

Compulsory School Attendance Policy and Procedures

Purpose: *In compliance with 6.10.8 NMAC, Raíces has established an Attendance Policy to address truancy and academic achievement. This policy aligns with the New Mexico Compulsory School Attendance Act, NMSA 1978 Section 22-12-1 et seq., which specifies that:*

- *Students between the ages of five (5) and eighteen (18) years of age are required to attend public school, private school, home school or a state institution.*
- *Parents are responsible for explaining a student's absence from school and only keep a student from school for excusable reasons.*
- *Requires schools to track and report unexcused absences.*
- *When students have accumulated five (5) unexcused absences, parents are required to meet with the school to develop strategies for keeping students in school.*

This policy defines absences, states the responsibilities of Raíces administration, teachers, parents, and students regarding school attendance, specifies the tracking process for excused and unexcused absences and outlines the steps the school will take in addressing unexcused absences.

Policy:

Raíces emphasizes consistent, on-time attendance and considers it crucial for the academic success of each student. Raíces will implement a comprehensive approach to address student attendance by creating meaningful school connections with students and their families, through caring, supportive and mutually-accountable expectations. A positive school climate, family communication, and a supportive approach will be implemented to prevent attendance issues from occurring.

With regard to reporting in tardy to school in the morning, if a child arrives late for school more than 3 times within a month, either the Principal or Director of Operations and Community Engagement will ask for an informal meeting with the parent/guardian to discuss the issue and the importance of arriving on-time so that the child is getting a full day of required instruction. If there is further tardiness, the Principal will request another meeting and require the parent to enter into a written contract to improve the student's on-time arrival. If the tardiness becomes habitual after taking these two steps, the Principal will use her discretion as to whether to report the case to local Office of NM Child Protective Services.

Students are required to attend all classes and to be present during all school scheduled events such as conferences, field trips, and any school gatherings during the regular instructional school day. Parents, families, and students are expected to work with Raíces to assure that attendance is a priority.

Attendance will be taken every instructional day for each student. Students missing up to fifty percent of an instructional day will be considered absent for one-half day, more than fifty percent of an instructional day will be counted as one full-day absence.

Raíces will acknowledge **excused absences** as illness, the death of an immediate family member, religious commitment, cultural observances, diagnostic commitment, doctor appointments, and extenuating circumstances as agreed to by the administration prior to the absences. All excused absences will include parent-signed documentation of the reason for a student missing school. Vacations are not excused absences. The school will limit the number of cultural observances as excusable absences to one event per semester.

Raíces will consider it an **unexcused absence** when the student has no allowable excuse for missing school or if the parent or guardian do not provide proper documentation for an excused absence.

Absences will be tracked and reported by the student's classroom teacher in the school's student information system. The office manager will be responsible for managing and following up with parents to determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused and will make a proper indication in the school's information system. The school will not use suspension or expulsion to address absences or habitual truancy and will make every attempt to keep the student in school by implementing interventions, in accordance with section 22-8-2 NMSA 1978, before the withdrawal of a student.

Attendance Policy Responsible Parties:

The Role of the Student - Raíces encourages students to make responsible decisions about their use of time, own their educational experience, and understand student attendance is crucial to their success.

- The student shall recognize the importance of regularly attending and being on time to school.
- Students shall be present in assigned or designated areas at all times.
- Students shall follow proper check-in/check-out procedures when leaving early or arriving late to school.
- Students shall obtain make-up assignments from the teacher due to absences and shall turn them in according to arrangements made with the teacher.

The Role of the Teacher/Advisor - Raíces teachers and staff will emphasize the importance of punctuality by beginning class promptly with meaningful instruction and by holding students accountable for following attendance procedures.

- Teachers shall keep an accurate roll of daily absences and tardiest and provide a report to the school office via the school's information system.

- Teachers will work with families and students who miss school to determine the reasons for student absence, to obtain a written excuse for any absence and to provide for make-up assignments.
- Teachers shall discuss attendance issues with students and families as they arise and work with the school administration if attendance does not improve.

The Role of the Parent/Guardian - Parent/guardian will acknowledge that they are subject to the following:

New Mexico Compulsory Attendance Law requires every school-age child to be in school. Parents/guardians are responsible for their children's regular school attendance and may be charged with a misdemeanor if they fail to ensure their student's regular attendance. Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school when an absence occurs within five school days of the absence.

- Parents/guardians should avoid interruptions of the academic year and plan medical appointments and vacations at times that will not require students to be out of school.
- Parents/guardians will show support regarding school policies and state law by expecting regular school attendance for student success and by attending any school meetings to student attendance.
- Parents/guardians shall contact the school office and notify the school of student's absence, in the case of illness or other legitimate reasons for absences, within five (5) days of the absence.

