within five days of the absence, or proper guidelines should have been followed to excuse the absence. If the student received an early dismissal or came to school late from an appointment, they still need to submit the documentation to excuse the absence.
- The absence was due to personal business such as vacations, shopping, non-medical appointments, illness other than the immediate family, and work-related absences.

E – Excused – Indicates a valid excuse note has been received, and the absence has been excused.

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For a complete list, please see the Attendance handbook, page 54.

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Examples:

- *Death in Family* – Indicates an excused absence due to a death in the student's immediate family.

- *Extra Curricular* – Indicates the student was absent due to attending a school-sponsored activity (field trip, athletic event, academic event, etc.)

- *Court* – Indicates the student was absent due to a court-related appointment and has provided required documentation from the court upon their return to school.

Medical – Indicates the student had a medical appointment and attended school part of the day, either prior to, or after the medical appointment. *If the student was absent all day due to a medical appointment and provided proper medical documentation, the absence is EXCUSED*

College Visit – Indicates the student attended a pre-approved College Visit.

Other/On Campus – Indicates a student was on campus (office, etc.) but not in their regular classroom.

Religious – Indicates an excused absence due to a verified religious holy day as stated in the FBISD Interfaith Calendar.

U – Unexcused – Indicates one of the following situations:

An excuse note was: -not received at all -not received within five days of the student's return to school.

-was received, but the reason indicated was not valid to excuse the absence

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-A student was not present in their classroom but was present on campus. However, he/she did not sign into the office or activity they were participating in.

T – Late/Tardy – This code indicates that a student was tardy (late) to class. Three tardies equal an absence.

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Missing a day of school here and there may not seem like much, but it adds up!

When a student misses 2 days a month:

- They will miss 20 days a year
- They will miss 30 hours of math over the school year
- They will miss 60 hours of reading and writing over the school year
- They will miss over a year of school by graduation

When a student misses 4 days a month:

- They will miss 40 days a year
- They will miss 60 hours of math over the school year
- They will miss 120 hours of reading and writing over the school year
- They will miss over 2 years of school by graduation

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ATTENDANCE in the early grades

Many of our youngest students miss 10 percent of the school year—about 18 days a year or just two days every month. Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten, and even preK, can predict lower test scores, poor attendance and retention in later grades, especially if the problem persists for more than a year. Do you know how many young children are chronically absent in your school or community?



Who Is Affected

Kindergarten and 1st grade classes often have absenteeism rates as high as those in high school. Many of these absences are excused, but they still add up to lost time in the classroom.

1 in 10 kids

in kindergarten and 1st grade are chronically absent. In some schools, it's as high as 1 in 4.¹



2 in 10 low-income kids

miss too much school. They're also more likely to suffer academically.¹



2.5 in 10 homeless kids

are chronically absent.²



4 in 10 transient kids

miss too much school when families move.²

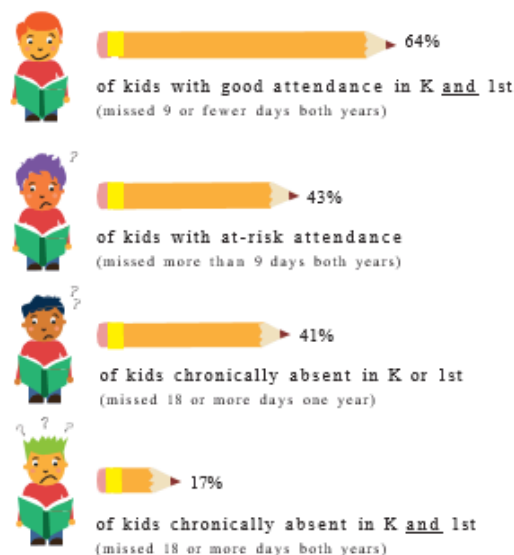


Why It Matters

If children don't show up for school regularly, they miss out on fundamental reading and math skills and the chance to build a habit of good attendance that will carry them into college and careers.

Preliminary data from a California study found that children who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were far less likely to read proficiently at the end of 3rd grade.

Who Can Read on Grade Level After 3rd Grade?³



What We Can Do

Engage Families

Many parents and students don't realize how quickly early absences can add up to academic trouble. Community members and teachers can educate families and build a culture of attendance through early outreach, incentives and attention to data.



Fix Transportation

The lack of a reliable car, or simply missing the school bus, can mean some students don't make it to class. Schools, transit agencies and community partners can organize car pools, supply bus passes or find other ways to get kids to school.



Address Health Needs

Health concerns, particularly asthma and dental problems, are among the leading reasons students miss school in the early grades. Schools and medical professionals can work together to give children and families health care and advice.



Track the Right Data

Schools too often overlook chronic absence because they track average attendance or unexcused absences, not how many kids miss too many days for any reason. Attendance Works has free data-tracking tools.



These are a few steps that communities and schools can take. How do you think you can help?

¹ Chang, Hedy; Romero, Marijose, *Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades*, National Center for Children in Poverty, NY, NY, September 2008.

² Chronic Absence in Utah, Utah Education Policy Center at the University of Utah, 2012.

³ Attendance in Early Elementary Grades: Association with Student Characteristics, School Readiness and Third Grade Outcomes, Applied Survey Research, May 2011.