~ TACA ~

TYRONE AREA CYBER ACADEMY HANDBOOK

PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND STUDENT TO TEACHER CONNECTIONS

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TYRONE AREA CYBER ACADEMY COORDINATOR

It is the policy of the Tyrone Area School District not to discriminate on the basis of sex, handicap, race and national origin in its educational and vocational programs, activities, or employment as required by Title IX, Section 504, and Title VI. Please direct questions about this policy to the Superintendent of Schools, at 814.684.0710 Ext. 4123.

Board Approved: 8/11/2026

Soaring Forward to Explore, Challenge, and Succeed

TASD Mission

We establish high standards of learning and expect all students to achieve. Our goal is to facilitate collaboration among staff, parents, and community to create an environment that supports, engages, and challenges students to achieve high levels of success.

TASD Vision

LEADERSHIP

- District leaders promote a culture of learning, support and monitor use of best practices, and provide opportunities for professional growth.
- District leaders facilitate collaboration among all members of the school and community.

CLIMATE

- Students are engaged. Teachers are motivating. Administrators are supportive. Parents and community members are involved.
- All members of the learning community feel safe, both physically and emotionally.
- Efforts and successes of students and staff are recognized and celebrated.

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

- High expectations are met by providing research-based, data-driven instruction that is aligned to the state standards.
- Curriculum and Instruction integrates technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Curriculum and Instruction prepares and inspires students for future endeavors.

STUDENTS

- Students take ownership of their learning through active participation.
- Students believe in themselves, put forth their best effort, and take pride in their abilities and achievements.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Parents, as the first and most influential teachers, are committed to their children's education.
- The district collaborates with local businesses and outside agencies to provide support and opportunities for students.
- All members of the school and community share the responsibility for student success through continued involvement and commitment to the educational process.

PERSONNEL

- Staff recognizes a shared responsibility for enforcing and modeling school rules and increasing student achievement.
- Professional Learning Communities collaborate to make data-based decisions and implement best practices to enhance student success.
- Staff effectively communicates with parents and community to support student success.
- Staff takes ownership for their professional growth.

Board Approved: 8/11/2026

Tyrone Area Cyber Academy Contact Information

District Administration

Mrs. Leslie A. Estep, Superintendent of Schools
Mrs. Kristen Pinter, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

TASD Cyber Academy

Mrs. Jessica Hetrick	Cyber Academy Coordinator	814-684-4240 ext. 3106 jmhetrick@tyrone.k12.pa.us
Mrs. Lynda Hoover	Cyber Academy Secretary	814-684-4240 ext. 3704 lahoover@tyrone.k12.pa.us
(New Hire)	MS Attendance Office	814-684-4240 ext. 3712 @tyrone.k12.pa.us
(New Hire)	HS Attendance Office	814-684-4240 ext. 3703 @tyrone.k12.pa.us
District Technology Help Desk (send screen shot of issue, if possible)		814-684-4240 ext. 3330 helpspot@tyrone.k12.pa.us

Other Important Phone Numbers

Middle & High School Main Offices		814-684-4240
Mr. Darin Ricciotti	High School Principal	Ext. 3701
Mr. Shane Cowher	Middle School Principal	Ext. 3712
Ms. Kristin Musselman	Elementary Principal	Ext. 2701
Mr. Lucas Rhoades	High School Dean of Students	Ext. 3728
Mrs. Amy Fleck	Middle School Dean of Students	Ext. 3714
Mrs. Lynda Hoover	High School Guidance Office	Ext. 3704
Ms. Brittany Russell	Middle School Guidance Office	Ext. 5226
Officer Steven Miksich	Chief of Police	Ext. 3724

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TYRONE AREA CYBER ACADEMY

This handbook has been written for a typical school year and is the Board-approved handbook for specific information regarding students enrolled in the Tyrone Area Cyber Academy (TACA).

While this handbook contains procedures that are specific only to students enrolled in the Tyrone Area Cyber Academy, students are also subject to applicable rules and regulations contained in the student handbook for their grade level and of that respective building. A copy of the appropriate handbook can be found on the district website. Failure to adhere to the policies and procedures within the TACA Handbook and the Parent/Student School handbook may result in a student's removal from the TASD Cyber Academy and/or discipline in accordance with either manual and the TASD School Board Policies.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

While the Tyrone Area School District continues to carry the belief that the interaction with professional educators truly extends learning to a higher level, we also recognize that there is value in offering different educational options, like distance learning. The Tyrone Area Cyber Academy (TACA) is an educational learning environment designed to meet the needs of students who desire to pursue their education in a non-traditional format and with the flexibility of when during a 24-hour period a student works and in what order of subject material. This educational program offers a distance learning option that includes a variety of interactions with professional educators, school counselors, and opportunities to interact with peers of the students' own ages.

