

TAFT



NOTES FOR **STUDENTS** AND **PARENTS**
2016-17

TAFT

TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS NEW TO TAFT, **WELCOME.**

To those of you who know the school already, we hope some of the information in this booklet will be helpful to you as well. A great deal of specific information about the school can be found on the school's website: www.TaftSchool.org, and in the Taft Student Handbook (also available online). We have tried to answer here some of the questions most often asked in calls to our offices, and also have included an explanation of the various permissions and forms that you must send back to us before the start of the Fall Semester. We are sure that the information we have put together will raise some questions as it answers others, and we hope from reading this booklet you will have an idea of whom to call for further information. When in doubt, parents usually call the Dean's Office. We welcome your questions.

Sarah D'Annolfo
Dean of Students



STUDENT HANDBOOK

The Taft Student Handbook outlines the rules of the school and also contains information that is useful to both returning and new students. Please take time to read through the handbook during the next few weeks. You will probably find the rules and procedures outlined there somewhat daunting when viewed as a whole, but we hope you will find that most of them are sensible. While it is necessary for us to be quite specific in our expectations to avoid confusion, students who use common sense and treat others in the community with respect do not find the rules of the school difficult to follow. Students and parents can access the handbook through the school's website. If you would like a hard copy of the handbook, we would be happy to mail one to you.

PERMISSION FORMS

The enclosed permission forms allow parents to tell us their expectations regarding weekend destinations, travel in automobiles, participation in school trips and a few other activities. Parents and students should review these forms together so both will understand what they mean. We suggest parents photocopy these forms after you have filled them out and keep a copy for reference. For example, in April you may not remember whether you gave your daughter permission to drive with Aunt Mia and Uncle Bill. Please discuss all the permissions with your child and return the appropriate forms in the return envelope before **August 15**. If you need to make changes at any point during the school year, permission forms are available to download on the school's website.

AUTOMOBILE PERMISSION FORMS

The Automobile Permission Forms are different for boarding and day students. The blue Automobile Permission Form for boarders allows parents to identify people with whom they will allow their children to drive. You will note that there are three categories of "blanket permissions" and a space where you may, if you wish, list other drivers not covered by the blanket permissions. You will also note from reading this form that it is not possible to give students a blanket permission to drive with anyone they choose. Unless the driver is a family member or a Taft parent, each driver must be listed specifically on the form. If you list anyone under 21 years of age, proof of the driver's liability insurance and written permission from the driver's parent or guardian are required. Driving permission can never be taken over the phone. Please note that Uber's "Use of Services" does not allow students who are under 18 to ride via Uber unless accompanied by the account holder. Taft policy aligns with these expectations and so, unless your student is 18, s/he may not use Uber transport while at Taft.

As you will see from the handbook, boarding students are not permitted to have cars in Watertown. Boarding students are not permitted to have cars on or near campus under any circumstances. Should your child be found to have access to a car, disciplinary consequences may result. Seniors, at any point in the year and particularly in the spring, are subject to this rule.

The blue Day Student Driving Permission Form, in addition to requesting the names of those students with whom your son or daughter may drive, asks for information about cars that they might drive to school.

WEEKEND PERMISSION FORM

It is important for all parents to understand our weekend procedures and to consider carefully their responsibilities when hosting Taft students. Although a vast majority of Taft parents view seriously their obligation to provide supervision, our experience suggests that parents define the specifics of this obligation in different ways. Also, legal decisions in Connecticut and elsewhere have emphasized the accountability of parents who entertain adolescents in their homes. For specific information on underage drinking laws and parent liability in Connecticut, visit the website: www.settherulesct.org.

When parents give their children permission to visit the homes of Taft students, they generally do so with the expectation that there will be adult presence in the house throughout the weekend. In fact, this adult presence is required by Taft rules. It is not therefore appropriate to invite students to your home if you will be away. When you invite a student to your home, we expect that you will be taking responsibility for that student for the entire weekend. If you will be hosting someone for only part of a weekend, please make that clear to us when you call in an invitation. You will also note that it is not permissible for parents to rent hotel rooms and allow their children or guests to spend the weekend unsupervised.

