



HRCS Attendance Policy

At High Rockies Community School (HRCS), we believe consistent, on-time attendance is one of the most important ways families can support their child's growth and success. Our place-based, experiential approach means learning happens through projects, fieldwork, and hands-on experiences that cannot always be replicated through make-up work. Every day offers new opportunities for students to connect with peers, engage with the natural world, and build understanding through real-world experiences.

While we understand that illnesses, emergencies, and special circumstances arise, frequent absences can disrupt a student's learning and the rhythm of our school community. This policy outlines the expectations, supports, and procedures HRCS uses to promote regular attendance and help students stay fully engaged in their learning journey.

Compulsory Attendance

Compulsory school attendance laws apply to all students age 6 (on or before August 1 of each year) through 17. Families and HRCS collaboratively uphold high attendance expectations as a fundamental part of our shared commitment to learning.

Student Absences and Excuses

At HRCS, we view regular, daily attendance as essential—not just for academic achievement, but for connection, collaboration, and participation in our place-based learning model. While we understand that absences sometimes occur, we also believe that there's no true substitute for being present: learning alongside peers, engaging in hands-on experiences, and contributing to a shared learning community.

Although make-up work may be offered in the case of excused absences, it cannot replicate the dynamic and collaborative learning environment of an HRCS day. Each child's voice and presence matters—our approach to interdisciplinary learning depends on it.

Colorado state law recognizes that it is the responsibility of every parent or guardian to ensure their child receives an adequate education and attends school consistently. HRCS supports this by setting a school calendar, clearly defined attendance expectations, and, when needed, partnering with families to troubleshoot barriers to attendance.

If a student is participating in remote or hybrid instruction (e.g., during a health-related closure), an alternate calendar and attendance expectations will be communicated separately.

Excused Absences

At HRCS, we recognize that life sometimes requires students to be away from school. While we value consistency, we also partner with families to ensure that necessary absences are handled with understanding and clarity. The following absences are considered excused:

- Illness or injury that temporarily prevents the student from attending school
- Prearranged absences for serious matters or appointments that cannot reasonably be scheduled outside of school hours (must be approved by the Head of School or Site Lead Teacher)
- Absences related to physical, behavioral, or mental health needs
- Absences during a suspension or expulsion period
- Absences due to court appearances or when the student is in the custody of law enforcement or a court
- Participation in a verified work-study program or with a valid youth employment certificate
- Attendance at therapy, legal, medical, or victim services appointments related to harassment or discrimination, per C.R.S. 22-1-143(2)(f)
- Absences of students in out-of-home placement due to court-ordered activities (verified by a caseworker or social worker)

HRCS may also excuse additional absences for extenuating circumstances, such as family emergencies, religious observances, legal obligations, medical procedures, or funerals. Refer to the Student and Family Handbook for a full list. Documentation (such as a note from a provider or parent/guardian) may be requested.

Unexcused Absences

Unexcused absences occur when:

- A student misses school without a valid excuse in line with this policy
- A student leaves school or class without permission from school staff
- The school does not receive timely communication from the family about the reason for an absence

All unexcused absences will be recorded and shared with parents or guardians. HRCS may assign appropriate consequences directly tied to the missed instructional time. See the HRCS Discipline Policy and Student and Family Handbook for more information on support strategies and responses.

Makeup Work

Due to the experiential and place-based nature of learning at HRCS, some instructional activities and community-based experiences cannot be fully replicated outside of the school day. However, when a student has an excused absence, teachers will make reasonable efforts to provide opportunities to recover essential content and demonstrate learning.

Students are encouraged to connect with their teacher as soon as possible after an absence to discuss what was missed and determine a plan to address learning gaps. Makeup work may be assigned based on the nature of the missed experience and the student's individual needs. In general, students should plan to complete any assigned makeup work within a reasonable timeframe in consultation with their teacher. Makeup work may also be offered after a suspension or unexcused absence, with the goal of supporting continued learning and encouraging positive attendance habits. Additional guidance on makeup work will be outlined in the HRCS Student and Family Handbook.

Tardiness

At High Rockies Community School, we view each day as a carefully designed rhythm of learning, exploration, and connection. Students are expected to be prepared for outdoor activities by 8:00 a.m., and on-time arrival helps set the tone for the entire learning community.

Tardiness is defined as a student arriving after the scheduled start time without a valid excuse. Because late arrivals can disrupt group flow and affect learning for others, we ask families to prioritize punctuality. Patterns of excessive tardiness will be addressed in partnership with families, and consequences may be imposed if the issue persists. Details about how tardies are tracked and the process for addressing chronic lateness will be outlined in the HRCS Student and Family Handbook.

Tuancy

Tuancy occurs when a student is absent without a valid and verifiable excuse from a parent/guardian or leaves school or class without permission from school staff. Colorado law defines a habitual truant as a student of compulsory attendance age who has four unexcused absences in one month, or ten unexcused absences in a school year.