Like the educational program of the Tyrone Area School District's traditional "brick and mortar" system, the learning environment of TACA is based on the Pennsylvania Academic and Pennsylvania Core Standards. This standards-aligned curriculum emphasizes the students' demonstration of mastering specific skills by engaging in an academic program that emphasizes proficiency in all curricular activities, whether the academics are acquired through distance or local learning.

Students participating in the Tyrone Area Cyber Academy (TACA) demonstrate their proficiency in a variety of ways and range academically from those who have a sound skill base in all areas to those who have been identified as having learning deficiencies. Like all students in the Tyrone Area School District, students enrolled in TACA have access to Tyrone teachers, counselors, and other support services and receive a Tyrone Area High School diploma upon graduation.

The Tyrone Area Cyber Academy (TACA) strives to engage students in a highly motivational, student-centered educational program that relies on basic educational principles while utilizing the latest information and communications technology to promote student achievement and foster higher order thinking and problem-solving skills. Students have a chance to master essential content skills and a chance to build a strong foundation to compete in the workforce of today and tomorrow.

GOALS

The goals of TACA (Tyrone Area Cyber Academy) are to:

- Offer a non-traditional learning environment to the students of the Tyrone Area School District that is aligned with the district's mission and vision statements.
- Provide students who desire a non-traditional learning environment with opportunities to acquire the education necessary to earn a diploma from the Tyrone Area School District.
- Provide students who select the Cyber Academy with balanced educational experiences that include synchronous and asynchronous academic programs, personal interactions with professional educators, and opportunities to interact with peers.
- Establish individualized learning plans for participating students that are consistent with the Pennsylvania Academic and Pennsylvania Core Standards and graduation requirements of the Tyrone Area School District.
- Provide students with a sense of ownership and responsibility for their academics.
- Utilize web-based learning and existing courses in addition to assignments, tests, products, and portfolios as means of assessing students' mastery of competencies to advance to higher learning.

APPLICATION/REGISTRATION/ORIENTATION

All students interested in the cyber program must complete the TACA Application to begin the acceptance process. After a student's application is approved, the Cyber Academy Coordinator will contact the family to schedule a meeting once the appropriate stakeholders determine in which courses a student will be enrolled. **To begin coursework, each student, accompanied by a parent/guardian, MUST meet with the TACA Coordinator to register.** At this time, the courses will be explained, the student will receive passwords, and the coordinator will give instructions about how to best use and navigate the program. **Every student must have an orientation, even if they have previously been a student of the TASD Cyber Academy (TACA).**

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Participation in the TACA requires organization, motivation, and the willingness to assume responsibility for one's education. Failure to adhere to any of the following requirements may affect the student's success in the program and/or may result in the removal from the Cyber Academy.

Full-time TACA students:

Attendance is recorded as follows:

- Attendance is recorded by attending and participating in homeroom each morning. The student **MUST** have their camera on and **MUST** participate in the homeroom session.
- The student must arrive on time for each homeroom session or attendance will not be counted for the day.

Part-time TACA students:

- Attendance will be taken by **following your in-building course schedule and attendance taken during advisory/homeroom.**

All TACA students are required to:

- Respond to **all** communications with TACA Coordinator and teacher(s) in a timely manner through VLN email as well as Tyrone school email.
- Access their electronic communication account daily
- View all VLN daily announcements
- Contact the appropriate TACA staff if support is needed
- Complete and submit one's own work
- Participate in phone conferences, virtual conferences, and/or in-person conferences when a weekly report indicates less than acceptable progress in the course and/or failing grades on assignments, tests, tasks, projects, etc.

The device issued by the Cyber Academy should NOT be used to access sites other than those used for curricular purposes.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between TACA students and the TACA staff is crucial for success. Students may contact Cyber Academy staff by e-mail, in-person, or on the phone. Failure to communicate on a regular basis will affect the student's success in the program and can result in poor performance.