If you are the parent of a boarding student, you will find a pink form in this package, which you should fill out with your child. The form asks you whether you would like to give certain blanket permissions allowing your child to leave Taft on weekends. Parents of day student should also read the information below carefully, for although your children obviously do not need permissions and invitations to leave campus, they will probably invite boarders home on occasion. All parents should understand our weekend procedures.

We require students to have permission from their parents to leave Taft on weekends. These permissions are often covered by one of the categories on the accompanying pink Weekend Permission Form. If you choose to give any or all of these blanket permissions, you do not need to write or call when your child is leaving for a destination covered by the blanket permission.

If your child signs out to leave for the weekend, we will send out an e-mail prior to the weekend stating our understanding of his or her plans. You do not need to respond to this e-mail unless you have questions or concerns about the information we have provided. Please make sure that you have provided the school with an up-to-date e-mail address.

If students are going somewhere other than their homes for the weekend, we require the host family to extend an invitation. Invitations may be called or e-mailed to the Dean of Students' Office (860-945-7800, deanofstudents@TaftSchool.org). We must receive invitations by noon on the Thursday before departure. On Long Weekends, we ask that parents call in invitations by Tuesday at noon. If Ms. Darcy McLellan, the assistant in the Dean's Office, Ms. Sarah D'Annolfo, or Mr. Tom Antonucci are not available when you call, you will be instructed to leave a message in our permissions mailbox. Please leave a phone number so we can get back to you if we have questions.

Because the school cannot be responsible for what students do when they are away on weekends, we feel that it is essential that you discuss your expectations with your child. Because no group of teachers or parents would probably agree on what constitutes appropriate behavior in the homes of Taft students, it is important for you to discuss these matters with your child. For example,

- ▶ If you have given your child blanket permission to go to the homes of Taft students, do you want your child to call you whenever leaving school to let you know of weekend plans?



- ▶ Do you approve of your child riding with Taft students or their friends while away on weekends? Our Automobile Rule specifies with whom students may ride when leaving from or returning to campus, but cannot cover what is permissible after students have arrived at the homes of their hosts.
- ▶ What are your expectations regarding the use of alcohol by your children and their guests in your home and in the homes of other students?

The last question is a timely one because of a current program in the state of Connecticut aimed at educating parents about hosting laws and underage drinking laws. For more information, please visit the website: www.settherulesct.org.

We do not mean to sound overly alarmist or legalistic about this issue, but it is clear that many parents to whom we have spoken about the use of alcohol do not fully understand their liability. Parents should acquaint themselves with the laws and legal precedents of their own states.

We also hope parents will endorse Taft's rules concerning drug and alcohol use as both can and do harm to developing adolescents. We encourage you to call host parents or the parents of your guests to discuss with them any of the issues we have raised. The Taft Directory will contain addresses and phone numbers, so we hope you will make these contacts.

In reading the Student Handbook, you will note that our procedures regarding student conduct are, of necessity, quite precise. Certainly parents do not need to be as specific as a school must be in setting guidelines for students, but a clear understanding of your expectations will help your children appreciate their responsibilities while away on weekends and will help them understand better the need to hold themselves to high standards of personal conduct no matter where they are, at school or away. When parents allow their weekend visitors to behave irresponsibly, it can be difficult for these students to make the transition back into the Taft community when they return. Carefully planned and responsible weekends, on the other hand, can add a valuable dimension to their Taft experience.

STUDENT HANDBOOK AGREEMENT FORM

All students must sign the upper portion of the yellow Student Handbook Agreement Form, as must one of their parents or guardians. The lower portion of the form applies only to those students who will be 18 before June of 2017. Since all of those who have reached 18 years of age are adults according to Connecticut state law, students must also sign the bottom portion of the form if they will turn 18 during the course of the school year. If your child is 18 at the time you receive the Student Handbook Agreement Form, Student Activity & Release Form, and the Enrollment Contract, he or she should sign both the upper and lower portions. Students who turn 18 between the time they return this form and the opening of school must come into the Dean's Office immediately upon returning to school and sign the lower portion of the form. The Dean's Office will ask students to sign their Student Handbook Agreement Form, Student Activity & Release Form, and the Enrollment Contract as they reach 18 during the course of the year.

