

## Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential for success in school; therefore, absences shall be excused only for necessary and important reasons. Not only is attendance important for academic success, the attendance of school age children (*any child reaching his or her 5<sup>th</sup> birthday by September 1 until reaching 18 years of age or graduation*) is required by state law (22-12-2 NMSA, 1978). Excused absences include illness, illness of a parent, sibling, or other immediate family member, bereavement, or other family emergencies, and observance of major religious holidays of the family's faith. Excused absences do not include family vacations, sleeping in, a parent's inability to wake up on time, haircuts, shopping, or a general desire not to come to school on a given day.

We know that life happens, and every student becomes ill from time to time. We also understand that sometimes other illnesses in the family need to be addressed and it is not possible for a student to attend school. We do not expect, nor do we desire, to have students in school who are running a fever, vomiting, coughing excessively, or generally feeling bad. Students with these symptoms should remain at home or be taken to a physician at the parent's/guardian's discretion to allow the student time to recover from the illness and to help prevent the spread of disease to others.

Parents or guardians should attempt to schedule medical, dental, and other appointments after school hours whenever possible. If a student misses school due to a medical or dental appointment, the parent should ask for an appointment card or a doctor's note. The appointment card or doctor's note can be used as documentation of the excused absence. If a student remains home and does not see a physician, the parent should call the school on the day of the absence to verify the reason for the absence. If calling the school is not possible, parents may send a signed note to school with the student when he or she returns. Whenever possible, the school will make a reasonable effort to contact a parent to verify why a student is absent if the parent has not contacted the school prior to the absence or on the day of the absence. If parental contact is made, no other action is needed. For absences greater than one (1) day in length, the school should be notified each day of the absence. However, if the parent knows that a student will be absent for more than one (1) day, notifying the school at the beginning of the absence will suffice. We recommend that if an absence will be more than three (3) days in duration, the parent make contact with the school so that arrangements can be made to provide instructional materials and assignments to the student so that work can be completed during the absence if possible. In all cases, if an excused absence is expected to be for more than five (5) days, parents should contact the school to create a plan to provide instruction at home or other location to prevent the student from falling too far behind. Such plans must be approved by the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction after consultation with the school's principal.

**Verbal notice or notes from parents identifying the reason for the absence will only be accepted until the day following the absence. Verification of an excused absence after the day of return will only be accepted in the form of a note from a physician, clinic, or dentist confirming the dates of the absence.**

A verified absence is not necessarily an excused absence. However, verification is important for the safety of students. Verification provides the school with information that you, as a parent or guardian, know the student is not in school on a given day or at a given time.

If an absence is unexcused, missed assignments may be accepted up to a maximum of five (5) days following the date of the absence; however, **a teacher may reduce the maximum number of days he or she will allow to collect work missed due to an unexcused absence. Teachers may choose to not accept work missed during an unexcused absence,** but in no case will a teacher accept work missed as a result of an unexcused absence after five (5) days of the unexcused absence. Teachers will provide their assignment policy regarding unexcused absences to students in writing the first day of school.

Absences of students due to the deployment or return from deployment of a parent, guardian, or sibling are excused absences. If the absence will be longer than three (3) days, the student will be expected to make arrangements with the school to receive lessons in advance as stated above regarding extended absences.

Many students enrolled in Portales Municipal Schools are members of 4-H and FFA. Absences for the participation in local and state fairs to show livestock or enter exhibits are excused absences. Parents or guardians should notify the school in advance regarding these absences. All attendance and homework rules apply.

State law requires the school to contact parents and guardians when a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence occurs. You could also be contacted after a third (3<sup>rd</sup>) unexcused absence. However, a fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence, according to State law and District Policy, identifies the student as a student in need of intervention and requires a meeting between school administration and the parents or guardians. At this meeting, an administrator will work with the parents/guardians and student to determine the cause of the unexcused absences, what resources might be available to assist the parents/guardians and student, and create a corrective action plan to help prevent future unexcused absences. If parents/guardians fail to respond to notice of the meeting or fail to attend the meeting, the Juvenile Probation Office, District Attorney's Office, Children's Youth and Families Department, and New Mexico Income Support Division will be notified that the student is in need of intervention and that the school has received no support from the parents/guardians.

Upon a tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) unexcused absence, parents or guardians will be notified by mail or in person that the student is now considered habitually truant, and another meeting between the parents/guardians, student, and administration must occur. This meeting will be held to develop intervention strategies focused on keeping the student in school. The parents/guardians will also be notified in writing that a future absence will require that the school notify the Juvenile Probation Office that the student is habitually truant. The administration will also notify the District Attorney's Office, Children's Youth and Families Department, and New Mexico Income Support Division that the student is habitually truant and has failed to respond to intervention.

In order to be successful in school, students must attend regularly. Portales Municipal Schools has no desire to create additional tension within a family or contention between schools and parents. Yet, we know that attending school as required, putting in the effort necessary, and building good relationships with other students and school staff will ensure the success of our students. Our most important goal is to provide a quality education so that all of our students will be productive and successful citizens