



# Taos Municipal Schools

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Superintendent*

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Pascualito Maestas, Board Member  
Cynthia Spray, Board Member*

Date: March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Regular school attendance is vital to your student's success. At Taos Municipal Schools, our goal is to ensure that all students fully benefit from their education by getting to school **on time (in class by 8:30 AM for elementary and 7:45 AM for Secondary)** and **attending school regularly**. The same applies to the end of the day. Be conscious that when you pick up your child early **(elementary before 3:30PM and secondary before 2:50PM)** it results in missed instruction. Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school—and themselves. You can help your student learn that going to school on time, every day is important. Consistent attendance will help children do well in high school, college, and at work. If your child attend's class online (Taos Tiger Connect K-12 Online Academy), the same rules apply. Students are required to complete a minimum of 5 hours per week. However, 1-hour per subject/per day is advised.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

- Starting in kindergarten, too many absences (excused and unexcused) can cause children to fall behind in school.
- Missing 10 percent (or about 18 days) increases the chance that your student will not read or master math at the same level as their peers.
- Students can still fall behind if they miss just a day or two days every few weeks.
- Being late to school may lead to poor attendance.
- Absences can affect the whole classroom if the teacher must slow down learning to help children catch up.
- By 6th grade, absenteeism is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school.
- By being present at school, your child learns valuable social skills and is afforded the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships with other students and school staff.
- Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with schoolwork, dealing with a bully, or facing some other potentially serious difficulty.
- By 9th grade, regular and high attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- If your student attends the Taos Tiger Connect K-12 Online Academy (TTCA), they are subject to the same absentee regulations as a brick-and-mortar student.

## **OUR PROMISE TO YOU**

We know that there are a wide variety of reasons that students are late or absent from school, from health concerns to transportation challenges. There are many people in our building prepared to help you if you or your student face challenges in getting to school regularly or on time. We promise to track attendance daily, to notice when your student is missing from class, communicate with you to understand why they were absent, and to identify barriers and supports available to overcome challenges you may face in helping your student attend school. This also pertains to students who are remote in TTCA. Students must meet the student success act and the district is required to follow the same policy as the brick-and-mortar student.

*Taos Municipal Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Title IX – CJ Grace (Taos High School Principal) and Section 504 – Renetta Mondragon (Compliance Officer).*

## WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

Have your child ride the bus as this assures your child will get to school on time. If you must drive your child to school, leave yourself extra time in case of traffic or inclement weather.

If your student attends TTCA, make sure they complete the 5-hour minimum per week attendance requirement. The school suggests 1-hour per day/per class to keep up with the pacing. In addition, students must show active participation. The school suggests that students should show 6-7% progress in each course per week.

An unexcused tardy means your child arrived in class late (after 8:30 AM for Elementary and after 7:50AM for Secondary) due to an unexcused reason. If you're not signing your child in, or if your student is going to be absent or late, please contact the attendance office for your child's school or email with the reason why your child is late or absent. It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to notify the school's attendance within 24 hours of the absence to be considered excusable should an appeal be required.

| School                                    | Contact Person                          | Phone number                 | Email   |
|---|---|------------------------------|---|
| Taos High School                          | Evelyn Anaya                            | 575-751-8016                 | evana@taosschools.org   |
| Taos Cyber Magnet                         | Kate Jensen                             | 575-758-5221                 | kate.jensen@taosschools.org   |
| Taos Middle School                        | Sheila Jiron                            | 575-737-6002                 | shejir@taosschools.org  |
| Arroyos del Norte Elementary              | Carmella Martinez                       | 575-737-6175                 | carmella.martinez@taosschools.org                                       |
| Enos Garcia Elementary                    | Cristina Hernandez<br>Margaret Gonzales | 575-737-6095<br>575-737-6070 | Cristina.hernandez@taosschools.org<br>margaret.gonzales@taosschools.org |
| Ranchos Elementary                        | Cathy Vigil                             | 575-737-6150                 | cathy.vigil@taosschools.org   |
| Taos Tiger Connect K-12<br>Online Academy | Dr. Mae LaBella                         | 575-737-6122                 | maelab@taosschools.org  |

Arriving late to school/class impacts a student's learning as well as the classroom atmosphere. Being on time for school/class is a positive goal for each of our students. Research has shown that your child's attendance record may be the biggest factor influencing his/her academic success.

