



**Catholic Diocese
of Jackson
Office of Education**
Back-to-School
Safety Requirements



OFFICE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

CATHOLIC DIOCESE *of* JACKSON

Dear members of our Catholic School Community,

We would first like to thank you for your continued support of Catholic education in the Diocese of Jackson. We know that in these unprecedented times, there are many uncertainties, but one thing you can know for sure is that the well-being of all of our community members is and will continue to be our primary focus. As we prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, we know that while the physical environment may look different, our mission and dedication to the spiritual, academic, and emotional development of all students remains the same.

In this document, you will find several guidelines and recommendations that have been created by our Diocesan Back-to-School Taskforce. This group was comprised of administrators, teachers, parents, and healthcare professionals from across our diocese. They reviewed recommendations from the CDC and the Mississippi Department of Health as well as back-to-school guides and publications from a variety of public school districts, individual schools, and other Catholic Dioceses from our region. Based on all of the information gathered, this document was designed to guide administrators, teachers, parents, and school communities to ensure a safe return to our schools in August.

As Catholic institutions, it is our duty to provide safe environments for all of our teachers, staff members, and students. The guidelines presented here are not only designed to provide individual protection, but they call for our entire community to work together to protect our most vulnerable community members. If all individuals take precautions, even those who are healthy and less susceptible, together, we will protect the most vulnerable in our communities. Psalm 41:1 tells us, "Blessed is anyone who cares for the poor and the weak; in times of trouble, Yahweh rescues him." As members of our faith community, we can make small sacrifices in our daily routine to protect others, just as Scripture calls us to do.

This document was provided to all school administrators, and they have been charged with creating individualized plans that outline how each school will logistically implement the guidelines and recommendations. Once individual school plans are finalized, they will be published to the school website and communicated to members of each school community.

Again, thank you for your support of Catholic education in our Diocese. Know that we recognize the ever-changing nature of this public health emergency, and we will continue to monitor and adapt as needed. We appreciate your continued prayers as we navigate these unprecedented times.

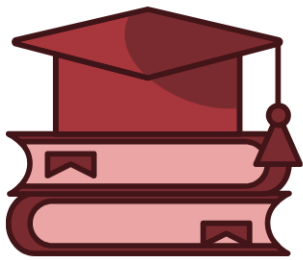
Sincerely,

The Office of Catholic Education



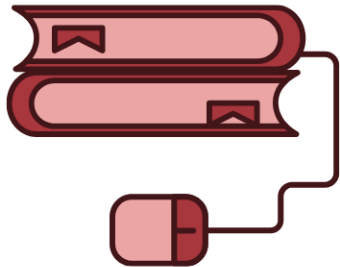
DIOCESE OF JACKSON OFFICE OF EDUCATION

To prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, the Diocese of Jackson-Office of Education has created a Back-to-School Task Force to plan for various scenarios that may occur, pending developments related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Those serving on the task force represent parents, school administration and faculty, and the medical community. We are eagerly preparing for an in-person return in August, and we are also exploring different scenarios that may occur throughout the year. The task force is developing thoughtful and thorough planning tools for the following scenarios:



SCENARIO 1: ON-CAMPUS LEARNING

All students are back on campus with social distancing guidelines and additional safety measures in place until restriction can be eased.



SCENARIO 2: A HYBRID OF ON CAMPUS AND DISTANCE LEARNING

All students participate in on-campus learning along with distance learning if schools are required to operate at a limited capacity.



SCENARIO 3: DISTANCE LEARNING

If pandemic conditions require one or more of our campuses to temporarily close, learning will continue virtually with additional guidelines and structures in place based on feedback from experiences in the spring.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Diocese of Jackson-Office of Catholic Education is to foster centers of learning that are rooted in Gospel values and Catholic teachings as we pursue academic excellence in a safe and caring environment.