All TACA students will have access to the TACA Coordinator and teachers via electronic communication (student TASD email account and VLN email account). Students are required to check their accounts each time they log in and out of their cyber courses.

In the event a student needs academic help, he/she should contact the teacher first. If the issue cannot be resolved by emailing the teacher; the student should contact the VLN homeroom teacher and the Cyber Coordinator. If the student has a problem with the Cyber program, has a schedule concern, or a general question about the TACA, he/she should contact the TACA Coordinator.

FOLLOW COURSE SCHEDULE

Students are required to follow the order in which assignments are listed. Students are not permitted to work out of order, unless instructed by a TACA staff member. A zero or a "missing" will be entered as the grade for all skipped assignments until the assignment is submitted and graded. All work completed through VLN is due every Friday by midnight. (Late work will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances which will be reviewed by the Cyber Coordinator.) If any courses are taken through Canvas, due dates will be listed on the course page.

GRADES

Teachers will update grades at least once per week and can be found on the VLN student gradebook. All work through VLN must be completed and submitted on Friday by midnight.

All midterm (interim) and final grades will be posted in Sapphire. Weekly grades can be found on the VLN student gradebook and will show their measure of progress in the class. Parents/Guardians receive an updated weekly progress report sent through email from VLN.

COURSE PROGRESS

VLN courses are organized by weekly modules. Each module must be completed by Friday at midnight. Students are not permitted to **work more than a few days ahead; the student must stay within the weekly module.**

CHEATING/PLAGARISM

It is unacceptable for students to receive credit for work that is not their own. Plagiarism occurs in a variety of ways. Consequences will be assigned to any student or students who deliberately cheat or cause others to cheat. The consequences will include, but are not limited to, a zero being given for the assignment (test, quiz, project, midterm, final, homework, etc.) where the cheating occurred as well as a possible disciplinary consequence. Depending on the weight of the assignment where the cheating occurred, the student may fail the marking period or even the entire course. The teacher and/or an administrator will notify parent/guardian and the appropriate school counselor as to what occurred. A student will be expected to redo the assignment (for NO credit) or take an alternate examination and turn it in to the teacher for evaluation.

Students having questions about the use of appropriate documentation for their work should speak with their teacher or the librarian. A research guide with MLA style is available for checkout from the library or can be accessed online.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, RESPONSIBILITY & EXPECTATIONS

Student success is greatly impacted by parent/guardian involvement. During orientation, parents/guardians will be shown how to monitor their student's progress. The TACA Coordinator can be contacted via e-mail, telephone, or in person. Progress can be assessed by the students and parents/guardians in both the Cyber programs and the Sapphire Community Portal and will be provided to students and parents/guardians by the teachers of the courses.

Primary Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian

Provide a safe and secure environment.

- This requires that the student has adequate adult supervision during the entire school day for the student to complete his or her work in a safe and healthy environment.

Ensure that the student is an active participant in school and is completing work in all courses, as assigned.

- Monitor student progress by checking online to see that assignments have been completed and submitted.
- Maintain an active, consistent internet account or be willing to transport a student to a location with active, consistent internet service so that the student can complete online assignments.
- Maintain timely communication with teachers, principals, counselors, and school officials.
- Respond promptly to all school communications (within 24 hours).
- Ensure that the student is attending school as per our attendance policy, **both in this handbook and in the Parent/Student Handbook for your child's grade level.**
- Expect students to spend 5-6 hours a day engaged in schoolwork and virtual lessons.

Ensure that student progress is satisfactory by checking grades on a regular basis, communicating with teachers, and attending parent-teacher conferences.

- Comply with state and local testing requirements.
- Ensure student participation in all online proctored local assessments.
- Ensure student participation in all required in-person state assessments.
- Provide transportation for students to state-mandated testing locations, allotting time for test completion.

CONTINUATION IN CYBER PROGRAM

Cyber students and their parent/guardian may be required to meet with the TACA Coordinator and other school staff when success is not being reached. At this time, a review of the student's performance will be assessed. Based on the review, it will be determined whether the student will continue in the Cyber program. All policies and procedures contained in this document will be reviewed. **Please note, if a student is not being successful, he/she may have to return to traditional, building-based classes prior to the end of the marking period.**

CYBER ATTENDANCE

Students enrolled in the Tyrone Area Cyber Academy are subject to the same attendance policies, requirements, and consequences as any other TASD student, with the exceptions explained below and in this handbook. **It is very important to read and understand the Attendance Sections in the Parent/Student Handbook of your child's grade level.**

Attendance is taken daily to ensure that students are working online. Students must attend school every day on the school calendar ***(found on the district website)***. Due to the nature of the cyber school model, instructional time and progress can be completed on any day (e.g. weekends, holidays, etc.) and at any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week as long as the deadlines are met. Students are expected to log into the online system each **scheduled school calendar day**. If attendance is not recorded on a school day as listed

on the school calendar, the student is marked absent.

