

School Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is the greatest factor in school success; therefore, a student's first concern should be to attend class regularly. Being absent unnecessarily from school impairs a student's opportunity to succeed in studies and also indirectly encourages the development of poor attitudes toward schoolwork and other obligations. A significant part of the learning process occurs in direct instruction from the teacher and the interaction between students and teachers within the classroom; completing make-up work, worksheets and other assignments cannot take the place of these essential interactions in the classroom. Communications between students, families and the school district personnel are important to understanding how attendance plays a role in a student's overall success. We must all work together for a student to have the best educational experience possible and to take advantage of all of the opportunities available.

What are the laws governing attendance?

Compulsory Attendance

Texas requires a child who is at least 6 years of age, or who is younger than 6 years of age and has previously been enrolled in first grade, and who has not yet reached his/her 18th birthday to attend school unless exempt by law. Students enrolled in pre-kindergarten or kindergarten shall attend school.

The state compulsory attendance law also requires that a child between the ages of 6 and 18 must attend school and District required tutorial sessions unless the student is otherwise legally exempted or excused.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his eighteenth birthday is required to attend each school day **until the end of the school year**. However, if a student eighteen or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, the district may revoke the student's enrollment. The student's presence on school property is then unauthorized and may be considered trespass.

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent from school without permission from any class; from required special programs; from additional instruction assigned by a placement/attendance committee or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the law and subject to disciplinary action.

A school aged student deliberately not attending school may also result in assessment of penalties by a court of law against both the student and/or his or her parents. A complaint may be filed in the appropriate court if the student:

1. Is absent from school ten (10) or more days, or parts of days, within a six month period in the same school year, or
2. Is absent from school on three (3) or more days, or parts of days, within a four-week period.
3. Tardies are considered parts of days.

Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days;

- Required court appearances;
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship;
- Service as an election clerk; and
- Documented health-care appointments, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders.

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university may be considered an exemption, provided the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such visit, and makes up any work missed.

A person required to attend school may be **excused for temporary absence** resulting from any unusual cause acceptable to the Superintendent, the principal or the teacher of the school in which the student is enrolled. Such causes may include, but are not limited to: 1) personal sickness; 2) family emergency; 3) documented juvenile court proceeding; 4) Board-approved extracurricular activity; or 5) approved college visitation.

Absences such as non-school related **vacations and trips**, babysitting, working (including modeling), and non school-sponsored athletic events and programs shall be considered **unexcused**. If a student is going to be absent more than ten consecutive days, the student shall be withdrawn on the tenth day.

Attendance for Course Credit

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. If a student does not attend a class 90% of the time, it is the policy of Fisd to allow the student to make up the missed time in either Saturday School and/or Detentions prior to the end of the semester in which the time was missed in order to come into compliance with the law and gain credit for the class in question. (Time made up in Saturday School will be at a cost of \$5 per hour as is all other Saturday School assignments.) Fisd high school students are in violation of the 90% attendance law if and when they accumulate five (5) or more absences in any given class. Students who are in violation of the attendance code and who fail to make up the amount of time required to be in compliance with the law will be denied credit for that class for that semester. An attendance committee consisting of school administration and faculty will hear any appeals if a student or parent wishes to appeal a denial of credit brought about by failure to attend a class at least 90% of the days in the semester.

Note: All absences, both excused and unexcused, count against the 90% attendance rule and for exemption purposes.

What do I do if my child has to be absent due to family emergency, illness, etc.?

When sickness or other obligation necessitates an absence, a note signed by the parent/guardian explaining the reason for the absence is required the day the student returns to school. If a student fails to submit a note, the absence will be considered unexcused. The student will be allowed three (3) days to submit a written note excusing an absence. It is acceptable to submit an email or call the campus attendance/data clerk to excuse an absence. Visit your campus website for instructions and contact information for your attendance/data clerk. It is very important to send a note because the absence will be unexcused if a parent/guardian fails to provide a note within the specified time. Unexcused absences are what

triggers the warning letters regarding violation of truancy laws and can lead to filing of failure to attend school charges.

When a student's absence **for personal illness exceeds four (4) successive days**, the student shall provide a **statement from a physician or health clinic** verifying the illness or other condition requiring the student's extended absence from school (the school nurse is available to verify an illness on the day of the absence). If you did not take your child to the doctor, a note from the doctor's office or clinic stating that you discussed symptoms with them and they advised you to stay home for a certain number of days would be sufficient. If your student is absent due to illness, please include his/her symptoms in your email or note. This is particularly important during this time as we are tracking absences related to flu and flu-like symptoms to report to the health departments. Please let us know if your child has a fever, sore throat, cough, vomiting, diarrhea, etc. If your student will be absent more than one day, a call would be helpful. The school nurse is available to verify an illness on the day of the absence.

The attendance committee may, if the student has established a questionable pattern of absences, also require a physician's or clinic's statement of illness after a single day's absence as a condition of classifying the absence as one for which there are extenuating circumstances.

Can my student make up their work if they are absent?

Yes, consult the student handbook regarding make up work guidelines. It is the student's responsibility to obtain work from the teacher and to turn it in within the allotted time.

In addition to your school administrators, FISD employs truancy specialists to assist with issues of attendance. Please contact your school if you are in need of more information or assistance.