Contents

Overview	5
Task-Force Mission	5
In-Person Return to Campus	5
Fully Virtual Learning	5
Hybrid Learning	5
In-Person Return to Campus Safety Requirements All Schools	6
Class Sizes	6
Cleaning and Sanitation Practices	6
Enhanced Hygiene Practices and Personal Protective Equipment	6
Drop-Off and Dismissal	6
Self-Containment of Classes	6
Meals & Food Service	7
School Visitors	7
After and Before School Care Program	7
Use of LMS or Online Learning Platform	7
Prolonged Absences Due to Quarantine/ COVID-19	7
Students or Families with Underlying Health Conditions	7
Substitute Teachers	7
In-Person Return to Campus- Middle and High Schools	8
Scheduling	8
Distance Learning Guidelines	9
Online Learning Platforms	9
The Role of the Administrator	9
The Role of the Teacher	9
The Role of the Student	10
The Role of the Parent	10
Catholic Identity in Virtual Learning	10
Hybrid Model	10
What to do if a Case Occurs in Your Community	11
Task Force Recommendations	12
Catholic Identity both Virtually & In-Person	12
In-Person Planning Document	13
Drop Off & Pick Up	13

Class Sizes- Self-Contained Grades	13
Class Schedules & Sizes- Middle & High School	14
Lunch	14
Outside & Inside Play	15
Cleaning & Sanitation	15
Distance Learning During Prolonged Absences	15
Virtual Learning Planning Guide	16
Virtual Learning Platform	16
Parent, Student, and Teacher Training	16
Minutes Per Week by Subject	16
Video-Conferencing Expectations	17
Expectations for Lesson Plans & Posting Weekly Content	17
Hybrid Planning Guide	17
Class Guide.....	19

Overview

Task-Force Mission

In May of 2020, the Catholic Diocese of Jackson - Office of Education established a Back-to-School Task Force to create planning guidelines for a safe return to learning in the 2020-2021 school year. The task force is comprised of Catholic school teachers, administrators, parents, health professionals, and diocesan staff. The group was charged with evaluating three potential scenarios for our return to school in August. The three scenarios were: a full, in-person return to campus, a hybrid model that integrates in-person learning with distance learning, and an entirely virtual scenario for extreme circumstances. Once the task force evaluated the three scenarios, planning guides were created to help schools ensure they were fully prepared for whichever scenario plays out in August or if there is a need to switch to distance learning temporarily at any point during the school year. The thoughts and rationale for each planning tool are outlined below.

In-Person Return to Campus

In this scenario, we must take into account current recommendations from state and local officials and create an environment that adheres to these recommendations to ensure the safety of students, teachers, and all community members. The task force discussed current recommendations, talked with state-level health care officials, and created a planning document for all schools to complete. The completion of this planning tool ensures that schools can adhere to all of the appropriate guidelines.

Fully Virtual Learning

Following the final quarter of the 2019-2020 school year, our schools and entire school system were able to learn a great deal about what is and is not effective when it comes to distance learning. The task force worked to outline clear expectations and guidelines for all schools to ensure consistency and a clear understanding of how distance learning will be implemented when needed. The task force and health officials agreed that this scenario would only be applied when and if pandemic conditions require the school or facility to close, for example, if a case of COVID-19 is reported within a school community. The Diocese hopes to avoid long-term fully-virtual learning when possible. Still, we also recognize that it may be necessary at times to ensure the health and safety of our students, teachers, and community members.

Hybrid Learning

This scenario would likely be the case if our schools were able to open at a limited capacity and will probably only affect middle and high school students if implemented. This case would include students having in-person learning on some days supported by virtual learning on days when they do not come to campus.

In-Person Return to Campus Safety Requirements All Schools

Class Sizes

To limit the amount of exposure between students and staff members, class sizes should be evaluated to ensure the classroom space can accommodate the number of students with proper social distancing. Desks should be spaced a minimum of five feet apart, and all desks should face the same direction. If tables are used in lower elementary classrooms, students should be spaced three students per table (one at each end and one in the middle). The size of each classroom should be measured, and the number of students will be determined by the number of work stations that can be placed with adequate distance in between. Teachers and administrators should consider removing any unnecessary furniture or supplies to create as much space as possible. In the planning guide at the end of this document, you will be asked to think about square footage of classrooms and how many students will be able to be in a room safely.

