

West Central CUSD #235

Absenteeism and Truancy Policy

Board Approved: September 22, 2026

The following attendance and truancy information is in the West Central 2026 – 2027 District Student Handbook. That information is presented to students at the start of the school year, provided to families either online or in print form (based on their preference) and available on our district website. The 2026 – 2027 District Student Handbook, including this Attendance and Truancy Policy, was approved by the Board of Education at their Regular Meeting on June 17, 2026.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Illinois law requires that whoever has custody or control of any child between six (by September 1) and seventeen years of age shall assure that the child attends school in the district in which he or she resides, during the entire time school is in session (unless the child has already graduated from high school). Illinois law also requires that whoever has custody or control of a child who is enrolled in the school, regardless of the child's age, shall assure that the child attends school during the entire time school is in session.

There are certain exceptions to the attendance requirement for children who: attend private school, are physically or mentally unable to attend school (including a pregnant student suffering medical complications as certified by her physician), are lawfully and necessarily employed, are between the ages of 12 and 14 while in confirmation classes, have a religious reason requiring absence, or are 16 or older and employed and enrolled in a graduation incentive program.

Whenever students are absent, they miss valuable information and opportunities. The missed educational opportunity can never be entirely made up. Absences are noted on transcripts which are sent to colleges and employers. Employers and colleges note excessive absences negatively as do committees that award scholarships.

Students' attendance at school is the number one factor in their success at school. When students are not at school, they are not able to learn. The Illinois State Board of Education has put a focus on student attendance and tracks Consistent Attendance. Consistent Attendance is defined as a student who is present 90% or more of the school year. Chronic Absenteeism is when a student misses 10% or more (18 days) of school for any reason. At West Central we value the education we provide our students and to help our students be successful, we place a priority on student attendance each day. Please know that buildings will track attendance and reach out to the student and/or parent when there is a concern with the student's attendance pattern, in order to help avoid your student being chronically absent.

It is the feeling of the Board of Education, administration, and teaching staff that no student should be absent unless it is absolutely necessary. Regular and punctual patterns of attendance are expected of each student enrolled in the West Central School District. Absences and tardiness are to be kept at a minimum. The following attendance policies reflect this District's philosophy.

Notification of Absences

In the event of an absence, the student's parent/guardian is required to call the appropriate school office by 9:00 a.m. each morning the student is absent to explain the reason for the absence. If a call has not been made to the school by 10:00 a.m. on the day of a student's absence, a school official will attempt to call the home to inquire why the student is not at school. If the parent/guardian cannot be contacted, the student will be required to submit a signed note from the parent/guardian explaining the reason for the absence upon his/her return. Failure to do so shall result in an unexcused absence. The student has two days to clear the unexcused absence. Any unexcused absence not cleared after two (2) school days will remain an unexcused absence. The principal, at his/her discretion, has the right to request a written statement from a physician explaining the nature of the absence. Upon request of the parent/guardian, the reason for an absence will be kept confidential.

Absences fall into two categories:

A. Excused - Examples of Excused Absences may include:

- Illness (including mental or behavioral health of the student),
- Observance of a religious holiday or event,
- Death in the immediate family,
- Family emergency,
- Verified medical or therapeutic appointment (including a victim services provider)
- Situations beyond the control of the student,
- Circumstances that cause reasonable concern to the parent/guardian for the student's mental, emotional, or physical health or safety,
- Attending a military honors funeral to sound TAPS,
- Attend a civic event,
- Students who are parents, expectant parents, or victims of domestic or sexual violence, an excused absence includes the fulfillment of a parenting responsibility and addressing circumstances resulting from domestic or sexual violence
- Students eligible to vote are also excused for up to two hours to vote in a primary, special or general election
- Up to five (5) days in cases where the student's parent/guardian is an active-duty member of the uniformed services and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support postings. The Board of Education, in its discretion, may excuse a student for additional days relative to such leave or deployment,
- Pre-arranged absences such as college visits, funeral attendance, doctor or dentist appointments and family vacations must be pre-approved by the Building Principal,
- One college visit day will be allowed to a student as a junior and two as a senior. These days must be approved in advance by the Guidance Counselor and the Building Principal,
- Students who must be absent for a dental or medical appointment must bring back an appointment card certifying the appointment was kept and a written request or a phone call from their parent or guardian must be on file prior to the absence,
- Students may not leave for appointments with another student even with a parental note except with siblings,
- Out of school suspensions,
- Other reasons as approved by the Building Principal.

The school may require documentation explaining the reason for the student's absence.

A student will be permitted to make up all missed work, including homework and tests, for equivalent academic credit. The student will be given a minimum of one school day for each day absent to complete and return the work.

Anticipated Absences

Anticipated absences may be approved if the following are met (These may be considered excused absences):

- Travel or other extended absences with parents/guardians and other emergencies as determined and defined by the principal.
- All make-up work is to be arranged prior to the student's absence. A student and the student's parent/guardian are responsible for obtaining assignments from the student's teachers prior to any anticipated excused absences and for ensuring that such assignments are completed by the student prior to his or her return to school.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in an unexcused absence. Any work assigned during the student's absence and not provided to the student prior to being gone, will be given to the student on his/her return and the student will be given a minimum of one school day for each day absent to complete and return the work.

B. Unexcused

All other absences are considered unexcused unless otherwise approved by the Building Principal. Unexcused absences are detrimental to the learning process and are highly discouraged. Absences correlate more than any other factor with school failure or poor school performance. The student has two days to clear the unexcused absence. Any unexcused absence not cleared after two (2) school days will remain an unexcused absence. If a student's absence is unexcused as described above, he/she will be permitted to make up all missed work, including homework and tests, for equivalent academic credit. The student will be given a minimum of one school day for each day absent to complete and return the work.