## SCHOOL POLICIES AND STATE LAWS

It is important that you understand our school policies and procedures, as well as New Mexico's State Law, to ensure your child is successful in school. State law for mandatory attendance, called the Student Success Attendance Act, requires children from age 5 to 18, age of majority to attend a public school, private school, or a district-approved home school program (some exceptions do apply-contact school for further information)

[https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/NMPED\\_SupportDoc\\_AttendanceforSuccessAct.pdf](https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/NMPED_SupportDoc_AttendanceforSuccessAct.pdf)

We, the school, are required to take daily attendance and notify you when your student has an unexcused absence. If your student attends TTCA (remote learning), attendance is reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure that students are meeting the 5-hour minimum requirement.

The Attendance for Success Act requires school districts to classify each student into one of four attendance intervention tiers, based on the percentage of class periods and school day absences. The Act provides required interventions for students in each of the tiers. In addition, the Act also requires school districts to report, at each reporting period and the end of the year, for each student with an absence, the attendance intervention tier to which the student was assigned during the reporting period.

Tier 2; If your student has **missed 5% or more, but less than 10%**, state law (Student Success Attendance Act) requires that the attendance team shall contact the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) to discuss the student's attendance history, the impact of student absences on student academic outcomes, and interventions /services, available to the student. The school may request verification or require other actions to resolve the attendance issue.

Tier 3: If your student has **missed at least 10%, but not more than 20% of school**, the attendance team shall notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of the student's absenteeism. The notice shall include a date, time, and place for the parent(s)/guardian(s) to meet with school officials/staff to develop intervention strategies that focus on keeping the student in an educational setting. The attendance team shall be convened to establish a specific intervention plan for the student that includes

establishing weekly progress monitoring and a contract for attendance. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan, the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.

Tier 4; If your student **has missed more than 20% of school or classes**, the attendance team will provide prevention strategies and other supportive interventions to the student. Written notice shall be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s), (including a date, time, and place for the parent(s)/guardian(s)/student to meet with the school principal and the attendance team) to establish non-punitive consequences at the school level. That would include identifying appropriate specialized supports that may be needed to help the student address the underlying causes of excessive absenteeism and apprise the student and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the consequences of further absences. If your student has an Individualized Education Plan or a 504 Plan, the team that created the plan needs to reconvene.

Students who continue to have unexcused absences after written notification of excessive absenteeism, shall be reported to the judicial district in which the student resides (Attendance for Success Act, Section 12.B.) Schools are required to report for each reporting date and at the end of the year the students who were referred to the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) because of excessive absences (Section 13.A.2). The school will provide the student with a discipline infraction code of: Referred to CYFD for Excessive Absenteeism.

Daily attendance is mandatory for students to benefit most fully from the instructional program. However, the school recognizes that there are situations that cause a student to be absent from school. Students will be allowed up to nine (9) absences from a class per semester without penalty of loss of credit. Therefore, in accordance with the district guidelines, absences MAY be excused for the following reasons:

EXCUSED ABSENCES • Medical Appointment- (with note from doctor) • Illness- (not to exceed 3 days or a doctor's note required) • Diagnostic Testing • Death of a family member • Religious and/or cultural commitment • Family emergency-with principal's approval • All school related activities-not to exceed NMAA policy of 15 days per semester • Extenuating circumstances with PRIOR approval from administration. • Travel, not covered above with PRIOR approval from administration.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE: is an absence from school or a class for which the student does not have an allowable excuse pursuant to the Attendance for Success Act which is adopted by the Taos Municipal School Board as policy (for example- family vacations, haircuts, shopping trips, sleeping late, taking siblings to school, babysitting siblings, etc.)

CHRONIC ABSENCE: When a student misses, 10% of school, **excused or unexcused**, their absences will be considered chronic, and interventions will be considered. Excessive excused absences for medical reasons will be evaluated for additional school-based support.

Remember that 3 unexcused tardies equals 1 unexcused absence. 4 class absences equal 1-day unexcused absence. Please see your child's school policy regarding missed work, loss of academic credit, and credit recovery.

#### **WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Set a regular bedtime and morning routine.
- Prepare for school the night before, finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep.
- Don't let your student stay home unless they are truly sick. Keep in mind complaints of a stomachache or headache can be a sign of anxiety and not a reason to stay home.
- Avoid appointments and extended trips when school is in session.
- Develop back-up plans for getting to school if something comes up. Call on a family member, a neighbor, or another parent.
- Keep track of your student's attendance. Missing more than 9 days could put your student at risk of falling behind.
- Talk to your student about the importance of attendance and getting to school on time or attending on line classes to meet the weekly attendance requirements.
- Talk to your students' teachers if you notice sudden changes in behavior. These could be tied to something going on at school.
- Encourage meaningful afterschool activities, including sports and clubs.

Sincerely,

**Sarah Bradley, Principal**

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**Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the attendance policies and procedures of the Taos Municipal School District. Please complete and return the signature page to your child's school.**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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