The Role of the Principal - The Principal shall ensure the school maintains an earnest and persistent effort to encourage and improve student attendance, provides a warm and welcoming environment for students and their families, develops incentives for consistent attendance, communicates attendance goals with students and families, and fulfills statutory requirements of the Compulsory Attendance Law.

- The Principal shall develop, in collaboration with school staff, an attendance program that communicates to parents the importance of attending school, to identify any barriers to school attendance and to develop intervention strategies to keep students in school.
- The Principal shall implement a student attendance incentive program that encourages attendance and provides meaningful incentives to students and families for consistent attendance.
- The Principal shall ensure the school provides opportunities for absent students to make up missed work.
- The Principal will make the determination of which cultural observances may be considered an excusable absence and limit each student to one observance per trimester. Cultural observances for which absences may be excused will be posted on the school website and in the monthly calendar postings in the school reception area and school newsletter.
- The Principal shall identify students with attendance issues and work cooperatively with parents/guardians and students to improve attendance.

- The Principal shall ensure the school maintains class attendance records in a verifiable manner and will report absences as excused or unexcused in the STARS system as required by the NM Public Education Department.
- The Principal shall provide a copy of this attendance policy to the NM Public Education Department's Health Education Coordinator or designated staff for approval.

The Role of the School Office

- The school office shall keep track of student absences and tardies on a daily basis and make phone calls home for any student whose absence is unaccounted for in advance.
- The school office shall verify excused and unexcused absences and resolve discrepancies in student attendance records through regular communication with families and the classroom teacher.
- The school office shall provide updated and accurate cumulative tallies of all student attendance data to students, parents, classroom teachers, and the Principal upon request. Tallies will be generated for classroom teachers to be included in student report cards.
- The school office shall provide check-in /check-out slips upon authorization by phone or in person by a student's parent/guardian

Procedures for Addressing Unexcused Absences:

If a student is absent, the school will call home within the first hour of school to determine the reason(s) for absence and if no contact is made, every day until parents are reached. All phone calls and attempts to contact parents and families will be documented in the student information system. However, if a student accrues **three (3) days** of unexcused absence, the school will contact the student's parent or legal guardian with the attendance concern and send home an **Attendance Letter** to clarify school attendance policy, document concern and offer support.

If the unexcused absences continue and reach five (5) days, a **Five Day Truancy Letter** will be sent to the student's parent or legal guardian informing them of the absences and requiring a meeting to discuss the issue in accordance with NMSA § 22-12-9. The student will be classified as a student in need of early intervention and the Principal in conjunction with teachers and parents will develop an intervention plan to improve the student's attendance. The Concilio de Padres (parents council) will also be consulted for input on effective attendance interventions in general once school commences.

If the unexcused absences continue and reach seven (7) days, a **Seven Day Truancy** certified letter will be sent home calling for another family meeting. The student will be placed on an **Attendance Contract** signed by the student, a parent or legal guardian, the student's classroom teacher, and the school administrator. The contract will include a plan identifying issues regarding why the student has been missing school and shall attempt to recognize environmental concerns that are keeping the student from attending school. Other forms of interventions can and will be offered to assist the family with the truancy issue.

Procedures for referral to the Juvenile Probation Office of the 3rd District Court:

If the student accumulates ten (10) or more unexcused absences, they are considered a “Habitual Truant”. In accordance with NMSA § 22-12-7, the school administration will be required to notify parents or legal guardians of such designation and complete a **Compulsory School Attendance Referral** to the Juvenile Probation office of the 3rd District Court for investigation that determines whether the student is neglected, the family in need of CYFD services or if the parent/legal guardian will be subject to criminal prosecution. The principal will make the referral and the Director of Operations and Community Engagement will track the paper work and stay in touch with the appropriate court liaison.

If after 10 (ten) consecutive days of absence with attempts to contact but no response from families, the school may withdraw the student from enrollment at Raíces, in accordance with NMSA § 22-12-9.

NMSA § 22-12-9-D: Enforcement of attendance law; habitual truants; penalty

If, after review by the juvenile probation office where the student resides, a determination and finding is made that the habitual truancy by the student may have been caused by the parent of the student, then the matter will be referred by the juvenile probation office to the district attorney's office or any law enforcement agency having jurisdiction for appropriate investigation and filing of charges allowed under the Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Charges against the parent may be filed in metropolitan court, magistrate court or district court. E. A parent of the student who, after receiving written notice as provided in Subsection B of this section and after the matter has been reviewed in accordance with Subsection D of this section, knowingly allows the student to continue to violate the Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be guilty of a petty misdemeanor. Upon the first conviction, a fine of not less than twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) or more than one hundred dollars (\$100) may be imposed, or the parent of the student may be ordered to perform community service. If violations of the Compulsory School Attendance Law continue, upon the second and subsequent convictions, the parent of the student who knowingly allows the student to continue to violate the Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be subject to a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500) or imprisonment for a definite term not to exceed six months or both.