PreK-5 Virtual Learning Handbook for Families

City Schools of Decatur created a virtual learning plan based on survey data from students, parents, and teachers. It is research-based, and was made in an effort to ensure high-quality instruction for students. The guidelines set forth in this document will not only ensure students learn and experience success, but will also help to provide balance between academic growth, social and emotional development, and the overall well-being of our students.

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Foster Engagement and Connection

We believe in the importance of creating a sense of belonging, building positive relationships, and ensuring that students feel "seen," welcome, and wanted in the virtual classroom. We will achieve this through frequent check-ins, creating opportunities for choice and voice, and through our support for the emotional well-being of students, staff, and parents.

Be Equitable

In establishing a sense of belonging and anti-racist practices, we believe it is important to embrace cultural perspectives and experiences within all of our classrooms, to be equitable in our teaching, and to ensure everyone has the tools and resources they need to be successful.

Centralized and Simplified Presentation

Learning in an online environment can feel, at times, overwhelming. Therefore we believe in the simplicity of presenting information on one platform, limiting the number of digital tools students engage with, and providing and following consistent schedules.

Communicate Expectations Clearly and Directly

Every student is capable of experiencing success regardless of where learning takes place. However, we believe it is more important than ever to have open lines of communication with our students and parents, to ensure students are given instructions that are clear and easy to access, and to provide frequent feedback, in order for them to excel in an online learning environment.

QUICK TIPS

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Create and Maintain a Consistent Schedule

A healthy routine that includes physical activity/exercise, quiet moments, and time for snacks and refueling.

Find a Good Space for Learning

Identify a specific area for learning in your home with minimal surrounding distractions.

Stay Involved and Engaged in the Learning

Begin and end the day with a check-in. Ask about what classes, assignments, or assessments are lined up for the day, and if any help is needed. At the end of the day help them to reflect on their learning by asking questions, such as: what was a success or what could go better tomorrow? Specific questions like these not only help your child process the day, but also help them to develop life, executive functioning, and time management skills.

Keep that PMA! (Positive Mental Attitude)

Mindset matters, and modeling how to manage emotions can help your child learn how to practice healthy coping mechanisms.

Encourage Exercise and Physical Activity

Being at home all day can set us into a habit of a sedentary lifestyle. Children, and adults, need time everyday to engage their minds, as well as their bodies. In addition to participating in their Physical Education classes, children benefit from gross motor movement activities like riding bikes, going for walks, or playing catch. On rainy days, consider having your child participate in helpful household jobs that foster movement.

Communicate

Teachers will send out weekly newsletters, and if there are areas where you or your child needs support, please reach out to ask. Stay in contact with your child's teachers and school counselors. If you have concerns, please let someone know.

KEY DEFINITIONS

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Virtual Learning

Live: Learning facilitated by a teacher. It includes a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning and may include classroom meetings, whole group sessions, small group sessions, and individual check-ins.

Synchronous: Learning that happens in real time at a specific time. Methods include video conferencing, webinars, live chatting, and live-streaming.

Asynchronous: Learning that does not happen in real time. It maximizes flexibility by allowing a student to work at their own pace, and includes various forms of digital and online learning such as pre-recorded video lessons, slide shows or project- and game-based learning tasks.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL): Lessons and a curriculum for SEL have been adopted from the SEE Learning program through the office of Equity and Student Support. Lessons will focus on social emotional learning and engagement.

Wellness Wednesday: A district-wide initiative that will provide lessons on topics such as equity, wellness, social emotional learning and increasing engagement. The Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum and framework comes from Emory University's SEE Learning program.

DAILY SCHEDULES

Our goal for virtual learning will be to mirror a typical in-person school day as closely as possible. Based on research and virtual learning best practices, we have developed district-wide schedules that are organized and structured, and that provide students with opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Having students follow along with a typical school day not only creates a sense of accountability, but enhances learning, helps build a sense of community, and is essential in eliminating stress on students, and teaching them to become independent and engaged learners.