Cleaning and Sanitation Practices

To ensure a safe working and playing environment disinfecting should take place regularly throughout the day, and additional deeper cleanings should take place at the end of each day. A sample schedule of cleaning and disinfecting practices is provided at the end of this document. The use of classroom sets of textbooks should be limited to prevent cross-contamination.

Enhanced Hygiene Practices and Personal Protective Equipment

Students and teachers should regularly wash their hands throughout the day. Hand sanitizer should be readily available throughout the school, but thoroughly washing with soap and water should be used when students first enter the school, before meals, and before returning to the classroom from outside play or other activities in the building. Anybody who can be reasonably expected to wear a mask should wear a mask all day. Students and teachers will be responsible for bringing their masks each day. Mask with valves should not be worn.

Drop-Off and Dismissal

Each morning all student and staff member temperatures will be taken before they are admitted into the building. If a person's temperature is 100.4 or higher, they will not be permitted back into the building until they have been fever-free for three consecutive days, per CDC guidelines.

Parents will not be admitted into the building until further restrictions are lifted. Students should exit the car, have their temperature taken, and then walk directly to their classroom. For dismissal, schools should determine the best and most efficient way to keep students in their classes until it is their turn to walk to their car. Schools should avoid having students wait in a common area to prevent cross-contamination.

Self-Containment of Classes

Whenever possible, groups of students should be isolated to only mingle with their own class and should remain in their classroom as much as possible. Special classes, such as art, music, PE, etc. should take place in their classroom with the teacher coming to them. Some classes, such as PE, may take place outside weather permitting. Schools should avoid having multiple groups utilize common spaces to prevent cross-contamination.

Meals & Food Service

Lunches should be served in the classrooms to limit cross-contamination in common areas such as the cafeteria. The school should evaluate what types of lunches are served from the cafeteria (i.e., pre-packaged, easily transported, etc.). If the school does not believe they can safely serve food from the cafeteria, schools may require children to provide their meals.

School Visitors

Until additional restrictions are lifted, and it is determined safe to increase the number of people allowed in the building, school visitors will be limited to only essential business. Visitors should not go beyond the office unless it is deemed necessary by the building administrator. We recognize that parent and community involvement is an essential part of our campus cultures. We will monitor recommendations from governing bodies and health care professionals and allow for visitors as soon as it is deemed safe.

After and Before School Care Program

These programs can continue to operate under the same guidelines for school-day operations. The number of available staff should be taken into consideration when determining the number of students who can be served in these programs.

Use of LMS or Online Learning Platform

Even if we return to campus in person, we must be able to quickly and seamlessly switch to distance learning should a case be reported in a school. Even if classes are taking place on campus, teachers should utilize LMS to post assignments, share information with parents, and help students practice submitting assignments when possible. The use of an online learning platform should especially take place beginning in 3rd Grade. Training for parents and students should be done at the beginning of the year.

Prolonged Absences Due to Quarantine/ COVID-19

When the school building is open, it will not be uncommon for students to be absent for extended periods due to quarantine requirements or personal healthcare needs. To ensure minimum disruptions to learning, students should be able to access their online learning platform from home. Each grade level should have one designated staff member (counselor, teaching assistant, etc.) to be the primary point of contact for students participating in distance learning while schools are open.

Students or Families with Underlying Health Conditions

We recognize that some of our students or families may be at higher risk of contracting or suffering additional complications due to COVID-19. If a student or family is concerned about the threat posed to their student due to an underlying health condition, they should work with their healthcare provider and school administrator to determine the best course of action.

Substitute Teachers

Throughout the year, schools will likely see more teachers out for extended periods. Schools should make every effort to expand their list of potential substitute teachers, and all substitute teachers must receive training of COVID-19 guidelines and expectations.

