

Portales Municipal Schools Student Academic Expectations

The mission of Portales Municipal Schools is to “Provide all students a quality education” so that “All students will be productive and successful citizens.” With the many distractions everyone faces today, the mission and vision is becoming much harder to accomplish. Today’s students are overwhelmed with information from the internet and television, and social media has replaced much of the interpersonal communications between individuals. Many of these distractions have created barriers that make teaching and learning a much more difficult task as teachers work to develop atmospheres of learning that can compete with all of these different distractions. Still, we at Portales Municipal Schools believe that in order to achieve our mission and vision, administrators, teachers, parents, and students must make high expectations a priority. To help accomplish these lofty goals, Portales Municipal Schools has developed the following regulations and rules. These rules are not intended as punishment for students, but as expectations that will drive students to reach deeper, soar higher, and achieve more.

Assignments and Homework

The development of study skills and self-discipline are integral and indispensable elements of a quality educational process. Assignments and homework will be provided to help students better develop study skills and self-discipline and as a means to allow for practice and retention of material. Homework is not punishment and should never be used as such. Classroom and homework assignments should be specifically addressed to the objectives of the instructional program, and, in addition, students should develop responsibility for actively pursuing knowledge without immediate supervision outside as well as within the classroom.

Students, regardless of their intellectual capacity, should understand that mastery of skills is not always possible within the time constraints of the classroom. Each student should leave the District with a firm foundation for pursuing knowledge and developing skills on an independent basis. Since a student cannot learn everything possible in an individual subject, students must develop skills necessary to use the foundation laid in school to learn how to learn and access information that will indeed make them life-long learners.

To that end, in order for teachers, students, and parents to understand what level of mastery a student has achieved, student work must be assessed through in-class and homework assignments. Completion of these assignments allows a student to show what he or she understands and helps the teacher to design future instruction. Regular formative and summative assessments along with completed assignments will provide information to parents, students, and teachers to determine a student’s strength and weaknesses for future instruction and assignments.

1. In-class and homework assignments must be turned in on time. Teachers will provide the date the assignment is to be completed and turned in. Late work will generally be accepted up to a maximum of five (5) days following the due date; however, a teacher may reduce the maximum number of days he or she provides to collect late work, but in no case will a teacher accept late work after five (5) days unless related to an excused absence or approved by the principal. Teachers will provide their assignment policy to

students in writing the first day of school. If a teacher decides to accept late assignments, a reduction from the total score will be made for each day the assignment is late until the fifth day. In 7th and 8th grades, late assignments may be accepted up to five (5) days after the assignment is due with a deduction of five percent (5%) of the maximum points possible for each day the assignment is late. (*ie: If an assignment is worth 100 points, 5 points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. After five (5) days, a zero (0) will become the final grade for the assignment. If an assignment is worth 50 points, 2.5 points will be deducted each day.*) No work will be accepted for a grade after five (5) days beyond the due date. (**Late work due to excused absence is noted below.**)

2. If a homework assignment is not completed by the due date because a student does not understand the assignment, the student should discuss the assignment with the teacher. The teacher should then provide the information the student requires. If necessary, the teacher may require the student to attend tutoring to provide the information the student needs. If additional instruction or tutoring is required, the teacher may waive the deduction of points from the grade if the work is turned in by a due date set by the teacher. Late assignments or homework should be questioned by the teacher. It is the teacher's and student's responsibility to ensure that missing assignments or homework is not due to a lack of understanding.
3. Assignments or homework assignments not completed by the due date because of excused absences, may be made up without loss of points provided that:
 - A. The student speaks to the teacher the day after the excused absence and obtains the assignment to be completed.
 - B. Students with an excused absence will be allowed two (2) days for every day missed to complete the assignment.
 - C. Students may be required to remain after school to receive instruction to complete the assignment(s).
 - D. Assignments not turned in by the third (3rd) day after the absence will have points deducted for each day late as explained in paragraph 1 above or as per the teacher's homework policy provided to each student at the beginning of the school year.
4. Students who have excused absences for three (3) or more days in a row may have a total of six days to complete the make-up work or meet with the school principal or counselor to create a plan that is reasonable to ensure the make-up work is completed in a timely manner without losing points. This plan may include before or after-school tutoring to ensure that proper instruction is provided to the student. A student involved in extracurricular activities who has an approved plan may not be penalized in that activity for failure to attend the entire practice or event.
5. Students who have prior knowledge of a planned absence for extracurricular activities, school activities, or family activities of three (3) days or more are expected to meet with their teachers to obtain their assignments in advance. These assignments will be expected to be turned in on the day the student returns to school. Otherwise, assignments will be expected to be complete and turned in as per paragraph 3 above.
6. Even though a student may have additional time to complete an assignment due to absence or the assignment being late, a zero (0) will be recorded in the grade book for that assignment. When the assignment is turned in, it will be graded and the zero (0) will

be replaced with the corrected grade. If the assignment is not turned in as required above, the zero (0) shall remain the recorded grade for that assignment.

Extra Credit

In-class and homework assignments are due on the due date. If all assignments are completed and turned in on time, a student should have no fear of failing a class. It is the responsibility of all involved including the teacher, the student, and parents to ensure that assignments are completed on time. Because assignments have a due date and there is an opportunity to complete and receive credit for late assignments, there is no need for extra credit assignments. Teachers will not provide additional assignments for extra credit. No extra credit will be provided for returning required documents, progress reports, etc. Teachers may not provide extra credit for providing supplies that are required of students in a class.

Teachers may provide extra credit questions or work within an assignment or assessment, ie: extra credit questions, extra credit essay answers, etc.