Please note that the schedules provided herein are a sample of the typical day. More specific schedules, as well as the schedule for Wellness Wednesday, will come directly from your child's teacher.

PK Schedule   K-2 Schedules   3-5 Schedules

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ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT DELIVERY

We will use Google Classroom to allow us to centralize all information and activities for students. We will use research-based best practices for delivering content and for keeping students engaged in their learning. Grade- and subject- alike teachers will plan collaboratively to ensure all students are learning priority content and have opportunities for enrichment, remediation, and required services as needed.

Curriculum and Content Delivery

All teachers will utilize Google Classroom for organization, announcements, and presentation of instruction. Each Friday, families will receive an overview of the week including:

- The learning targets
- All needed login information
- Needed materials for off-screen activities

Our Learning Plan is designed to keep students engaged so they can learn and grow, while also affording them meaningful opportunities for connection and community. We want to provide opportunities for students to read, write, share ideas, explore, create, play, and move. With that, homeroom teachers will formulate a mix of synchronous and asynchronous lessons around reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. Special subject teachers will provide subject-related activities. Assignments will have a balance of on-screen and off-screen tasks that help connect to previous learning and the current curriculum.

- All live sessions will be recorded by the teacher and posted in Google Classroom. When live instruction is used to teach new content, sessions will be recorded and will be posted within 24 hours for students who could not attend live sessions. Students are not required to have their cameras on during live sessions. Teachers will record the sessions regardless of whether the student has the camera on.

Additionally, learning will follow the district-wide pacing and will use the IB Units of Inquiry or EL Core Practices to frame instruction.

In the first 10 days of school, teachers will:
- Focus on building community
- Teach technologies, digital citizenship, time management, and organization
- Teach classroom expectations & procedures
- Coach students on being accountable for their own learning

Communication
- All announcements and assignments will be posted in Google Classroom.
- Weekly newsletters to families with preview of upcoming/current learning targets, due dates, and highlights from the previous week.
- Teachers will respond to parents within 48 hours.
- Shortly after virtual learning begins, parents/guardians for whom we have contact information in Infinite Campus will receive an invitation to accept guardian summaries from Classroom. We encourage all parents to accept these summaries, which include information on upcoming work, missing work, and announcements. Additional information about the summaries is here.

SUPPORTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

In addition to providing well-rounded academic opportunities, we will continue to provide students with a sense of community and normalcy within a structured school day. We want to ensure continuity in our planned learning program. And, through both synchronous and asynchronous lessons, special attention will be given to the teacher/student connection. Teachers will focus on increasing accountability and engagement, building peer relationships, and letting our students know that we care about them.

Other strategies for supporting student engagement and social emotional learning include:
- Using culturally responsive strategies that celebrate diversity and encourage inclusion of all students.
- Setting and maintaining a positive tone from day one
- Seeking periodic feedback from both students and parents
- Scheduling frequent check-ins with students
- Providing growth-focused feedback

- Allowing students multiple opportunities to ask questions
- Ensuring communication is personal, polite, positive, and professional.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

Assessing students through multiple means helps teachers check for understanding, differentiate instruction based on student needs, and provide growth-focused feedback. Together, assessment and feedback ensure accountability and create opportunities for growth and success. You can expect your child's teacher to provide clear expectations, offer regular descriptive feedback, and provide opportunities for reflection. When students are not being successful, teachers will communicate with you in a timely manner to discuss the best way to address those issues.