In-Person Return to Campus- Middle and High Schools

Scheduling

Given the volume of classes that must be offered and variants in individual class selection, scheduling in the middle and high school level will prevent students from being self-contained. The following are suggestions that should be considered while building schedules for the 2020-2021 school year.

1. A/B Day or Block Schedules: Moving to an A/B Day or Block Schedule will extend the time students spend in each classroom each day and limit the number of times students will have to switch. While students will not be entirely self-contained, this would limit them to intermingling with three or four groups of students versus seven.
2. Grouping Students in Similar Classes: Consider grouping students who are on the same academic path and will be in the same level of classes to allow them to rotate as a group. This strategy will likely work better in middle school, as there are fewer classes offered.
3. Traffic Patterns should be evaluated. When students must change classrooms, an effort should be made to change in waves to allow students to move in smaller groups. Traffic patterns should be evaluated to limit interactions between students (i.e., one-way hallways)
4. Middle and high school students should wear masks throughout the day, and desks should be spaced a minimum of five feet apart, with the goal of six feet when class size allows.

Distance Learning Guidelines

Distance learning will look different from school to school based on the availability of technology, age of students, and what generally works best within a school community. Listed below are guidelines and roles for the administrator, teachers, students, and parents that will occur at every school. Individual schools will complete a Virtual Learning Planning Document outlining specific expectations regarding platforms, virtual meeting times, schedules, and other things specific to each school.

Online Learning Platforms

One online platform should be agreed upon by the school for each grade/ grade bands. It is highly recommended that school/ grades use the FACTS LMS when possible. Exceptions may be lower elementary grades that may need a more age-appropriate platform. No matter what platform is chosen, teachers, students, and parents should receive training on its functionality at the beginning of school, even if we plan to return to school in person. Schools should complete a Virtual Learning Planning Document outlining which platforms will be used and how teachers, students, and parents will be trained.

The Role of the Administrator

The local school administrator will be responsible for monitoring the overall implementation of the distance learning platform and ensuring that teachers and students receive the training necessary to utilize the platform proficiently. The administrator will also work closely with teachers and other support staff members to monitor student grades and help provide intervention early on to help every student succeed. Lesson plans will be submitted by teachers and reviewed by administrators (or department chairs when appropriate). Ongoing conversations will help ensure that teachers and students are fulfilling expectations for the duration of distance learning.

The administrator will also be responsible for communicating with parents in a timely manner. Parents should be kept up to date on any developments regarding COVID-19 within the school community and communicate decisions regarding a transition from in-person to virtual learning and virtual learning back to in-person learning when appropriate. Administrators should be responsive to parents while delegating communication or support to other staff members when necessary. Administrators should reply to emails from staff members and parents within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays).

The Role of the Teacher

Teachers will consistently provide quality learning materials and assignments to students through the designated online platform. When creating assignments, teachers should take into account that assignments completed virtually or at home often take longer than they would in the typical school environment. Teachers should refer to the school's daily suggested amount of time for each subject and work to help students stay within those guidelines. All teachers, no matter what grade, will provide parents with a class guide for their online learning. A template for this syllabus is provided at the end of this document. Grades should be posted each week to ensure parents, students, and teachers are aware of student progress.

Teachers are expected to be in consistent communication with students and parents. Schools will outline the expectations for videoconference/ "live" classes each week, and they may include the requirement of virtual office hours. Schedules should consider families who have more than one student with just one computer or device capable of video conferencing. Students should not be

penalized if they are unable to attend a meeting or class due to a lack of technological capabilities. Teachers should work with students to address these situations. Teachers should respond to emails within 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays).

The Role of the Student

Students are expected to be engaged in their learning and consistently communicate with their teacher. Students should participate in their education every school day, and they are responsible for their assignments—students, when age-appropriate, should be familiar with their class's syllabus and late work policy. Training on the use of the online learning platform will be done at the beginning of the school year. If a student is unsure or has questions about an assignment, they are responsible for reaching out to the teacher to address their questions early on in the process.

