

Heights High School Attendance Policy

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day's learning on the previous day's, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student's mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences.

Key Points

- Students should be in school every scheduled day from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Attendance records are maintained by each teacher every class period.
- To be eligible to participate in any extracurricular activity offered by the school, students must be in school from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. on the day of the activity. Attendance on the final school day before a weekend or school vacation will also be used to determine a student's eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities scheduled during the weekend or vacation. Special circumstances will be reviewed by the Principal or her designee.
- All absences due to school-sponsored field trips are considered excused.
- When a student arrives to class without an excused pass and is tardy more than fifteen (15) minutes after the tardy bell, he/she is considered absent-unexcused. **The student should still go to class to receive credit for the work done in the portion of the class he/she attended.**

Individual Responsibilities

Student's Responsibilities

- It is each student's responsibility to monitor his/her own attendance and speak with his/her teachers if he/she has any questions about attendance records.
- The student must submit all Attendance Notes to the Attendance Office within 3 days of returning to school following an absence.
- The student must obtain and make-up class work missed due to absences. It is the student's responsibility to see his/her teachers to obtain missed work.

Parent/Guardian Information and Responsibilities

- The parent/guardian should monitor his/her son's/daughter's attendance in each of his/her classes through PSCconnect.
- We encourage parents to discuss the importance of good attendance with their children.

Students must bring a note from a parent/guardian to the Attendance Office or their Grade Level Principal's Office explaining the absence. **Students are allowed to submit no more than 3 handwritten parent/guardian notes per semester.** Students should NOT give the note to a teacher, coach, bus driver, friend or anyone else. Upon returning to school, students have 3 days to turn in the note. Excuse notes turned in after the 3-day period will be sent to the Assistant Principal for approval. **Please note that, unless the absence is for an allowable reason under compulsory attendance laws, Heights High School is not required to excuse any absence, even if the parent provides a note explaining the absence.** The note needs to include:

- the student's first and last name, grade, and ID number
- date(s) of absence and reason for absence
- a parent/guardian signature and date of signature
- phone number for verification

All excuse notes will be verified! Absence notes must be signed by parent, legal guardian or physician's office; therefore, e-mails are not accepted.

Faculty, Staff, and Administration Responsibilities

- Record each student's attendance in GradeSpeed for each class daily.
- Maintain accurate attendance records in the event disputes arise related to a student's attendance.
- Submit all adjustments to a student's attendance no later than 2:00 p.m. the following day.
- Submit the ADA attendance at 10:00 a.m. each day and Non-ADA attendance after the first 15 minutes of class.
- Assistant principals will address students with chronic attendance issues.

Attendance Policy Guidelines and Protocols

According to the state of Texas, students must be present 90% of the time in a class daily to receive credit for the course. Non-attendance is the number one reason that students are unsuccessful in their classes. Students are expected to attend every class meeting unless excused according to procedures described here.

Tardy Policy

- If a student arrives to class with a pass 14 minutes or less after the tardy bell, he/she is considered tardy. Students should report directly to class after a pass has been issued. The school personnel issuing the pass will inform students when they have accumulated enough unexcused tardies to warrant detention.
- When a student arrives to class more than fifteen (15) minutes after formal instruction has commenced, he/she is considered absent- unexcused. The student should still go to class to receive credit for the work done in the portion of the class he/she attended.
- When a student arrives late to class with a pass from a staff member, then he/she will be considered excused for the tardy. Tardy passes from the Tardy Tracker are unexcused.
- Unexcused tardies are **not** converted to unexcused absences. Tardies are a disciplinary issue.

Perfect Attendance

A student must be enrolled for at least two hours to be considered present for one-half day and for at least four hours to be considered present for one full day. **These time limits refer to instructional time, not including lunch, homeroom, passing periods, or other non-instructional time.**

Documented Excused Absences

Students who have been absent or tardy must present a written excuse from the parents/guardian or medical professional when they return to school. Written excuses should be in the school's possession **no later than three school days** after the date of the absence or tardy. The three-day period begins with the day the student returns to school. **Students are allowed to submit no more than 3 handwritten parent/guardian notes per semester.** Routine health professional appointments should be scheduled after school. If this is unavoidable, parents/guardians must notify the main office or submit a note in advance of the appointment. Additionally, if absences become excessive, the student will be required to submit a doctor's note verifying illness for the absences to be excused. A note signed by the student, even with the parent's permission, will not be accepted unless the student is age 18 or older and is no longer a dependent of his parents for tax purposes or is an emancipated minor under state law.

Excuses for absences and tardies include:

- personal illness
- sickness or death in the family
- quarantine
- weather or road conditions making travel dangerous
- participation in school activities with permission of the principal
- juvenile court proceeding documented by a probation officer
- approved college visitation
- emergencies
- or "any other cause acceptable to teacher, principal, or superintendent"

Unexcused Absences

When in school, students are expected to attend all classes unless excused by an administrator or the nurse.

