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Attendance Policy & House Bill (HB) 410

Now that we are in the second quarter of school, student absences are beginning to add up. Not only is regular attendance at school an important part of a student's success, it is also a state law. House Bill (HB) 410 changed how schools must report student absences in order to address excessive absenteeism. According to the law, schools may not suspend or expel students for excessive absences or habitual truancy but instead must provide other ways to promote compliance with school attendance. These include warning letters to parents/guardians and Absence Intervention Teams/Plans for students who exceed the absence thresholds outlined in the law.

The goal of the law is well intentioned: Require schools to take measures to ensure students attend school since good attendance is a vital part of a student's academic success. However, in practice, the requirements will be very apparent to families whose students miss school with any regularity even if for excused reasons.

Excessive Absences

All time out of school – including personal illness, doctor appointments, funerals, etc. – is included in student attendance totals in determining excessive absences. Parents/Guardians will receive a letter notifying them of a student's excessive absences once a student misses:

- 38 or more hours in one school month **(with or without a legitimate excuse)**
- 65 or more hours in one school year **(with our without a legitimate excuse)**

This means that even if you have called the office to report your child ill or have an excuse from a doctor stating that your student is excused from school, you may still receive an excessive absence notification letter. Please note that this is a requirement of the law and not optional for schools.

Habitual Truancy

The law also requires schools to address Habitual Truancy, which occurs when a student misses:

- 30 or more consecutive hours **without a legitimate excuse**
- 42 or more hours in one school month **without a legitimate excuse**
- 72 or more hours in one school year **without a legitimate excuse**

Absences that are recorded as legitimate or excused will not count towards the hours for habitual truancy.

Parents/Guardians must call the school to report the student as absent. In addition, we ask that the student bring a note to school signed by the parent/guardian or a physician after each absence explaining the reason for the absence or tardiness. Please note that a doctor excuse is required after five days of illness or the absence may be recorded as unexcused.

Absence Intervention Team

If a student continues to miss school after reaching the above thresholds, an Absence Intervention Team will be created and a conference scheduled to help improve the student's attendance. Parents/Guardians are required to be a part of this team. If the student does not make progress on the plan within 60 days or continues to be excessive absent, the district must take further action including the possible filing of a complaint against the parent/guardian and student in Juvenile Court.

Excused Absences

Fremont City Schools considers the following factors to be legitimate and excused reasons for missing up to five days school:

- personal illness of the student;
- illness in the student's family necessitating the presence of the child;
- needed at home to perform necessary work directly and exclusively for parents or legal guardians for a limited period of time when approved by the Superintendent (applies to students over 14 years of age only);
- death in the family (applies to absences of up to 18 school hours unless a reasonable cause may be shown for a longer absence);
- quarantine for contagious disease;
- observance of religious holidays consistent with a student's truly held religious belief;
- traveling out of state to attend a Board-approved enrichment activity or extracurricular activity (applies to absences of up to 24 school hours);
- college visitation;
- absences due to a student's placement in foster care or change in foster care placement or any court proceedings related to their foster care status;
- absences due to the student being homeless; or
- as determined by the Superintendent.

If you take your child to the doctor for illness or a scheduled appointment, please obtain and provide to the school an excuse from the doctor for missing school. This will ensure the absence is recorded as excused.

All other absences/tardies will be unexcused.

Vacations

In accordance with Board policy, students are permitted to go on vacation during the school year (except the week ending each semester and during state assessments). However, the time missed will be counted as an authorized, **but unexcused absence**. The parent/guardian must complete an Application for Extended Absence to have it authorized by the Principal. If approved, the absence shall not be a factor in determining grades unless makeup work is not completed **but will still count in the hours determining excessive absences and habitually truant**.

We appreciate your support in our compliance with this law. Please contact us with any questions regarding our attendance policy.