The Role of the Parent

Parents and teachers should work as partners to encourage their students' success in online learning. Parents should communicate with teachers, or when appropriate in older grade-levels, parents should encourage students to communicate with their teachers. Parents should provide support to their students when necessary. If a family is facing unique situations or a parent feels they need help supporting their student, we encourage them to reach out to their teacher early on to develop a plan that will work for everyone.

Catholic Identity in Virtual Learning

The hallmark of our schools is our commitment to our Catholic identity. During times of distance learning, maintaining our Catholic identity should remain a priority. Teachers should strive to integrate our faith into virtual lessons through prayer and real-world connections between content that is being taught and Church teachings. School administrators should make a conscious effort to provide opportunities for building the school's faith community.

Hybrid Model

The hybrid model will be used if the number of individuals allowed in our school buildings is limited to an amount lower than our total enrollment with faculty and staff. In the case that students must operate partially online and partially in person, the school will provide a schedule for individuals. The guidelines outlined above for both in-person and virtual learning must be followed when appropriate in the hybrid model.

What to do if a Case Occurs in Your Community

****MOST IMPORTANT** - Notify your pastor and the Office of Catholic Education immediately!**

Taken from: Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Child Care and COVID-19 - Week of May 25-29, 2020 – Mississippi State Department of Health

Q: What should we do if a child or staff member tests positive for COVID-19?

A: The individual should be quarantined for 14 days, and anyone that had close contact would need to be isolated as well. Close contact is when an individual has been within 6 feet of the person who tested positive for an extended period.

Q: If a facility has a positive test result from an individual working or attending the facility, are they required to close?

A: Facilities are not mandated to close due to having a positive case; however, if the staffing capacity does not allow them to adhere to requirements concerning staff-to-child ratio (due to cases and contacts being in isolation or on quarantine orders) it may be necessary to close for a brief period.

Q: If a parent tests positive of a child attending the facility, and the child is showing no symptoms, what should we do?

A: The child of a positive parent would be considered a close contact and would need to be quarantined for 14 days. If the parent had any direct/close contact with any other individuals at the facility, those contacts would need to be isolated as well. If the child of the positive parent developed symptoms or tested positive, the other children or staff in the classroom, as well as any other close contacts would need to be quarantined.

Taken from CDC on Considerations for Schools – Cleaning and Disinfecting After a Report of Illness

Clean and Disinfect

Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#).

Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaning and disinfection products](#), including storing products securely away from children.

Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts

In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, school administrators should notify [local health officials](#), staff, and families immediately of any case of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)

Inform those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and [self-monitor for symptoms](#) and follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

Task Force Recommendations

Keeping in mind that all schools are unique and that guidelines cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach, the back-to-school taskforce highly recommends that the following recommendations be considered as schools create their final plans for the fall.

In-Person Guidelines:

- Desks should be spaced six feet apart and students should wear masks when feasible. If spacing restrictions apply, a distance of five feet between desks is acceptable.
- In lower elementary classrooms where tables are used, sneeze-guards should be used to provide additional separation between students.
- Class sets of face shields should be provided and utilized for activities or lessons that require the teacher or student to have their face visible (i.e. phonics or language lessons). These should be kept at school and sanitized each day by a teacher or staff member.

Virtual Guidelines:

- Grades should continue to be assigned as they would in person. While we should be cognizant of the workload, we should be assigning quality work that can be graded to assess student mastery.
- At the middle and high school level teachers should have two “live” zoom sessions with students for each class each week. These sessions should be recorded and posted for students to refer to later if they have questions.
- When new material is introduced teachers should record videos and post them to the virtual learning platform. Teachers should not rely on students reading or working independently to introduce a new concept.
- Teachers should also have additional office hours in which students can talk with the teacher to answer questions and provide additional support.
- Teachers should implement a schedule that provides work and assignments four days a week and then allows one day for students to catch up on assignments and ensure everything is turned in by their due date.

