Walden Attendance Policy

Walden School of Liberal Arts, like all Utah charter schools, is a school of choice. As such, families typically choose to attend Walden because of the programs, policies, and offerings that we are able to provide. We recognize that enrollment at a charter school typically requires a greater commitment in terms of transportation responsibilities and we express our deep appreciation to families who chose to attend Walden School in spite of the added travel time, transportation costs, and scheduling difficulties.

The faculty and administration of Walden School are deeply committed to our responsibility for the education of all enrolled students. In order for our programs to be effective, it is essential for students to participate regularly and on time. Research supports the fact that regular attendance is a critical component of scholastic success. Our experience has shown that students who are habitually late or absent always suffer significantly in academic and/or social ways. Nevertheless, we recognize that there are valid reasons for students to miss school. Walden School’s teachers and administration will work with families to create a plan so that students who are legitimately ill or who have an opportunity to travel or participate in approved alternative learning activities can do so without irreparably jeopardizing their attendance record.

Policy Definitions:

**Attendance:** A physical presence in the class, at the time the class is scheduled to start, wherein the student is ready and prepared to participate in the academic and social activities prepared by the school and/or a designated teacher.

**Excused Absence:** Any absence from school for reasons identified by the school as reasonable such as: illness, medical appointments, family emergencies, death of family member or close friend, pre-approved family activity or travel, approved school activity or other activities approved by the school for which a parent communicates with the school to excuse the absence. Absences must be excused within two school days from the time of the missed attendance. For absences longer than one day, the absence must be excused within two days of the first day of the absence. *Excused absences require the student to make up any missed assignments.*

**Unexcused Absence:** As per state law, an unexcused absence is recorded when a student is not physically present at the school at any of the times attendance checks are made and the student’s absence has not been excused by a parent, guardian or physician, or was not incurred as a part of school sponsored educational activity.

**Tardy:** Arrival in the classroom, ready to participate in learning activities after the designated start time for that class. Elementary classes and the first period classes of the day (for middle and high school students) start at 8:30 each school day. *Three tardies are equivalent to one unexcused absence for the purposes of Walden’s attendance policy.*

**Habitual/Chronic Truancy:** A student who has ten or more unexcused absences is designated as habitually or chronically truant and will face procedures as designated by school and state policy.
Truancy: Unexcused absences are truancies. If a student is truant more than five times in a school year, the student must be reported to the courts. To avoid this problem, please excuse your student by stopping by, or calling, the front office before 8:30 the day of an absence.

Absences
Students are expected to be in class and on-time every school day. Walden faculty and administration will work in partnership with students and families to support continued academic progress when students miss school due to illness or other approved absences. However, those who accrue five unexcused or ten excused absences during the school year (or three unexcused/five excused absences in a semester) for any reason must address the school board of trustees or a subcommittee thereof and submit a plan for improving school attendance or withdraw from the school. Missing two or more class periods counts as a day’s absence for middle or high school students. Families who are unable to meet Walden School’s attendance policy are encouraged to consider alternative schooling options such as enrollment in their neighborhood school or online public schools. Wherever valid reasons exist for an adjusted attendance requirement, students or parents may request for consideration of an Individual Attendance Plan (see the section on Special Circumstances below).

Each term (in middle and high school) is approximately 40 days in length. Middle and high school students often receive participation points for daily classroom activities and even a small number of absences can put their grades in jeopardy or loss of credit. A student who misses more than 18 days in a school year will face retention in the same grade for the next school year and will be reported to truancy court. Loss of credit can be appealed by a parent or guardian but will be granted only in extreme situations.

A student will not be counted absent if he or she is participating in an educational or approved family trip, a performance, or a competition and has received prior approval.

Tardiness
School begins at 8:30 each morning and every student should be in his or her classroom ready to learn at or before that time. Elementary classes have specific routines and students who are late miss important academic and social content and cause disruptions to the class when entering late. High school and middle school classes are limited in length and instruction time is compromised when a few students straggle in late. Please be considerate of the teachers and other students and help your student arrive on time. Three tardies are the equivalent of one absence in terms of calculating compliance with the school absentee policies.

10-Day Rule
As per state law, any student who is absent 10 consecutive days (without prior written notice and approval) and has not communicated with the school, will automatically be dropped from the school’s records. We will make every attempt to contact the family to determine if there is a legitimate reason for the absences, but we are required to withdraw inactive students.

Extended Absence Approval
Students may be absent from the regular school day and still receive credit for attending school under certain circumstances. The student or parent must submit an official “extended absence approval” form to the school director or counselor at least one week prior to departure. A
decision will be rendered within three business days of receipt. Extended absence approval may be issued for the following reasons.

1) Family trip that includes educational activities.
2) Study abroad experience affiliated with Walden or another institution.
3) Educational or athletic trip affiliated with Walden or approved organization.
4) Workshop or seminar that fulfills educational purposes.
5) Competitions or performances in which the student is participating.

Please be aware that approval may be contingent on completion of academic work to be submitted upon return from the trip.

Attendance Make Up Procedures

Students who are in danger of losing credit for a class or multiple classes (middle and high school) or who are falling behind academically (elementary) may qualify to make up missed days or excessive tardies using the following procedures:

Teacher Excused
Individual teachers may allow students the opportunity to make up absences/tardies by assigning extra homework, and/or other duties. However, teachers are not obligated to provide make-up hours. Teacher-initiated make-up hours are only allowed for the teacher providing makeup (i.e., hours are not transferable to another teacher).

Math and Writing Lab
At the discretion of the teacher, students in middle or high school may make up missed days by attending Math or Writing Lab. Math Lab is available Monday through Thursday after school from 3:00-4:00 PM. Writing Lab will be announced throughout the term. Both labs are open to all upper school students at Walden. Student who are currently behind on assignments or who are earning lower than a C are required to attend lab until they are receiving a passing grade.

Special Circumstances

Individual Attendance Plan
A student who suffers from a medically documented chronic condition that negatively impacts attendance may qualify for consideration or accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you feel that you or your student may qualify for an Individual Attendance Plan in conjunction 504 plan, please contact an administrator or the school’s special education coordinator.

Attendance Improvement Plan
Students or parents meeting with the board of trustees regarding attendance concerns will be asked to submit an Attendance Improvement Plan for approval by the board. This plan may be constructed with assistance from a school administrator or faculty member and should document steps that will be taken to improve a student’s school attendance. Failure to comply with the improvement plan will lead to further action by the school administration or the board of trustees, and/or may lead to school suspension or expulsion.