STUDENT ACTIVITY & RELEASE PERMISSION FORM

This form is required for all students. By signing this form, you give permission for your child to take part in any and all activities sponsored by the school. As is the case with the Student Handbook Agreement Form, students who have reached 18 years of age must sign the bottom portion of the form.

BLUE CARD

This card contains a school calendar and important Taft phone numbers. Please refer to the most up-to-date calendar on the school website.

SPENDING MONEY

Being away from home provides the opportunity to discuss with your child what financial needs are likely to arise and then to develop a reasonable budget. We strongly discourage students from keeping more than a minimal amount of spending money in their rooms at school. At the beginning of the year, new students will be issued their own personal debit card, which will be used for most school purchases and allowance withdrawals. Returning students are not issued a new card and should bring their previously issued card back to school in September. Books and basic necessities—supplies, stationery, snacks, etc.—can be purchased with this card. The Business Office recommends that parents make an initial minimum deposit of \$1,500 (seniors/Pg's), \$1,000 (uppermids, mids and lowermids) and \$750 for day students. Debit card readers are available in the School Store and Business Office so that students can check the balance of their account. Certain other expenses, such as prescription drugs, lost athletic equipment or damages caused by the student, will be billed directly to the student's school account. Debit card accounts work in the same way as a traditional checking account. A positive balance must be maintained in the account in order for your child to make purchases. It is the responsibility of the students and their parents to ensure that appropriate funds are available in their accounts for incidental expenses. The school will not loan any funds to students for the purposes of replenishing debit card accounts. Many parents also open bank accounts in Watertown for their children and give them the responsibility of buying plane tickets, clothes, etc. The Business Office sends a separate mailing with details about debit cards. We have a Wells Fargo ATM machine in the main building.

TELEPHONING TAFT

The main switchboard number is 860-945-7777. After business hours, until 11:00 p.m., you can call the Duty Office at 860-945-7800. In case of an emergency, the Campus Safety Office can be reached 24 hours a day at 860-945-7789.



WHERE TO GET **HELP**

FACULTY ADVISOR

New students are assigned temporary faculty advisors for the first three weeks of school. At the end of three weeks, new students will have the option of selecting a different advisor if they choose, at the same time returning students select advisors. During the first few weeks, an advisor is usually the best place to start if you have a question or concern about any aspect of your child's life at Taft. A space will be left on the Blue Card for the advisor's name and phone number.

CLASS DEANS

Class deans monitor the academic progress of students. Class deans make an effort to get to know students in their class and try to help them deal with any problems that arise. Six times a year, class deans convene all of the teachers who teach students in their class to discuss each student. Deans report to parents in writing at the end of each semester—more often if they feel it necessary. Students will be told when they arrive in September which dean will be working with them. Contact your child's class dean if you have questions about your child's academic progress.

<i>Lowermids</i>	Mr. Bob Campbell	860-945-7745
	Ms. Caitlin Hincker	860-945-7914
<i>Mids</i>	Mr. Phillip Koshi	860-945-7819
	Ms. Lindsay Leal	860-945-7841
<i>Uppermids</i>	Ms. Shannon Guidotti	860-945-7831
	Mr. Ozzie Parente	860-945-7838
<i>Seniors</i>	Mr. Jack Kenerson	860-945-7734
	Ms. Susan McCabe	860-945-7869

DEAN OF STUDENTS

For questions about student life, weekend permissions, disciplinary cases (major or minor) or school rules, call Ms. Sarah D'Annolfo, 860-945-7733, or Mr. Tom Antonucci, 860-945-7728, in the Dean's Office. As mentioned at the beginning of this booklet, we can usually either answer your questions or direct you to the appropriate person who can.