Parent-Call-in

Parents have 10 parent 'call-ins' that they can use during the school year to excuse their student if an absence is unavoidable. These absences would be considered 'excused' as long as the parent sends a note or contacts the office. Two examples of commonly used parent call-ins are to call in a student because of an illness that does not necessitate a doctor visit or taking a mental health day. These parent 'call-ins' are inclusive of the first 10 days a student misses school. After the 10 parent call-ins are exhausted, any additional absences will automatically revert to unexcused absences unless they are verified medical, legal, funeral or other state approved absences.

Truancy

Student attendance is critical to the learning process. Truancy is therefore a serious issue and will be dealt with in a serious manner by the school and district.

Students who miss more than 1% but less than 5% or more of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause (a recognized excuse) are considered truants. Students who miss 5% or more of the prior 180 regular school days without valid cause are chronic truants. Students who are chronic truants will be offered support services and resources aimed at correcting the truancy issue.

If chronic truancy persists after support services and other resources are made available, the school and district, with support from the Regional Office of Education, will take further action, including:

- Referral to the truancy officer
- Reporting to officials under the Juvenile Court Act
- Referral to the State's Attorney
- Appropriate school discipline

At 5 and 10 absences, including mental or behavioral health of the student, a warning letter will be sent to parents/guardians concerning attendance issues. Students must present proof from a doctor within 2 school days upon returning. When a student reaches 3 unexcused absences, a warning letter will be sent from the ROE. When a student reaches 6 unexcused absences, a second letter will be sent from the ROE and the student and parent/guardian will be expected to participate in an Attendance Support Hearing. The third truancy letter will be issued after the 12th unexcused absence. After 15 unexcused absences, the students will receive notice of a hearing before a county Truancy Review Board to be convened by the Office of the Regional Superintendent. The last step in the process (if success is not attained after the hearing before the Truancy Review Board) will be a referral to the appropriate court for legal action. This step will be initiated by the Regional Office of Education.

A student who misses 15 consecutive days of school without valid cause and who cannot be located or, after exhausting all available support services, cannot be compelled to return to school is subject to expulsion from school.

A parent or guardian who knowingly and willfully permits a child to be truant is in violation of State law.

High School Dance Attendance

Attendance at school-sponsored dances is a privilege. High School students are required to be at school the day before the dance in order to attend the dance. Students who are not in attendance before the start of 3rd hour or have any unexcused absences the day before the dance will not be allowed to attend.

Only students who attend the school may attend school-sponsored dances, unless the principal or designee approves a student's guest in advance of the event by completing the Out of District Guest Form. A guest must be "age appropriate," defined as under 21 years of age.

All school rules, including the school's discipline code and dress code are in effect during school-sponsored dances. Students who violate the school's discipline code will be required to leave the dance immediately and the student's parent/guardian will be contacted. The school may also impose other discipline as outlined in the school's discipline code.

Tardies

Student tardies may result in disciplinary action. Problem solving meetings will take place to address tardies and determine possible solutions.

Elementary

Students are considered tardy when they are not physically present in their classroom at the beginning of the day. Students arriving late at the beginning of the school day are to report to the office, sign in, and have a pass issued to them before they continue to their class.

Middle School

Students are considered tardy when they are not physically present in their classroom at the beginning of the day and when the bell rings at the start of each individual class. Students arriving late at the beginning of the school day are to report to the office, sign in, and have a pass issued to

them before they continue to their class. This procedure applies to core classes, lunch, physical education, and exploratory classes.

Consequence for being tardy:

- Every 5 tardies in the quarter will result in one (1) 30-minute after school detentions (3:15-3:45)
- Continued tardies will result in on-going disciplinary action
- Tardies will reset at the start of each quarter
- Administration has the option to assign lunch detentions instead of after school detention

High School

Students are considered tardy when they are not physically present in their classroom when the bell rings at the start of each class period, without a pass. A student will be considered tardy if they arrive in class after the bell rings, until 5 minutes after the bell. (Students arriving after 5 minutes, without a pass, will be considered absent for the class period.) Students arriving late at the beginning of the school day are to report to the office, sign in, and have a pass issued to them before they continue to their class. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.

Consequence for being tardy:

- 5 tardies in the quarter will result in a 30 minute after school detention
- 10 tardies in the quarter will result in two (2) 30 minutes after school detentions
- 15 tardies in the quarter will result in a 1 day ISS.
- 20 tardies in a quarter will result in two (2) days of ISS
- 25 tardies in a quarter will result in three (3) days of ISS
- 30+ tardies in a quarter will result in four (4) days of ISS
- Continued tardies will result in on-going disciplinary action
- Tardies will reset at the start of each quarter

Skiping Class

High School students who skip class will be automatically assigned an ISS.

Interventions, Support and Absenteeism Data Review

Interventions and Support - Throughout all steps of the attendance and truancy procedures, conferences are held with the student(s) and/or parent(s) to determine needs and supports that the District is able to help provide the family to reduce the absenteeism rate for the student. These supports may include:

- Student Interviews
- Parent Interviews
- District Counselor
- District Social Worker
- District School Psychologist
- Eagleview Behavioral Health
- Bridgeway Services
- ROE Truancy Team

Data Review Process – The district will review absenteeism data at the end of each semester, at a minimum. Trends in data will be analyzed to determine (additional) needs for the overall district, individual buildings and/or individual students and families.