As with all TASD students who are absent, if a TASD Cyber Academy student does not attend the morning homeroom session, and is counted as absent, parents/guardians must submit a written excuse (can be emailed or delivered to the Attendance Office secretary) **within three (3) days** of the absence. If a student misses homeroom due to a doctor's appointment occurring during the homeroom session, a ½ day absence will be recorded with the time of the appointment noted.
In the case of extended illness, the student should make arrangements with the TACA Coordinator to complete all work missed in a reasonable length of time. Failure to follow this policy may result in dismissal from the Cyber Program.

Below is a summary of the interventions for students who are frequently absent:

ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL POLICY

1. A student can miss a maximum of twelve (12) days of school, whether the absences are excused by a parental note, medical with a doctor's excuse, or an illegal absence. All excuses must be turned in within three (3) days upon return to school. The doctor's excuse is to indicate that the student had a medical condition that interfered with the student's ability to attend school on the date of the absence(s) in question**. At three (3) consecutive days and all absences beyond twelve (12) cumulative days shall require an excuse from a licensed physician or the absence will be considered unlawful or unexcused.** **NOTE**: For a medical excuse to be valid, a student must obtain and turn in a signed physician's note. Handwritten changes to the physician's note will not be accepted.
2. When a student misses ten (10) accumulative days, a meeting may be scheduled between the parents, principal, dean, school social worker, counselor and the teacher(s). If a student misses more than fifteen (15) accumulative days during the school year, the parents(s) or guardian(s) may be required to meet with the principal and dean. Any student missing more than fifteen (15) days is in jeopardy of not passing to the next grade.
3. A warning letter will be sent home to the parent/guardians of all students who have accumulated three (3) days of unlawful absences, and a Truancy Conference will be scheduled with the School Social Worker/ Cyber Coordinator. The Truancy Conference will address the student's violation of the Compulsory School Attendance Law.
4. The student will be asked to sign a Truancy Acknowledgment Form. As soon as the school issues a referral to the District Magistrate, a referral may be made to CYS (Children & Youth Services). A doctor's excuse will be required to be presented to the school after the referral is sent to the District Magistrate, in order for subsequent absences to be considered excused absences.
5. The student and family will be given a list of community service providers and their telephone numbers in the event they choose to seek assistance to resolve the problem.

More information about absences, loss of credit, loss of dance privileges, chronic absenteeism, consequences, and citations for violating the PA Compulsory School Attendance laws can be found in the Student/Parent Handbook for your child's grade (on the district website).

DISRUPTION OF INTERNET SERVICE

In the event that internet service is non-operational due to natural consequences (weather-related issues), it is the student/family's responsibility to notify the TACA Coordinator immediately so a record of your absence can be logged, and an alternative course of action can be developed.

In the event internet service becomes non-operational due to financial hardships (inability to pay monthly bill), absences will still accumulate, and all policies will be enforced. Students/families in this situation should contact the TACA Coordinator immediately to discuss solutions.

In the event that the student/family experiences hardware issues with the device supplied by the Cyber Academy, contact the **Technology Help Desk**. **This information can also be found in the directory on page 3 of this handbook.**

BORROWING/USE OF DISTRICT PROPERTY

The instructional materials, textbooks, equipment, and/or technology (i.e., computers, etc.) are, at all times, the property of the Tyrone Area School District, even when in the physical possession of the student and parent/guardian. If the student does not already have a school-issued device, the student and parent/guardian will sign an ***Equipment Agreement*** which will outline the specific regulations regarding this equipment. The school district will NOT provide "consumables" to the students at home (i.e., printer paper, ink, etc.).

Students are personally responsible for the textbooks, computer, and other school property issued to them. If these items are lost or damaged, students will be required to pay the pro-rated replacement fees. Textbook damage through misuse or carelessness will result in students paying for the damaged books. Any outstanding bills at the end of the year may result in the withholding of a student's report card and other materials. All financial obligations must be satisfied with the High School Main Office.