DEAN OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

The Dean of Academic Affairs, Mr. Jeremy Clifford, 860-945-7845, is available if you have questions about course changes, academic programs or graduation requirements.

COLLEGE COUNSELING

Ms. Alison Almasian, 860-945-7732, is responsible for the College Counseling Office. During the second semester, parents of uppermids will begin to receive information from Ms. Almasian and will be invited to participate in an informational program at Taft in the winter. This office can also answer questions about College Board examinations.

HEALTH CENTER

Questions about medical services should be directed to the Martin Health Center, 860-945-7762. The school physician, Dr. Diane Fountas, keeps regular hours to treat students. The Health Center staff can arrange appointments with dentists, orthodontists, optometrists, dermatologists and other specialists when necessary, but recommends that routine appointments be scheduled while students are at home on vacations. More information can be found on the school website.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Taft offers a number of services for students. School counselors Rachel Jacobs, Ph.D., Lauren Henry, LCSW, and Jonas Katkavich, Psy.D., are available to students. Questions about counseling services at Taft should be directed to Rachel Jacobs at 860-945-5937.

MOORHEAD ACADEMIC CENTER

The director of the Moorhead Academic Center, Mr. Jon Willson, 860-945-7724, is available if you have questions relating to the learning process, study strategies, time management/organizational skills, tutorial assistance or standardized testing.

TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Michael Blomberg, 860-945-7721, can answer your questions about transportation. If there is sufficient demand, the school provides transportation at students' expense at the beginning and end of breaks during the school year. Transportation can be provided to bus terminals, airports and train stations in the greater Waterbury, Hartford and New York City area. Limousine and other local transportation companies are also available to transport students. Some of these companies are listed on our website. Students will be informed about how to sign up for transportation about ten days before each vacation. In case of late transportation changes—missed flights, for example—contact Mr. Blomberg or the school Duty Office at 860-945-7800.

ROOMING

Ms. Erin Duffy and Mr. Casey D'Annolfo, the directors of Residential Life, handle room assignments. Rooming lists are usually finalized the last week of August. We will send students email confirmation of their room assignments; you should receive notification by August 25.

PACKING LIST

Parents and students often have questions about what to bring to school, so we have developed a packing list. This list is more of a guideline than a list of required items, but we hope it will be helpful. You can find this list at www.TaftSchool.org/students/deans.aspx.

INFORMATION FOR DAY STUDENTS

Day students move daily between the community at Taft and home, two distinct environments in which adults sometimes have different expectations. Although day students sometimes feel that they would enjoy being boarders and living with their friends away from home, boarders envy the ability of day students to live at home and come and go as they please. Day students may feel that they cannot establish the same kind of friendships that often exist between roommates, but boarders miss the contact with friends at home and the full refrigerator that sits in the kitchen.

Some day students involve themselves deeply in the school and choose to spend a great deal of time here. For others, ties in the local community remain the primary focus. An important part of each day student's experience at Taft is finding a comfortable balance between these two worlds.

Day student parents are sometimes surprised by the amount of time their children spend at Taft. You may find that some extracurricular activities meet after dinner in the evening, and if your son or daughter is involved in a theater production, final week rehearsals will almost certainly be after dinner. Occasionally, special events such as class dinners, concerts or plays will be held in the evening. Some day students need to use the library in the evenings when they have papers and research assignments due. Adding to this confusion is the fact that student organizations do not always plan very far ahead, resulting in little warning about evening activities. We understand that for those day student parents who live far away, the schedule can be difficult. Usually students know in advance what their evening schedules look like, but the information can be a little slow in getting back to their parents. We will do everything we can to minimize "surprises." An online calendar allows parents and students alike to be up to date on what is going on at Taft. This can be accessed through the Taft website.

Some of the information enclosed—weekend and permissions procedures particularly—apply mostly to boarding students. We encourage you also, however, to read over that information because you and your child should discuss your expectations when boarders visit your home. We would primarily like to call your attention to several rules and procedures involving day students. These procedures are outlined in the enclosed Student Handbook, but we feel some points are worthy of special attention.

