

Attendance Policy

Regular school attendance is essential for the student to make the most of his or her education and to benefit from teacher-supervised activities, to build each day's learning on that of the previous day, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class will affect a student's ability to succeed in class; therefore, students and parents should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Additionally, state law mandates compulsory school attendance for children of a certain age, and another state law deals with attendance for course credit and a student's final grade. These laws are discussed below.

Compulsory Attendance

The state compulsory attendance law requires that a student between the ages of six and 19 must attend school and school-required tutorial sessions unless the student is otherwise legally exempted or excused. Somerset Academy staff 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, or from required tutorials will be considered "truant" and subject to disciplinary action.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 19th birthday is required to attend each school day. If a student 19 years of age or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester, Somerset Academy may revoke the student's enrollment, except that the School may not revoke the enrollment on a day on which the student is physically present at school. The student's presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. Prior to revoking the student's enrollment, Somerset Academy shall issue a warning letter to the student after the third unexcused absence stating that the student's enrollment may be revoked for the remainder of the school year if the student has more than five unexcused absences in a semester. As an alternative to revoking enrollment, the School may impose a behavior improvement plan.



Notice to Parents:

Under Texas Education Code § 25.095(a), you are hereby notified that if a student is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, the student's parent is subject to prosecution under Texas Education Code § 25.093; and the student is subject to referral to a truancy court for truant conduct under Texas Family Code § 65.003(a).

Somerset Academy shall notify a student's parent if the student has been absent from school, without excuse, on three days or parts of days within a four-week period. The notice will inform the parent that it is the parent's duty to monitor the student's school attendance and require the student to attend school; the student is subject to truancy prevention measures under Texas Education Code § 25.0915; and that a conference between school officials and the parent is needed to discuss the absences.

Attendance for Credit or Final Grade

To receive credit or a final grade in a class, a student must attend at least 90% of the days the class is offered. These days include both excused and unexcused absences. A student who attends fewer than 90% of the days the class is offered may be referred to the Attendance Committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit or earn a final grade.

The Attendance Committee will consider the following factors when determining whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absence:

1. All absences, whether excused or unexcused, must be considered, with consideration given to special circumstances as defined by the Texas Education Code.
2. For a student transferring into the School after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
3. In reaching consensus about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that its decision is in the best interest of the student.

4. The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or parent could exercise control.
5. The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documentation expressing reasons for the student's absences.
6. The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
7. The student, parent or other representative will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to discuss ways to earn or regain credit.

If credit is lost because of excessive absences, the attendance committee will decide how the student may regain credit or earn a final grade. If the committee determines there are no extenuating circumstances and that credit or a final grade may not be earned, the student or parent may appeal the committee's decision to the Board of Directors by filing a written request with the Superintendent. The appeal notice must be postmarked to the following address within 30 days following the last day of instruction in the semester for which credit was denied:

Somerset Academies of Texas
Notice of Appeal: Class Credit Attn: Superintendent
4802 Vance Jackson
San Antonio, Texas 78230

The appeal will then be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the student or parent of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

Absence and Tardiness

When a student must be absent from school, parents are asked to call the campus each day the student will be absent. Upon returning to school, the student must bring a note, signed by the parent, or a medical excuse signed and dated by a provider that describes the reason for the absence. If a note is not received within two school days of the absence, the absence may be recorded as unexcused.

Because excessive absences are considered truancy under state law, Somerset Academy reserves the right to:

- Impose a behavior improvement plan referencing attendance issues and the period of time the plan will be in place;
- Impose school-based community service;
- Refer the student to counseling, mediation, or other in-school or out-of-school service aimed at addressing the truant behavior;
- Initiate a truancy filing as allowed by state law; and/or
- Recommend disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, up to and including a recommendation for expulsion.

Somerset Academy recognizes two kinds of absences: excused and unexcused. Students and parents should read this section carefully to understand the school's expectations. Students and parents should also be aware of the school's policy regarding homework, quizzes, and tests following an absence.