If a student is removed, returns to the brick-and-mortar building, leaves the district, or has completed all assignments at the end of the school year, the borrower (i.e., student/family) must return all equipment within **five (5) business days**. If the equipment is not returned or is damaged, the parent or guardian is responsible to compensate the district for the cost of the equipment, or legal action may be taken.

All students enrolled in the Tyrone Cyber Academy must be equipped with a high-speed internet connection. High speed internet is preferable to dial up, as many of the educational programs that the student will utilize are complex and require a high-speed connection to work efficiently and properly. Preparing for this connection in the home is the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian.

Unlawful Dissemination of Intimate Image

In December 2024, the Pennsylvania Crimes Code was amended (per Act 125 of 2024) to allow for criminal prosecution for "unlawful dissemination of intimate image" under Title 18 Section 3131(a) and (c). In addition, the amendment added definitions of "artificial intelligence," "artificially generated sexual depiction," "generative artificial intelligence," and photo editing software. The offense of "unlawful dissemination of intimate image" is defined as "with intent to harass, annoy, or alarm another, the person disseminates (1) a visual depiction of the current or former sexual or intimate partner in a state of nudity or engaged in sexual conduct; (2) an artificially generated sexual depiction of an individual." The amendment further grades the offense as a misdemeanor in the first degree when the person depicted is a minor and a misdemeanor in the second degree when the person depicted is not a minor.

Similarly, on May 19, 2025, the "Take It Down" Act was signed into federal law. This Act prohibits the publication of non-consensual intimate imagery including AI-generated deepfakes and requires websites and social media platforms to remove such content upon receiving notice of their existence. Violators are subject to mandatory restitution and criminal penalties, including prison, a fine, or both. Threats to publish intimate visual depictions of a subject are similarly prohibited under the Act and subject to criminal penalties.

As the grading of the offenses reflect, engaging in this type of conduct could have severe consequences for individuals.

WORLD OF LEARNING STUDENTS

Course Overview:
The *World of Learning* introduces students to the foundations of several world languages, cultural customs, and global communication skills. We will use live Zoom sessions to build language skills through discussion and collaborative activities, supplemented by assignments and projects.

Participation Requirements and Expectations:
To remain in the *Language* class, students must meet the following expectations:

- **Attend and participate in all live Zoom sessions.**
    - If a student misses 5 or more (unexcused) live Zoom sessions in one marking period, they will be removed from the course.
    - Absences must be communicated and approved in advance whenever possible. You must communicate with the Cyber Coordinator as well as your World of Learning Teacher.
- **Grading policy:**
    - Students must earn a grade of 80% or higher in their regular English class to be admitted into the foreign language.
    - Students must earn a grade of 73% or higher during their first year of language to remain in the class
    - Students must earn a grade of 80% or higher during their second year of the language to remain in the class
- **Engage respectfully and actively in all class activities.**
- **Complete assignments on time and communicate any difficulties to the teacher.**

Students participating in our World of Learning program must follow the same guidelines as listed in the Cyber student handbook as well as the Tyrone Middle School/High School handbook.

INTERNET REIMBURSEMENT

Parents/guardians will be reimbursed the sum of $20.00 for each month their student is enrolled in the Cyber Academy, for a total of up to $180 per year. It is important to note that this opportunity is for full-time cyber students only.

Internet Reimbursement Form for Tyrone Area Cyber Academy Students/Families

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Name of parent/guardian to be reimbursed: _____

Address for sending reimbursement check: _____

_____

_____

Parent/guardian phone number: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

*** Reimbursement checks must be cashed within 90 days***

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TACA HANDBOOK AGREEMENT

Student Section

By signing this form, I indicate that I have read and do understand the Tyrone Area Cyber Academy Handbook, which has been provided to me in my orientation meeting. I agree to follow the rules, policies and procedures contained in this handbook. I understand that if I violate these rules, I may face removal from the cyber program.

Name (please print):_____ Grade:_____

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Parent/Guardian Section

By signing this form, I indicate that I have read and do understand the Tyrone Area Cyber Academy Handbook regarding my son/daughter and my responsibilities as a parent/guardian of a student in the cyber program. I further agree that my son/daughter and I will abide by the regulations set forth. Violation of these rules, policies, and/or procedures may result in my son/daughter's removal from the cyber program.

Parent/Guardian Name:_____ Date:_____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____