PARKING AND DROP-OFF AREAS

The area of the Main Circle in the front of the school closest to the building is reserved for day student parents who are picking up or dropping off their children. Although parking is prohibited in this area, our security staff does have some difficulty keeping it clear. If you will be at the school for any length of time, please park in the lot across the street. The reserved area should be used only for dropping off and picking up students. Many parents use the Headmaster's Circle to pick up their children at the end of the day. This circle—actually it is a bit more like a square—is on your left as you come in the main entrance.

DRIVING PERMISSIONS

Day students who have driver's licenses may drive to school. They may drive other Taft students providing that written permission from both the driver's parents and the rider's parents is on file in the Dean's Office. The driver must also provide proof of liability insurance and meet state licensing requirements. A photocopy of the front page of your insurance form is sufficient, or you may wish to ask your insurance agent for a certificate of insurance. We cannot permit

day students without appropriate permission forms on file to drive other students to and from school functions held either at Taft or at some other school unless they are accompanied by a parent, a faculty member or an adult approved by name. It is the responsibility of each student to know what permissions are on file.

CAR POOLING

A number of students pool rides to school. If you would like to know which Taft students live near you, please call the Dean's Office assistant, Ms. Darcy McLellan at 860-945-7717, after August 25.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Because some day students live a considerable distance from school while others walk across the street to go to class, it is not possible for us to determine when day students should stay home or come to school late due to snowfall. Please use your discretion in deciding whether it is possible to get to school on days when snowfall is considerable. As Taft has hundreds of boarding students and most of the faculty live on campus, we hold classes regardless of the weather. When your child cannot get to school, please call the Duty Office. Also, if a bad storm starts during the day, feel free to pick up your child whenever you think it wise to do so. Day students who leave early should stop by the Dean's Office to let us know that they will be missing class. If you feel that it is safer for your child to stay over at school, they may do so by going through the appropriate sign-in process in the Duty Office.

ILLNESS

We request that parents call the Health Center at 860-945-7762 by 8:30 a.m. on days when illness prevents a student from attending school. Permission for absence from school for any reason other than illness must be requested in advance through the Dean's Office.

CURFEW

Lower school day students are generally not allowed to remain on campus after 8:00 p.m. on school nights unless they have obtained permission from a faculty member to stay later. Upper school day students are generally not allowed to remain at school after 10:15 p.m. on school nights, and they should not arrive at school earlier than 7:00 a.m. They may remain at school after 10:15 p.m. only in the case of special social activities or extracurricular responsibilities. On weekend nights, day students are permitted and encouraged to stay on campus until check-in, which is usually at 11:30 p.m. on Saturday nights. Day students may not stay overnight at Taft unless prior permission has been obtained from the Dean of Students; however please know that permission will be granted under special circumstances. Due to the limited amount of space available in student rooms, stays of longer than one night's duration are rarely permitted.

MEALS

Day students are expected to eat lunch at school, and they are invited to eat dinner here. Day students who remain at school for dinner on nights when the school *has sit-down dinners must be properly dressed. Please see the Student Handbook for formal dress requirements.*

SPECIAL HOLIDAYS

During some years the headmaster declares a surprise holiday. These days are used for celebration or to give both students and faculty a break. If the holiday is called after day students have left for the day, an e-mail blast will be sent to all day students and parents to announce there will be no classes the next day. Parents who have any questions about the validity of this windfall should call the school Duty Office (860-945-7800) and speak with the faculty member on duty.



FA

Finally, new students should note that Headmaster Willy MacMullen, the class deans, the deans of students and many other members of the faculty will be available in Centennial Courtyard between 1:30 and 2:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 7th, to meet new students and their parents. This informal reception will be followed by some brief remarks by Mr. MacMullen at 2:45 p.m., after which new student orientation will begin. We look forward to meeting you on opening day and assisting you in any way we can throughout the year.



TAFT

THE TAFT SCHOOL

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