

New Mexico School for the Arts
Head of School Report: August 2022
Report by Eric Crites

NMSA provides access to a rigorous mastery arts and academic high school education for youth with passion and aptitude in the arts, leading to post-secondary learning, careers in the arts, and lives that contribute to society.

Kudos

- Jesse Begay (12/Creative Writing & Literature) has been named one of five National Student Poets, representing the Southwest region. Jesse was selected from among 21,000 applicants. Interviews in the *New Mexican* and *Albuquerque Journal* will be forthcoming.
- <https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/santa-fe-student-receives-national-recognition-for-poetry/>
- The ArtsReach Team (Sativa Cruz, Fred Graham, Shayla Patton) has increased our enrollment to 337 as we start the new school year.

School Year Update

- We expect to receive state assessment data for SY21-22 in September (we received the raw scores for SAT before the summer break).
- In response to revised COVID guidelines from CDC, NM PED issued a memo on August 12 revising COVID-related requirements. A proposed revision of NMSA COVID policies will be presented to the Governing Council for consideration for approval. A summary of those proposed changes will be:
 - No longer require surveillance testing for staff who are not up-to-date on COVID vaccines (up-to-date=have received every COVID vaccine shot for which they are eligible based on age and health criteria).
 - End requirement that a student who is a close contact with a COVID-positive individual, is not up-to-date with vaccinations, and is asymptomatic either quarantine at home for five days or participate in test to stay.
 - No longer require test to stay.
 - No longer require five-day quarantine for staff members who are a close contact with a COVID-positive individual, are asymptomatic, and are not up-to-date with COVID vaccines.
 - Tie mask requirement to CDC Community Level for Santa Fe County (masks optional when Community Level is Low or Medium; masks required indoors when Community Level is High, in line with CDC recommendation).
 - Continue to recommend that a close contact be tested five days after exposure.
 - Recommend that a close contact wear a KN95 mask (provided by school) for 10 days following exposure.
 - Require testing for residential students before they return from Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring Breaks (tests provided to students to take home before leaving from break).
 - Consider requiring testing for students who will participate in a live performance involving close contact and increased respiration (dance,

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theatre, vocal, winds, etc.) if CDC Community Level in Santa Fe County is High (per PED recommendation).

- Continue to offer free COVID testing to students and staff. PED has shifted the full cost of tests to the schools, so we are also encouraging staff and families to request free tests available through the federal government and their insurance providers.
- Continue offering "COVID Leave" to staff who are absent due to vaccination, testing, quarantine, or isolation due to COVID (does not count against annual leave).
- In order to support the school's existing cell phone policy, all classrooms will implement an assigned phone pocket system for students to store their phones during class.
- This year, students will not be provided with access to a student WiFi network. Last year, we had issues with bandwidth and increasing concerns over disruptive and unhealthy phone use. This change is meant to maintain the focus of our school network resources on learning in the classroom.

Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Instruction/Equity

- NMSA's new cultural liaison, Jolene Vigil, started on August 10. She has a background in building programming for Indigenous youth in Northern New Mexico. Her introduction to students is attached.
- 15 faculty members participated in a cultural tour of Tsankawi, guided by Art Institute Board of Trustees member Elmer Torres, as part of the August inservice.
- Teachers spent time during inservice developing Project-Based Learning units and working toward standards-based grading—both equity-focused approaches.
- Faculty received training in leading Community Building Circles, which will be implemented during our expanded (40 minutes) advisories on Mondays. This process is a critical component of a Restorative Justice ecosystem.
- Rose B. Simpson delivered a moving, thought-provoking keynote address during our first in-person opening ceremony in three years.

Safety

- The Safety Committee continues to review critical safety procedures during monthly meetings.
- We are in the midst of a review of key security systems to ensure ongoing preparation for emergencies.
- Safety trainings were provided to all staff and students at the beginning of the school year, with an emphasis on exterior door security as well as emergency procedures.

Staffing

- The academic program is fully staffed.
- We are in the final stages of hiring a co-chair for the dance department, to work alongside co-chair Bernadette Peña.

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Jolene Vigil Introduction

Dear Students of NMSA,

My name is Jolene Vigil, I am the Cultural Liaison for the New Mexico School of the Arts. I am the former CEO/Executive Director for the Native Services Boys and Girls Club for the Pueblo of Pojoaque. Before Boys and Girls Club I worked as a liaison under the Department of Justice Youth empowerment program, where I opened the opportunity for youth ages 14-24 years to implement the first Tribal Youth Council. I assisted the youth in creating bylaws and programming that would benefit the youth in the community. The programming was sufficient to meet the needs of the youth in the tribal and non tribal community.