Junior High Promotion Requirements

Entering junior high can be a challenging advancement for many students. Students who are moving to the junior high from Lindsey-Steiner will see many similarities. However, students coming to Portales from other Districts with community schools may see real change. At Portales Junior High School, most students will attend classes with six different teachers throughout the day. This can be challenging as students must learn procedures and expectations for each. Even though, most expectations are the same. Students are expected to go to class prepared, with items that will be needed in the class including a writing instrument, paper, and the textbook if required. Students are expected to be ready to learn and prepared for class when the bell rings. Being on time to each class is also an expectation. Junior high offers more freedom and requires a more responsible attitude by our students. There is nothing wrong with having friends and visiting with others, but there is work to do that must be done on time and there are classes where everyone must be and they must be there on time. Although all of our teachers and staff realize that junior high students are not adults, the transition from a child to an adult begins in earnest during the junior high years. With growing up comes responsibility and more will be expected from students as the year progresses. Junior high will prepare students for high school and begins the preparation for college or employment.

To help better prepare students for the rigors of junior high classes and even more so for high school, several transitional rules will be placed upon junior high students that require more responsibility including earning points toward high school, being timely to class, and completing homework assignments.

Teachers realize that students may have difficulty in understanding some academic concepts. They are more than willing to assist students with additional instruction during class, before school, during lunch, or after school. Portales Junior High School offers tutoring every day after school with qualified teachers who are there to offer additional instruction or help with

homework. However, it is up to the student and the parents or guardians to ask for help when needed. Although our teachers will follow a student’s progress and offer additional assistance when they see a need, the reasons for failure to complete homework or other assignments cannot always be analyzed by teachers. Without bringing it to their attention, teachers may not know whether incomplete or missing work is due to a lack of understanding, a lack of responsibility, or defiance. This means, quite simply, students must communicate with teachers and teachers will communicate with students, and working together, students will learn better communications skills, learn to be more responsible, and be prepared to move to the next grade at the end of the year. Students who are failing may be required to remain after school for additional instruction or to complete assignments. Parents will be responsible for transportation for students who are required to remain after school in these circumstances.

To help better prepare students for the rigor and challenges of junior high and high school, in order to be promoted to 8th grade or to 9th grade, students must earn enough academic points for promotion. A minimum of 16 points must be earned to promote to the next grade. Courses and point values are described below.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|
| 7 th Grade English | 4 points | 8 th Grade English | 4 points |
| 7 th Grade Math | 4 points | 8 th Grade Math | 4 points |
| New Mexico History | 4 points | U.S. History | 4 points |
| 7 th Grade Science | 4 points | 8 th Grade Science | 4 points |
| P.E. | 2 points | P.E. | 2 points |
| Elective | 2 points | Elective | 2 points |
| | | Student Aide | 2 points |

All four (4) point classes equal two (2) points each semester. Physical Education and electives, including student aide, equal one (1) point each semester.

Please read the “Student Expectations” section of this document to become more informed regarding homework rules and Honors classes.

Honors Classes

Portales Junior High School offers Honors classes in select courses. Honors classes are not appropriate for all students. Students may request to be enrolled in Honors courses, but because the curriculum is intended to provide an increased rigor and be more challenging, students who wish to enroll in these classes must meet more rigorous enrollment requirements. Students enrolled in Honors classes are expected to maintain high academic standards. A student enrolled in an Honors Class must maintain at least a “C” average in the class. If a student does not have at least a “C” as a semester grade in an Honors class, the student will be disenrolled from the Honors class and enrolled in a regular class for the next semester.

Honors grades at Portales Junior High School are not weighted, but Honors classes are intended to provide a more challenging curriculum for students wishing to enrich their educational experience and become even better prepared to meet the rigors of high school. Students who are

eligible to enroll in an Honors Class may decline the opportunity and be enrolled in a regular academic course for that subject.

When scheduling students into Honors classes, the most recent PARCC scores will determine eligibility. SBA Science scores will be used in conjunction with PARCC scores for enrollment in 8th Grade Honors Science. The chart below describes enrollment criteria for Honors courses.

Junior High School Honors Classes*

| CLASS | OPTION 1 | OPTION 2 |
|--|--|--|
| Honors English 7 | PARCC ELA Level 4 or 5 | PARCC ELA Level 3 with scale score of at least 740 and teacher recommendation |
| Honors English 8 | PARCC ELA Level 4 or 5 | PARCC ELA Level 3 with scale score of at least 740 and teacher recommendation |
| Honors Geometry | PARCC MATH Level 4 or 5 | PARCC MATH Level 3 with scale score of at least 740 and teacher recommendation |
| Honors Algebra I | PARCC MATH Level 4 or 5 | PARCC MATH Level 3 with scale score of at least 740 and teacher recommendation |
| Honors Algebra (7th) | PARCC MATH Level 4 or 5 | None (No PARCC Scores, Proficient or Advanced equivalent from our of state assessment.) |
| Honors Science | PARCC MATH Level 4 or 5 PARCC ELA Level 4 or 5 SBA Science Level 3 or 4 | PARCC MATH/ELA Level 3 with scale score of at least 740, SBA Science Level 3 or 4 and teacher recommendation |

**Students enrolling without PARCC scores may be enrolled in Honors Classes provided:*

- 1. Students enrolling from out of state must present scores from a standardized State assessment indicating the student is proficient or above in the subject area in which the student wishes to enroll.*
- 2. Transcripts of a student with no PARCC or out of state standardized State assessments will be enrolled in a regular class; however, upon teacher recommendation and evaluation of transcripts from the previous school, with principal approval, the student may be placed in an Honors class.*

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 5th 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 (5th) unexcused absence occurs. You could also be contacted after a third (3rd) unexcused absence. However, a fifth (5th) 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 (10th) 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