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UPDATE: Truancy Report

2014

Authorizing legislation: [RCW 28A.225.151](#)
(<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28A.225.151>)

Secondary Education and Student Support

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Executive Summary

At the end of the school year, each district compiles (from its schools), verifies, and submits summary data on truancy petitions to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

The provision of more clearly defined rules, definitions and reporting expectations from OSPI has assisted districts in the tracking and reporting of truancy data. Truancy data is currently provided to OSPI at the aggregate level by school. This level of reporting does not allow for disaggregated reporting of truancy petitions by subgroups (e.g., building or grade level or demographics).

There was a decrease in the total number of truancy petitions reported as being filed for the 2013-14 school year. The collection of this data at the aggregate level, without supporting information, does not allow for analysis of causes for the decrease. OSPI has identified the need for new or improved reporting tools that will better connect truancy data to other data elements so that questions regarding truancy can be better analyzed.

Update Status

OSPI began collecting student-level absence data, for both excused and unexcused absences, in the 2012-13 school year. Prior to that, information was only collected on an aggregate basis. [WAC 392-400-325](#) provides the definitions for excused and unexcused daily absences. However, truancy petition information is still submitted at an aggregate level.

Data elements required in the Truancy Report include:

- Total number of unexcused absences,
- Number of students with 10 or more unexcused absences in a school year or five or more unexcused absences in a month, and the
- Number of truancy petitions filed with the courts.

The expanded tables for Grades 1–8 and Grades 9–12 include information on enrollment, truancy petitions and more.

Grades 1–8 Statewide Truancy Report Totals

	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
October Enrollment	636,621	622,150	625,631	607,313
Unexcused Absences	144,550	147,021	134,396	119,139
5+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	9,658	10,360	8,830	7,633
10+ Unexcused Absences in a School Year	10,777	11,316	9,213	7,993
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 9/1/13 and 5/31/14	3058	3,621	2,901	3,043
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 6/1/14 and 8/31/14	425	310	193	327

Grades 9–12 Statewide Truancy Report Totals

	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
October Enrollment	327,161	320,153	324,951	325,566
Unexcused Absences	162,191	171,451	190,602	170,427
5+ Unexcused Absences Within 30 Days	34,042	36,146	36,647	35,012
10+ Unexcused Absences in a School Year	39,143	40,838	40,858	40,254
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 9/1/13 and 5/31/14	6,088	6,680	6,752	7,568
Total Truancy Petitions Filed Between 6/1/14 and 8/31/14	535	460	299	542

Conclusion and Next Steps

The original intent of the Truancy Report was to provide information on the relationship between the “habitual truant” and truancy petitions as an intervention.

Clearer, more defined guidance from OSPI in the definition of *unexcused absences*, and the accountability for districts to report the data within CEDARS, have moved districts to review and often redefine attendance policies across the state.

It is not clear from the data whether the decrease in percentages of unexcused absences and subsequent decrease in the number of truancy petitions filed is due to a clearer understanding of the term unexcused absence, the continued growth in the use of interventions such as the community truancy board, or the direct result of a change in culture because of court intervention.

The following next steps are suggested:

- Increased focus on data quality in reporting unexcused absences through the CEDARS system.
- Revision of the process for the creation of the Truancy report from reporting of aggregate numbers to an alternate, student-level submission so data may be more thoroughly analyzed.

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