FAMILY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Due to the developmental stages of our district's youngest learners, parents may need to assist their children with virtual learning. For example, students may need assistance with logging into devices and various applications, troubleshooting technology issues, understanding directions, and reviewing feedback from their teacher. As the school year progresses and your child becomes more familiar with the tools and routines, they should be able to be more independent. In the meantime, some suggestions for how to set your child up for success in an at-home learning environment may include:

- Creating a comfortable place for your student to work with the least amount of distraction as possible.
- Ensuring your home has quality wifi, and reaching out to the district if support is needed.
- Establishing routines and expectations for your child.
- Reading all communications from the teacher, including announcements and feedback to students. Likewise, reading all communications from the district and the school will provide vital information and lessen frustration.
- Encouraging your children to attend all online sessions and finish all assignments on time.
  - Reviewing work checklists and doing quick check-ins to ensure students are on task, have completed assignments, or understand expectations.

- ○ The goal is to teach students to be independent and reflective learners.
- Watching short, pre-recorded parent orientation videos supplied by the school/district on utilizing/navigating all digital resources and ensuring a successful at-home learning experience/environment
- Reaching out to the teacher if your child is unable to participate in distance learning due to illness.
- Helping students abide by digital citizenship guidelines.

If you would like even more tips for creating a positive learning environment at home, please visit the Virtual Help and Knowledge Center Website or reach out to your child's teacher.

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

It is important that, just like in the classroom, students commit to doing their best work, exhibit their best online class behavior, make sure to follow all established classroom agreements and procedures, and be open to feedback. To meet these expectations, students must:

- Keep cell phones, other devices, and distracting materials out of reach during virtual school.
- Follow the class schedule, do classwork daily, and complete/submit assignments on time and according to procedures established by the teacher.
- Check Google Classroom and, in upper elementary, CSD email daily.
- Use Chrome as your internet browser
- Read all weekly communications and announcements, as well as feedback on completed assignments.
- Watch all posted videos in their entirety, pausing and taking notes where appropriate.
- Attend all morning meetings, small group sessions, and individual meetings, as well as request additional 1:1 meetings using the established sign-up schedule.
- Join live sessions on time and be prepared with learning materials needed for the day.
- Keep computers charged, and have school supplies available and in a consistent place.

- Be courteous and respectful, and adhere to all digital citizenship guidelines when participating in online learning modules, and follow expectations around chatting appropriately, commenting, and participating.
- Ensure communication with teachers and peers is personal, polite, positive, and professional.
- Reach out to ask any questions or request help and support, and communicate technology issues or confusion about assignments.
- Adhere to academic honesty guidelines, ensuring all work is original and representative of understanding.

Additional tools for success will be provided directly to students during the beginning weeks of school.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

All lessons and classroom communications will be posted in Google Classroom. Google Meet will be used for synchronous instruction, and G Suite tools designated by the teacher will be used for assignments. Teachers and students will also use district-provided email for communication and feedback. We encourage families to visit https://virtual.csdecatur.net for additional information.

Students may use family-owned equipment or borrow a CSD-owned Chromebook to access virtual learning. CSD highly recommends family-owned equipment be a Chromebook, Linux, macOS, or Windows device; Android and iOS tablets and phones may not be able to provide full access to CSD virtual learning. If you choose to use your own device, make sure that it includes the ability for students to record audio and video. We also highly recommend students using family-owned devices access CSD virtual learning via the Chrome web browser, and that students log into the browser using their CSD G Suite account with sync turned on (to benefit from extensions and other enhancements pushed out for users).

It is important that students have access to quality internet, as well as basic classroom supplies and materials for their daily lessons. Hands-on materials and resources will be provided to supplement offline work.

Families may request to borrow a CSD Chromebook and/or hotspot via the Virtual Learning Readiness Form, which will remain open until Wednesday, August 12. After August 12, a request form will be available on the CSD Virtual Learning website.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Whom do I contact if I have a question?

Your first point of contact should be classroom teachers or school counselors. If you have a technology related issue, we recommend first notifying the teacher so they can request support from the technology team. This way, the teacher is also aware of the student's technology difficulties. If necessary, families may submit a technology support ticket themselves via the Virtual Learning Site's "Tech Help!" button.

How will the school ensure that my child has continuity of learning?

