

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**6.25.24**

At Journey School, students are taught in carefully designed, complete units known as Main Lesson blocks which last 3-4 weeks each. Missing a portion of a block will affect full comprehension of that block as well as future lessons. When school is missed, rhythm is disrupted, lessons cannot be replicated and missed work becomes a burden to complete while staying caught up on current assignments. Regular attendance is extremely important for many additional reasons, including:

- Attendance at school is mandatory by law. Note that the school is required to keep accurate attendance records. The school office must “verify” all absences with the parent, regardless of the reason. Regular attendance shows a commitment by the family to the school and to the student’s education.
- Regular attendance helps to ensure each student can reach his/her full educational potential.
- As a charter school, Journey School is accountable for overall student performance. A low attendance rate generally has a negative effect on student performance and can therefore impact the school as a whole.
- Journey School depends on student attendance for funding. When a student is absent, school funding is reduced, regardless of the reason for the absence. This can harm our education program as a whole and the educational experience for other students.
- Temporary Independent study may be available for students experiencing long periods of consecutive absences (more than 5 days, but no more than 15 days) pursuant to EC sections 51745-51749.3. For travel related independent study, placement must be requested by parents/guardians at least 5 business days in advance of the 1<sup>st</sup> missed school day. All placements in temporary independent study, regardless of reasoning, are subject to the administration team’s approval of a placement and finalization of a master agreement per the Independent Study board policy. Various factors may be considered by administration, including but not limited to availability in the independent study program, academic performance of the student prior to the absence, number of previous absences, Special Education status, English learner status, nature of travel/absence and other factors that may be relevant to supporting a student effectively in an independent study placement.

## *Excused Absence*

Absences for the following reasons will be considered excused:

- Illness or situations when a physician recommends a student miss school
- Medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointments which cannot be scheduled outside the school day
- Religious Holidays
- Court ordered absences
- Death in the student’s immediate family
- To spend time with a member of the student’s immediate family, who 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 position
- Other unusual circumstances when approved by the Executive Director or his/her designee and requested in advance

At the school’s discretion, a physician’s statement of diagnosis may be required at any point to excuse an absence or extended absence related to illness. Generally, a physician’s statement will be requested on the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive day of a student’s medical absence or when a student’s total days of medical related absence reach seven (7).

### *Unexcused Absence*

Absences for the following reasons will be considered unexcused:

- “Long weekends” and vacations
- Moving days (change of residence)
- Transportation problems
- Appointments for non-essential activities such as haircuts

### *Tardy to School*

Students who arrive at school after the start of the school day are considered tardy. Tardy students must come to the office where they will be marked tardy and receive a pass that will permit them into the classroom. If a pattern of late arrival develops, administration will schedule a parent conference at which additional measures for compliance will be discussed and during which placement at the school and/or other additional actions may be considered.

Excused tardies are those that are verified in writing by the director and or his/her designee.

### *Leaving Early/Early Departure*

Students leaving school before the end of the school day must be picked up in the office and officially signed out. Please avoid picking up students before the dismissal time if at all possible. It is important to honor every class and all instructional time at Journey School. If a pattern of early departure develops, administration will schedule a parent conference at which additional measures for compliance will be discussed and during which placement at the school and/ or other additional actions may be considered.

Please note, Journey School will send students home early from school for certain illnesses/injuries, including, but not limited to student's temperature is 100 degrees or higher, vomiting, pain in the chest or stomach, fainting, live nits or lice found in hair, injury other than minor cuts or bruises, etc. Please have current emergency contacts listed on your child's Emergency Forms. Please contact the school immediately if these numbers change during the year.

