



1306 Dupont Street
Bellingham, Washington 98225
(360) 676-6400
bellinghamschools.org

Required Attendance Form for All Families

SEE REVERSE FOR SIGNATURE AREA.

Please use one form per family.

Parents/guardians, please sign the reverse and return to your school office within 14 days of receipt.

Please retain a copy for your records. This information is online at bellinghamschools.org/attendance.

Consistent attendance helps children do well in school, college and at work. Attending school regularly also helps children feel better about school—and themselves. Your child can start building this habit at any age, but the earlier the better so they learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college and at work.

We ask for your help in ensuring that your child attends regularly and is successful in school. **If your child is going to be absent, please contact your school's office as soon as possible. Ideally, this would be the day prior or the morning of the absence.**

We track attendance daily to notice when your student is missing from class, and we will communicate with you to understand why they were absent and to identify barriers and supports.

SCHOOL POLICIES, NEW STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our policies and procedures, as well as Washington state law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance, called the Becca Bill, requires children to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program.

- If your student has three unexcused absences in one month, state law requires we schedule a conference with you and your student to identify the barriers and supports available to ensure regular attendance.

The district is obligated to develop a plan that may require an assessment to determine how to best meet the needs of your student and reduce absenteeism.

- In elementary school, after five excused absences in any month, or ten or more excused absences in the school year, the district is required to contact you to schedule a conference at a mutually agreeable, reasonable time with at least one district employee, to identify the barriers and supports available to you and your child. A conference is not required if your child has provided a doctor's note, or pre-arranged the absence in writing, and the parent, child and school have made a plan so your child does not fall behind academically. If your child has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.
- If your child has seven unexcused absences in any month or ten unexcused absences within the school year, we are required to file a petition with the juvenile court, alleging a violation of RCW 28A.225.010, the mandatory attendance laws. The petition may be automatically stayed and your child and family may be referred to a Community Truancy Board, or you and your child may need to appear in Juvenile Court. If your child continues to be truant, you may need to go to court.

If you have questions about attendance or need support, please talk with your school principal.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind.
- By ninth grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than eighth grade test scores.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher has to slow down learning to help children catch up.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your child will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- By sixth grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a child may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and has the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a child is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with a bully or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Set a regular bed time and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Find out what day and time school starts and monitor the school calendar closely.
- Don't let your student stay home unless they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomach ache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your child's attendance. Missing more than nine days could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your child about the importance of attendance.
- Talk to your child's teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful after-school activities, including sports and clubs.

Excused absence criteria (Please refer to policy and procedure 3122 for more details):

1. Participation in school-approved activity or instructional program

2. Absence due to illness, health condition, family emergency, religious purpose, etc.

3. Absence for parental-approved activities

4. Absence resulting from disciplinary actions or short-term suspension

5. Extended illness or health condition

6. Excused absence for chronic health condition

For more information about the Becca bill and Common School Provisions Title 28A, visit app.leg.wa.gov/RCW.

Bellingham Public Schools has provided me with a copy of this attendance information for families. Please sign and return to your school office within 14 days of receipt:

CHILD NAME

DATE

PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

DATE

CHILD SIGNATURE

DATE

BPS EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE

DATE