Excused Absences

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. 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;
- Documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. A note from the health-care provider must be submitted upon the student's arrival or return to campus;
- For students in the conservatorship (custody) of the state;
- An activity required under a court-ordered service plan; or
- Any other court-ordered activity, provided it is not practicable to schedule the student's participation in the activity outside of school hours.

A junior or senior student may also be absent for up to two days per school year for purposes of visiting a college or university, provided the student receives approval from the Head of School, follows the School's procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work.

Absences of up to two days in a school year will also be considered an exemption for a student serving as an early voting clerk, provided the student notifies his or her teachers and receives approval from the Head of School prior to the absence.

Absences of up to five days will be excused for a student to visit with a parent, stepparent, or legal guardian who has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or immediately returned from certain deployments.

For religious holy days, required court appearances, activities related to obtaining citizenship, and serving as an election clerk, one day of travel to the site and one day of travel from the site shall also be excused by the School.

Unexcused Absences

Any absence not listed above will be considered an unexcused absence. Examples of unexcused absences include, but are not limited to:

- Car trouble;
- Failure to bring a written note within two school days following an absence;
- Leaving school without the permission of the Head of School or designee or other administrator;
- Oversleeping;
- Personal business; and
- Vacation.

If a student receives more than 15 unexcused absences in a semester, the school may recommend expulsion as allowed under the Student Code of Conduct.

Tardies

Students are expected to be in class at the class start time. Students entering class after the class start time will be considered tardy. Students who are late to class are designated tardy and will be assigned disciplinary consequences if they are tardy, without an acceptable excuse, on four or more days within a period of 45 rolling school days.

Nearly all tardiness is avoidable and is excusable only in cases of illness or emergency. If a student arrives late to school, a parent must report to the School office to complete a tardy slip.

Students will receive the following consequences for repeated tardiness within a period of 45 rolling school days:

Two Tardies: Teacher conference with parent by telephone or in person.

Three Tardies: First written notice to parent that six tardies will equal one unexcused absence.

Four Tardies: Second written notice to parent that six tardies will equal one unexcused absence; referral for disciplinary consequences under the Student Code of Conduct.

Five Tardies: Referral for disciplinary consequences under the Student Code of Conduct.

Six Tardies: Notice to parent that, due to six tardies, the student has earned an unexcused absence that counts toward attendance under compulsory attendance law; referral for disciplinary consequences under Student Code of Conduct.



Warning letters will be given for excessive tardies and absences.

Required Documentation of Absences

When a student must be absent from school, parents are responsible for calling the School office each day to explain the reason for the student's absence. Upon returning to school, the student must bring a note to the School office, signed by the parent, which describes the reason for the absence. In order to excuse the absence, the note must:

- Be submitted to the School office within two school days of the student's return to school, and
- Describe an acceptable reason for the absence (see "Excused and Unexcused Absences" above).

A student may be excused for a temporary absence resulting from documented health-care appointments for the student or a child of the student if that student begins classes or returns to school on the same day of the appointment. A note from the health care professional must be provided to the School office upon the student's arrival to or return to school. Students whose absences are excused for these reasons may not be penalized for that absence and will be counted as if the student attended school for attendance purposes. The student will be allowed a reasonable amount of time to make up the missed schoolwork.

Make-Up Work

If a student misses class for any reason, a teacher may assign make-up work that incorporates the instructional objectives for the class and that will assist the student to master the essential knowledge and skills necessary to meet subject or course requirements. Students are responsible for obtaining and completing the make-up work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher. Teachers will provide students and parents with additional information regarding penalties for failure to complete make-up work within the time allotted, and the process for making up tests missed due to absence.

Driver's License Attendance Verification

The Texas Department of Public Safety ("DPS") is required to verify the attendance records of a student between the ages of 16 and 18 to obtain or renew a driver's license. In order for DPS to access this information or, in certain circumstances, for a school administrator to provide the student's attendance information to DPS. Written parental permission must be obtained. Students may obtain the required Verification of Enrollment ("VOE") form from the School office.