### **Procedure for Excessive Unexcused Absences**

The following procedure will be followed to manage Unexcused Absences:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Unexcused Absence – A staff or faculty member will call home to verify the student's attendance record, review this policy and discuss how the school can help to resolve the problem.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence – A staff or faculty member will call the family to verify the student's absence and a notice of excessive unexcused absences will be sent home and placed within the student's cumulative record.
- 7<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence - Upon reaching eight (7) unexcused absences, the parent/guardian will receive a notification letter and will be required to meet with the Executive Director. It is Journey School's intent to identify and remove all barriers to the student's success and will explore every possible option to address student attendance issues with the family. The Executive Director will discuss the absence problem with the parent/guardian to work on solutions, develop strategies, discuss appropriate support services for the student and his/her family, and establish a plan to resolve the attendance issue.
- 10<sup>th</sup> Unexcused Absence – The Executive Director will connect with pertinent staff to determine appropriate next steps to address the chronic nature of unexcused absences. The Executive Director may issue a letter informing the parent/guardian of Journey School's decision and intent to disenroll the student due to excessive absenteeism. Known as a “Five Day Letter”, this notice will explain the parent's/student's due process rights to request a neutral hearing on the

Executive Director's decision to disenroll the student for failure to comply with this policy. If the parent/student does not respond to the "Five Day Letter" or otherwise does not elect to request a hearing, the student shall be disenrolled and notification will be sent to the district of residence of a non-attending student. After disenrollment, the student can apply to Journey School the following school year.

### **Procedure for Excessive Consecutive Unexcused Absences**

Journey School will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet to reach out to families if students are absent for consecutive days without a valid excuse. If student is absent ten (10) or more consecutive school days without a valid excuse, it may not be possible to schedule meetings and phone calls detailed in the process above, given the condensed time frame. In this scenario, the school reserves the right to disenroll a student in accordance with Education Code and shall provide a "Five Day Letter" as described above for a disenrollment with ten or more unexcused absences.

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

Students who miss more than 10% of the school year for a combination of unexcused and/or excused reasons are considered chronic absentees according to the California Department of Education. Steps to support chronic absentees may include:

- Student Study Team
- School Attendance Review Team
- Possible Qualification under section 504
- Requirements to excuse further absences
- Home/hospital instruction
- Transitioning student into Independent Study

### **Procedure for Excessive Tardies and/or Early Departures**

The following procedure will be followed:

- Teachers will conference with the parent if a pattern develops.
- 10<sup>th</sup> unexcused tardy and/or unexcused early departure – Teachers will call home to discuss the violations in an effort to develop solutions.
- 20<sup>th</sup> unexcused tardy and/or early departure – The parent/guardian will receive a notification letter and will be required to meet with the Executive Director to discuss the tardiness with the parent/guardian to work on solutions, develop strategies, discuss appropriate support services for the student and his/her family, and establish a plan to resolve the attendance issue. It is the School's intent to identify and remove all barriers to the student's success and will explore every possible option to address student attendance issues with the family.
- 30<sup>th</sup> unexcused tardy and/or early departure – A 2<sup>nd</sup> conference will be scheduled with the parent to discuss the attendance trend.
- 35<sup>th</sup> unexcused tardy and/or early departure - The Executive Director may issue a letter informing the parent/guardian of Journey School's decision and intent to disenroll the student due to excessive tardiness/early departures. Known as a "Five Day Letter", this notice will explain the parent's/student's due process rights to request a neutral hearing on the Executive Director's decision to disenroll the student for failure to comply with this policy. If the parent/student does not respond to the "Five Day Letter" or otherwise does not elect to request a hearing, the student shall be disenrolled and notification will be sent to the district of residence of a non-attending student. After disenrollment, the student can apply to Journey School the following school year.

All attendance policies will be enforced fairly, uniformly, and consistently without regard to any protected classification, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

**Reporting Absences and Tardies to School**

Parents are to notify the school office of a student's absence (regardless of the reason – excused or unexcused) as soon as possible, ideally before 9:30 am when attendance is entered. Physician, dental, counseling and other appointments should be scheduled after school hours whenever possible. If unavoidable, please notify the office and have the child attend classes both before and after the scheduled appointments. Absences will remain unexcused and accumulate as such unless they are excused for a valid reason (see above). A child's absence may be verified/excused up to five (5) days after your child has been absent. Absences that are not verified within the time allowed will be considered unexcused.