

VGHS Attendance and Truancy policy

At VGHS, we want your kids here! In the EL model, students are an active part of creating the learning environment. When students miss school, not only do they miss the simulation, discussion, workshop, or experiment for the day, their peers miss their unique contributions and presence. The curriculum is an interactive one and students who miss school miss out on sharing learning experiences with their classmates. Teachers cannot recreate the same learning experience for students who were absent by providing a list of missing assignments. And, we miss them.

A strong correlation exists between academic success and regular school attendance. Please keep your students out of school only when absolutely necessary. Much of our daily endeavor at VGHS cannot be replicated; the benefits of discussion and/or participation in activities are lost to those who are absent. It must be emphasized that regular attendance is the key to much of the success a student may gain from the VGHS Experience.

The following policy is in taken from and in alignment with current state statue and the state compulsory attendance law. Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child is in school. Attendance will be taken in every class and each day. Appropriate legal procedures will be followed for ten or more unexcused absences during the school year, which is considered habitual truancy, as specified and required by the Public School Code. A student who has accumulated 10 unexcused absences is considered truant and students will not receive credit for the semester. However, it is expected that school staff are aware of repeated unexcused absences before the point of truancy and will intervene both informally by conferring with the student and more formally through parent contact and conferences to determine the cause of the student's absenteeism. Students will not be punished for truancy by suspension and/or expulsion.

Regular attendance is essential to a student's success in school. Persistent absenteeism creates a genuine hardship for a student academically and socially and is regarded as a very serious problem.

Excused Absences

In order for an absence to be valid the student must bring a written excuse signed by the parent the day he/she returns to school. A valid excuse is considered illness, death in family, prearranged (one week's written notice), family event, documented medical appointment or religious holiday. For illnesses over three days or more a doctor's excuse may be requested by the school and a medical absence form may be requested. When a student has entered the school truancy program with 5 or more absences, s/he must bring a doctor's note to school for any additional absences.

In the event that a student misses 10 or more days of class, s/he may not receive credit without documentation of an extraordinary circumstance.

CONSEQUENCES FOR ABSENCES

STEP 1: Initial Meeting

After three incidents of absences (excused or unexcused), the student is contacted and counseled by the director, crew leader or other school staff member. In the meeting the student and director decide what kind of support is needed for the student. Parent/Guardian(s) is notified by a phone call, email and/or letter and a conference is held discussing what was decided in initial meeting between student and director. Tutoring may be required as support for student to make-up missed assignments.

Step 2: Parent/Guardian Conference

If student has five cumulative (excused or unexcused) absences in a quarter, he/she will again be counseled by the director. Parent/Guardian(s) will be notified of continued truancy by a phone call, email and/or a letter. An in-person conference will be held between parent/guardian, student, director, and teachers. A truancy prevention plan and contract will be developed and signed in order to support the student. Tutoring may be required as support for student to make-up missed assignments.

Step 3: Meeting with juvenile probation and parole services in Taos

If the student has **ten unexcused** absences in a school year, the student's parent/guardian will be notified by certified mail and a phone call. The student, parent/guardian(s), director will meet with juvenile probation and parole services in Taos. A truancy action plan and contract will be developed. Tutoring may be required as support for student to make-up missed assignments.

Step 4: Taos Probation Office

If there is another unexcused absence, Taos probation offices will be contacted. The Director will be in communication with probation officers to see if student was referred to children's court. Tutoring may be required as support for student to make-up missed assignments.

Tardies

School begins promptly at 8:00 AM. It is very important for students to arrive at school and each class on time ready to learn. If a student has three tardies, it converts to one absence.

Consecutive or Accumulated Absences

After ten days of consecutive non-attendance, by state law, the student will be withdrawn. To request a medical or educational absence, please contact the office for proper procedures.

VGHS respects the Sovereignty of Native Tribes. While Native students are still subject to the same attendance laws as other students, VGHS is committed to working with families and tribes to understand specific tribal customs, practices and laws as well as any specific communication needs of tribe or family. VGHS would like to encourage the inclusion of tribal representatives/suggestions in any attendance contract to ensure the inclusion of culturally relevant support, additional resources, and to deepen the understanding of needs specific to the tribe, family, and/or student. Tribes or Native Families are encouraged to request this in the implementation of the attendance policy. Absences due to traditional activities must be excused by the Governor's Office. Parents are responsible for requesting and providing the documentation to the school.