To reduce incidents of truancy, HRCS will:

- Notify families at the start of each school year about their obligation to ensure their child's attendance
- Ask families to acknowledge this obligation in writing and provide updated contact information
- Implement a system to monitor unexcused absences
- Make reasonable efforts to contact parents by phone when a student is unexpectedly absent and no prior notice has been given

If a student is at risk of being designated habitually truant, HRCS will work with the student and family to create a remedial attendance plan. This plan will be collaborative and supportive, identifying underlying barriers to attendance and strategies to keep the student engaged in school. The plan may involve additional staff or community resources.

If truancy continues despite these efforts, HRCS may consult with the student's district of residence to consider additional steps, including potential truancy proceedings. While HRCS is not required to initiate such proceedings, the school reserves the option to do so if it is determined to be in the best interest of the student.

Chronic Absenteeism

Regular attendance is essential for students to experience the full benefits of HRCS's place-based and community-driven model. When students miss 10 percent or more of the school year (excused, unexcused, or suspension), they are considered chronically absent. This means a student who averages two absences per month is at risk of falling into this category.

If a student is identified as chronically absent, the Head of School or Site Lead Teacher will develop a support plan with the family. This plan will:

- Explore the reasons for the absences
- Outline research-based strategies and resources to improve attendance
- Involve a Family Liaison, Social Worker, or other staff as needed
- Include interventions outlined in the school's MTSS process and, when appropriate, attendance contracts

Persistent chronic absenteeism may impact a student's academic progress and, in severe cases, could lead to grade retention if the missed learning significantly affects readiness for the next grade level.

Student Withdrawal/Dropouts

At HRCS, we believe every student can thrive when connected to meaningful learning and relationships. We work proactively to keep students engaged and prioritize dropout prevention as a final effort after multiple layers of intervention have been attempted.

If a student is truant for an extended period of time without any notice of withdrawal or transfer, and school staff have made several documented attempts (phone calls, emails, home visits) to reach the family without success, the school may code the student as a dropout beginning on the first day of the extended absence.

Before a student is formally withdrawn:

- The student, their parent/guardian, and a school counselor or designated staff member will be invited to meet to discuss the student's strengths, needs, and possible solutions. The goal is to co-create a comprehensive plan to re-engage the student in school.
- If initial efforts are unsuccessful, an additional outreach attempt will be made. Families will be provided with resources, information about educational alternatives, and supports that may be available. These details will be published each year in the Student and Family Handbook.
- If the student and family remain unreachable or are unwilling to engage, HRCS will send written notice of the student's withdrawal status within a set number of calendar days (outlined in the Student and Family Handbook). This notice will include encouragement to return to school and information about available educational alternatives and supports.

If a student is ultimately withdrawn, HRCS will continue outreach efforts where possible to support the student in reconnecting to education or career pathways.

Special Education

When applying attendance and withdrawal policies to students with an IEP or 504 Plan, HRCS will ensure that all federal and state special education laws and rights are followed first and foremost. Any attendance interventions or withdrawal decisions for students receiving special education services will be coordinated with the student's IEP or 504 team to protect access to their individualized supports and services.

In-School Suspension

At HRCS, in-school suspension is designed to keep students engaged in learning and connected to the school community while addressing behavior concerns. Students serving an in-school suspension will be documented as present for attendance purposes, provided they remain on campus for the duration of the suspension and complete assigned work and reflection activities.

Tracking Online Attendance

If HRCS must implement online or hybrid instruction, specific details regarding how daily attendance will be recorded and monitored will be included in the family notification of implementation.

Importance of Accurate Documentation and Reporting

At HRCS, accurate attendance records are essential not only for supporting student learning and engagement but also for ensuring compliance with state reporting requirements. Complete and precise documentation during the October Count window is especially important, as this period helps determine school funding eligibility.

Staff must ensure that evidence of attendance is collected and submitted for all students during the October Count window in alignment with the October Count Audit Resource Guide.

Evidence may include attendance rosters, logs of instructional participation, or other approved forms of documentation.

In addition, the State collects various measures of student attendance in the Attendance Snapshot, which is reported as part of the Student School Association file. Accurate data collection and reporting are essential to reflect the full picture of HRCS student participation and to meet state accountability requirements.

LEGAL REFS.:

C.R.S. 22-14-101 et seq. (dropout prevention and student re-engagement)

C.R.S. 22-14-108 (notice to parent of dropout status)

C.R.S. 22-32-138 (6) (excused absence requirements for students in out-of-home placements)

C.R.S. 22-33-101 et seq. (School Attendance Law of 1963)

C.R.S. 22-33-104 (compulsory school attendance ages)

C.R.S. 22-33-105 (3)(d)(III) (opportunity to make up work during suspension)

C.R.S. 22-33-107 (enforcement of school attendance laws)

1 CCR 301-78 Rules 1.00 et seq. (standardized calculation for counting student attendance and truancy)