Unexcused absences include but are not limited to:

- If a student is in school and fails to attend one or more classes while on campus
- If a student arrives more than 15 minutes late to a class without an excused tardy pass
- **Common Unexcused Absences:** Car trouble, oversleeping, traffic, metro bus issues, being out of town, and trips not sponsored by HISD/Heights

Failure to Comply with Attendance Policy

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state attendance law. A student that is absent without permission from school or any class will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action. A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent without excuse from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year.
- Is absent without excuse on three or more days or parts of days within a six-week period.

Skip Days

There are NO sanctioned "skip days" at Height HS. Student organized "skip days" undermine the educational process. The school will not accept parental excuses to participate in "skip days". Students involved in a "skip day" will be given an unexcused absent. In order to receive an excused absence for being ill, the student must submit documentation from a medical professional. **NO EXCEPTION.**

Leaving Campus Early

Student attendance is crucial to learning. We ask that appointments be scheduled outside of school hours as much as reasonably possible. Also note that picking up a child early on a regular basis results in missed opportunities for learning. Unless the Principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the school day. State rules require that parental consent be obtained before any student is allowed to leave campus for any part of the school day. Heights High School has put the following procedures in place in order to document parental consent:

- A parent or otherwise authorized adult must come to the office and sign the student out. Please be prepared to show identification. Once an identity is verified, a campus representative will then call for the student or collect the student and bring him or her to the office. For safety purposes and stability of the learning environment, we cannot allow you to go to the classroom or other area unescorted to pick up the student. If the student returns to campus the same day, the parent or authorized adult must sign the student back in through the main office upon the student's return. Written documentation regarding the reason for the absence is still required.
- If the student's parent will authorize the student to leave campus unaccompanied, a note provided by the parent must be submitted to the attendance office in advance of the absence, no later than two hours prior to the student's need to leave campus. A phone call received from the parent may be accepted, but the school may ultimately require a note to be submitted for documentation purposes. Once the office has received information that the student's parent consents to the student leaving campus, a pass will be issued to the student to hand to his or her teacher with the necessary information. The student must sign out through the main office and sign in upon his or her return, if the student returns the same day. Documentation regarding the reason for the absence is still required.
- If a student becomes ill during the school day and the school nurse or other district personnel determines that the student should go home, the nurse will contact the student's parent and document the parent's wishes regarding release from school. The parent or other authorized adult must follow the sign-out procedures as listed above.

Field Trips

Students must get prior approval from the teacher/s whose class they are missing. Students must not have more than 3 unexcused absences from any class to be eligible to participate.

Extracurricular Activity Participation

To be eligible for participation in any extracurricular activity offered by the school, the student must be in school from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. that day. The student must be in school for the entire day on scheduled half-days and early dismissal Wednesdays. Attendance during the final school day before a weekend or a holiday break will be used to determine a student's eligibility to participate in an extracurricular activity during the weekend or holiday break. A student who does not attend school for the entire day prior to a weekend or a holiday break will not be allowed to participate in the practice, contest, and/or performance during that weekend or holiday break.

Extracurricular Activities = Any interscholastic athletic or school sanctioned activity

Military/College Interviews and Visits

Students are encouraged to schedule military/college visits during non-school hours. However, a student will be excused from school for military/college visits or interviews that cannot reasonably be scheduled outside of school time. Students can schedule no more than two (2) days of military/college visits or interviews during his/her Junior and Senior school year. Any visits or interviews beyond the allocated two (2) days will count as absences for the purposes of determining perfect attendance. ***The two days include travel time.***

Family Vacations and Trips

Parents and students are reminded that state law requires attendance for students. We strongly discourage family vacations while school is in session. Family vacations/personal trips interrupt the educational process. Completion of make-up work does not compensate for the impact of lost instructional time and classroom experience, regardless of the course or course level.

Alternative Education Program

Students are expected to attend class everyday even when enrolled in alternative programs. Heights High School will continue to monitor the student's attendance.

Substitute Teacher

If a substitute teacher is assigned to the class, the same attendance rules apply:

- Students should report to class on time.
- Students should remain in the classroom for the entire class period. Leaving the classroom will result in an unexcused absence.
- Students are responsible for the assigned work.

Notification of Absences

Automated attendance calls are made each school day. If a student is reported as "absent" for any class throughout the school day, the parent will receive an automated phone call and/or email concerning the absence the same day the absence occurred. Please contact the attendance office if you believe the call was made in error. All absences will be marked as unexcused until documentation supporting an excused absence is submitted.

It is important to keep the student's contact information up to date.