District administrators and teacher leaders have worked closely to finalize a distance learning plan that will ensure continuity of learning. Using Google Classroom, Meet, and other technology platforms, like email and video conferencing, our teachers will remain in contact with every student with an open line of communication to parents. There will also be information on the district website concerning each grade level/subject standards and learning focus. If you have questions or concerns about what your child is learning, the teacher is always the first point of contact.

How will I know what my child is learning?

If you have questions or concerns about what your child is learning, the teacher is always the first point of contact. You can also log into Google Classroom alongside your student to look at recent and upcoming course materials.

Will my child be online all day?

No! Learning will include a blend of online and offline learning opportunities. There will be a mix of live sessions with teachers as well as work time to be completed asynchronously. Students should still take breaks to move, read, and get outside.

Will my child receive grades during virtual learning?

Yes. Students will have formative and summative assessments.

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Will my child have the opportunity to get help from the teacher if needed?

Yes. All teachers will have live online sessions with students specifically to check in concerning progress and content.

My child has an IEP or other specialized services. Will those be implemented in the virtual classroom?

Yes, all students who qualify will receive interventions and specially designed instruction in the virtual classroom. Some interventions are not appropriate in the virtual classroom, therefore intervention plans and Virtual/Learning Contingency Plans for students with IEPs will be reviewed and revised as necessary to include supports that are appropriate in the virtual classroom.

What resources are available if my child faces challenges with distance learning?

While we may not be together physically, all of the school's resources remain available to our students. This means that our school counselors, social workers, administrators, teachers, and media specialists will all be hard at work supporting our students. At the same time, the District and the Decatur Education Foundation will continue to provide resources and strategies to support our teachers and school leaders.

Is attendance required?

Yes. School is in session and students will be expected to attend to the work and participate in class.

If my child is sick on a distance learning day, what should my family do?

Just like on a normal school day, a parent should notify their child's teacher or the front office if their child is sick. Because all of the classes are being recorded and archived, students will have the opportunity to watch classes when they feel better.

Is the district providing food service to students?

The School Nutrition Department will provide meals for pickup and delivery for students during the virtual learning period. Meals service pickup/delivery will be on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. Students will

receive multiple meals at each delivery/pickup option. The student must be present to pick up their meal. Meal pickup will be at Decatur HS. We are unable to extend this meal service to siblings who are not CSD students, parents/guardians, or the general public. Please see below for payment details.

Meal Service Plans:

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Lunch for Monday Breakfast and Lunch for Tuesday Breakfast for Wednesday	Lunch for Wednesday Breakfast and Lunch for Thursday Breakfast for Friday	Lunch for Friday Breakfast for Monday

Meal Service Reservations and Payments:

Parents may contact the school nutrition department at (404) 807-2840 to pre-order meals for delivery or pickup. An online pre-order option is in development. Students who plan to participate in meal delivery will need a meal reservation. Meals picked up at Decatur HS do not need a meal reservation. You may drop-in at this location. Students who do not qualify for free or reduced lunch according to USDA income guidelines will be charged the current CSD meal price. In order to support these efforts, we will encourage all parents who will need to pay for meals to create a meal pay account in their CSD Parent Portal prior to participating in meal service.

Pricing By Day (Paid Students)

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Student Meal Prices	Full Pay	Full Pay	Full Pay
Elementary Full Package	$8.00	$8.00	$4.00
Middle & High Full Package	$9.30	$9.30	$4.65

Pricing By Day (Reduced-Cost Students)

	Monday	Wednesday	Friday

Student Meal Prices	Full Pay	Full Pay	Reduced
Elementary Full Package	$1.40	$1.40	$0.70
Middle & High Full Package	$1.40	$1.40	$0.70

What do I do if my child doesn't have adequate technology at home?

Submit a request for a CSD-owned Chromebook and/or hotspot via the Virtual Learning Readiness Form, which will remain open until Wednesday, August 12. After August 12, a request form will be available on the CSD Virtual Learning website.

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