I was born and raised in Nambe Pueblo and Pojoaque Pueblo. Since I have lived in New Mexico my entire life I have witnessed the growth and evolution of diversity in the state. The cultural room will reflect the diversity of each NMSA student.

A survey will be conducted to understand the wants and needs of the NMSA students. The survey will be sent to each student and once the feedback is compiled I will meet with the students to create a foundation for what the cultural room will be. A student-led equity council will be established and will act as a unified voice for all students at NMSA. As the Cultural Liaison I will be working closely with all students at NMSA and its leadership. It is my pleasure to be a part of this new project and venture. I can be reached by email at jvigil@nmschoolforthearts.org.

Thank you,
Jolene Vigil, Cultural Liaison



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KURT STEINHAUS, Ed.D.
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

August 12, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Charter Leaders

FROM: Dr. Kurt Steinhaus, Cabinet Secretary, Public Education Department

RE: Updated Masking, Testing, Quarantine, and Test to Stay Requirements in Schools

In response to newly released guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) contained in the [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#), and a corresponding update to the [Public Health Emergency Order](#) from the New Mexico Department of Health on August 12, 2022, the New Mexico Public Education is updating the *COVID-19 Response Toolkit for New Mexico's Public Schools* as follows.

- The statewide requirement for school workers who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations to test for COVID-19 in schools weekly has been lifted. The decision for when and whether testing will be required is the determination of a local school district or charter school. The CDC suggests that local decision be guided by the local COVID -19 Community Level.
- The statewide requirement to quarantine for school staff and students who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccinations and who are exposed to COVID-19 has been lifted. The recommendation of the CDC is that close contacts of a positive case should wear a well-fitting mask and be tested. The decision for when and whether quarantine will be required is the determination of a local school district or charter school and should be based on the local COVID-19 Community Level.
- The statewide requirement for students and school staff to participate in the Test to Stay Program has been lifted. The decision for when and whether testing will be required is the determination of a local school district or charter school.
- The statewide requirement for mask wearing in schools was lifted last school year and will not be changed for the new school year. Mask requirements remain a determination of a local school district or charter school.

Schools, school districts, and charter schools drafting COVID-19 testing policies may wish to provide [diagnostic testing](#) for students and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 or who were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the school setting, or refer them to a community testing site, healthcare provider, or to use an at-home test. The CDC will provide up to 10 million tests per month nationally to schools for testing. The DOH Office of School and Adolescent Health will coordinate monthly requests for those tests.

At high [COVID-19 Community Levels](#), school districts or charter schools may wish to consider implementing screening testing for students and staff for high-risk activities (for example, close contact sports, band, choir, theater); at key times in the year, for example before/after large events (such as prom, tournaments, group travel); and when returning from breaks (such as holidays, spring break, at the beginning of the school year).

As schools, school districts, and charter schools are drafting quarantine policies, those who maintain quarantine requirements may also wish to consider offering a Test to Stay program. Further, while people exposed to COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine, the CDC recommends that they wear a mask for 10 days from exposure and to get tested on or after day 5.

Schools, school districts, and charter schools should put in place a core set of infectious disease prevention strategies as part of normal operations. The addition and layering of COVID-19-specific prevention strategies should be tied to the [COVID-19 Community Levels](#) and community or setting-specific context, such as availability of resources, health status of students, and age of population served. Enhanced prevention strategies also may be necessary in response to an outbreak in schools, school districts, and charter school settings.

In January 2020, the Public Education Department issued a memorandum on tribal consultation. LEAs must respect tribal sovereignty and adhere to the requirements of Tribal Public Health Orders and emergency declarations related to COVID-19. These requirements are to coincide with the model of school operation and masking requirements chosen by local authorities.

As a reminder, because of the continuing federal grant to the New Mexico Department of Health, weekly positive tests must still be reported in the DOH provider portal.

This memo is an amendment to the Public Education Department's *COVID-19 Response Toolkit for New Mexico's Public Schools* and remains in effect until such time as the Toolkit is updated to include the amended guidance. All other COVID-safe practices and requirements in the toolkit remain in effect, including the requirement for staff, contractors, and volunteers to isolate if sick with COVID-19.