Attendance Appeal Policy Guidelines and Protocols

Heights High School's attendance policy follows the Texas Education Code (TEC), which places a limit on the number of absences (excused and unexcused) a student may have in order to receive credit for a class. All high school students must be in attendance for 90% of all class days each semester.

Denied Credit Due to Excessive Absences

The **NG** in a course indicates a student has not met the school's attendance expectations. Students are afforded the opportunity to recover a grade of **NG** with the students' earned grade. The policy and procedures are listed below:

Credit Appeal Policy

A student will be denied credit for a course when they reach the limit for absences in a class during the semester, regardless of the academic grade they hold.

- If a student is denied credit for a course due to attendance, he/she may appeal to the Attendance Committee for a waiver. Appeal dates and times will be announced throughout the school year.

Credit Appeal Procedures

A student is required to complete an Attendance Matters workshop and course related assignments equivalent to the number of hours he/she is recovering in a class due to absences. The hours are calculated as **1** hour for each day over the maximum number of days a student can be absent. The number of days vary based on the semester the student needs to recover and the academic calendar for the school year.

Example: If the maximum allowable for absences in the Fall semester is **5** and a student misses **11** days in the first period class the following calculation for attendance appeal would apply:

(11 absences – 5 allowed absences = 6 absences over)

- 1-hour X 6 absences = 6 hours of recovery required (note: this is the recovery required for first period only. *If the student missed 11 days in all classes, the student would need to recover 6 hours for each class; i.e seven classes = 42 hours of recovery required*)
- Credit for a course **CANNOT** be appealed until the credit has not been earned. Students cannot begin the attendance appeal process until the following semester.
- Students will complete course related assignments equivalent to the number of hours required to recover unearned credit. **Keep in mind, students may take longer than the required recovery hours to complete the assignments.**
- Students wanting to request a credit appeal should contact their Grade Level Principal and complete the application process.

- Students who have been in attendance less than 80% of the time a class is offered in any semester **will not** be eligible for the credit appeal process until the student and parent have met with the Principal and provided documented evidence that there was a valid reason for the absences. **If the excuses are not deemed valid the student will be required to complete Credit Recovery to earn credit for the course.**
- Please remember the importance of student attendance at school and that, even though absences may be excused or unexcused, all absences account for the 90 percent threshold in regard to the state laws surrounding “attendance for credit or final grade.”

Incomplete Grade

Students who are absent for an extended period of time due to an illness and are able to make-up the work may receive an Incomplete (I) for the six-week grading cycle. All work must be made-up within two (2) weeks after the end of the grading cycle. Teachers must change the Incomplete to a grade within two (2) weeks after the end of the grading cycle.

Make-up Work after an Excused Absence

Students shall be allowed to complete, with full credit, all work missed during excused absences. Once a student returns to school, he/she will be allowed one day per each day of absence to make up work (weekends and vacation holidays **count** towards this allowance). In addition to their availability during the school day, teachers will establish and post times when they are available to assist students with make-up work. If a student is unable to meet with the teacher at the established time, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the teacher and establish a mutually agreeable time for assistance with make-up work. If a student is excused for an extended period, additional time to make-up work can be allowed at the discretion of the teacher. Teachers will make every reasonable effort to help students make up missed work. However, students and parents must understand that time lost from classroom instruction is irretrievable.

Semester Exam Exemption

Exemptions are a privilege to be earned by students attending Heights High School. Students may earn exemption status by reaching the following standards during the **Spring** Semester:

- Students must not have a conduct grade of P or U in **any** class
- Students must not have any Level 2, 3, 4, or 5 offenses (as outlined in HISD Code of Student Conduct) that result in more than a combined total of six (6) hours of any type of detention, or any in-school or out of school suspension, or higher consequences
- Students must not owe any fines or fees

District grade, attendance and application requirements for earning exemption status:

Course average of A (90 – 100) with no more than **3 total absences** (excused and unexcused)

Course average of B (80 – 89) with no more than **2 total absences** (excused and unexcused)

Course average of C/D (70 – 79) with no more than **1 absence** (excused or unexcused)

- For exemption purposes only, **three (3) tardies** to a class will equal one absence.
- **Each course is independent. Attendance and grade requirements must be met for course or courses student is requesting exam exemption.**
- Students **must** meet campus requirements related to submission deadlines and verification procedures for securing their exemptions.
- **Students must be in attendance on the day of the semester exam or they forfeit their exemption.**
- Students who transfer to Heights High School after the start of the semester are responsible for showing proof of attendance and academic records from their previous school.
- *Parents have the right to waive their child's exemption.*

Ninth grade students may exempt one exam*

Tenth grade students may exempt two exams*

Eleventh grade students may exempt three exams*

Senior students may exempt all exams*