Catholic Identity both Virtually & In-Person

- Even though school communities may not gather in large groups for Masses, schools should make every attempt to engage all community members in the celebration of Mass. For example, Mass could be held for one grade-level in person with social-distancing, and that Mass could be livestreamed to classrooms so the entire school can participate.
- A morning routine of scripture, prayers, and announcements through Zoom, recorded videos, or email is a great way to ensure all students and teachers are focused on our Catholic Identity throughout the day.
- Teachers should provide some type of prayer or spiritual journaling topic at the beginning of each class both in person or virtually. This will help set the tone for a thoughtful and spiritual class.

In-Person Planning Document

School:

Administrator:

Current Enrollment:

Grades Served:

Drop Off & Pick Up

In consideration for what is needed, in the space below please list exactly how and when drop-off and pick-up will take place.

1. Traffic Pattern
2. Number of Possible Entrances
 - a. Single Child Drop Off
 - b. Multiple Children Drop Off
3. Number of Screening Staff needed at each station
4. Equipment needed at each drop-off station (thermometer, wipes, gloves, etc.)

Overview of Procedures:

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Role of Staff Members and Equipment Needed:

Name	Role	Equipment Needed

Class Sizes- Self-Contained Grades

To limit contact between children and workers, class sizes should be kept to the smallest size possible with limited interaction. In the space below please list all classes, the number of students, the teacher, teaching assistant, and room and square footage.

Class:	Number of Children:	Teacher and Assistant	Room & Square Footage

Please also provide how and where students will attend special classes (art, music, etc.)

Class Schedules & Sizes- Middle & High School

Middle and high schools should provide a master schedule that includes the class, the time period it will meet, the teacher, and the number of students who will be in the class. In the space below you should also list adjustments you are making to your schedule to keep numbers smaller and how you plan to ensure social distancing when classes change.

Lunch

Please provide a brief explanation of how you will adjust your lunch schedule and process including where and when students will eat. You should also determine if your cafeteria can safely serve and deliver food to the appropriate eating area.

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Outside & Inside Play

Also, if classes will have play time outside, please provide when each class with play outside and cleaning/ disinfecting procedures that will be put in place between classes if more than one group plans to use the same outside play equipment.

Grade Level	Time Scheduled	Location & Plan for Disinfection

Cleaning & Sanitation

CDC Guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting your facility should be followed. These guidelines can be found [here](#).

To ensure a safe working and playing environment disinfecting should take place regularly throughout the day, and additional deeper cleanings should take care at the end of each day. Please list below additional measures that will be put in place and who will be responsible for them.

Task	Name of Person Responsible	Supplies Needed

Distance Learning During Prolonged Absences

Distance learning opportunities should be provided to students who are absent for prolonged periods of time due to exposure to COVID-19 or other circumstances. In the chart below please identify who the primary point of contact will be for students in each Grade:

Grade Level:	Primary Point of Contact (aside from classroom teacher)
Pre-K and Kindergarten	

1 st Grade	
2 nd Grade	
3 rd Grade	
4 th Grade	
5 th Grade	
6-8 th Grade	
9-12 th Grade	

Virtual Learning Planning Guide

School:

Administrator:

Current Enrollment:

Grades Served:

Virtual Learning Platform

Please provide the learning platform that will be used for each grade-level (FACTS LMS, Google Classroom, SeeSaw, etc.)

Grade Bands & Required Platform	
Pre-K & Kinder:	5 th & 6 th :
1 st & 2 nd :	7 th & 8 th :
3 rd & 4 th :	9-12 th :

Parent, Student, and Teacher Training

Please briefly explain how and when parents, teachers, and students will receive training on how to access and utilize your online learning platform.

Minutes Per Week by Subject

Please provide the minimum and maximum amount of time you expect each Grade to spend on each subject during the week. This should include live lessons, assignments, and any independent studying.

Grade Level	Minimum Time	Maximum Time
Pre-K 3 & 4		
Kindergarten		

1 st -2 nd		
3 rd -5 th		
6 th -8 th		
9 th -12 th		

Video-Conferencing Expectations

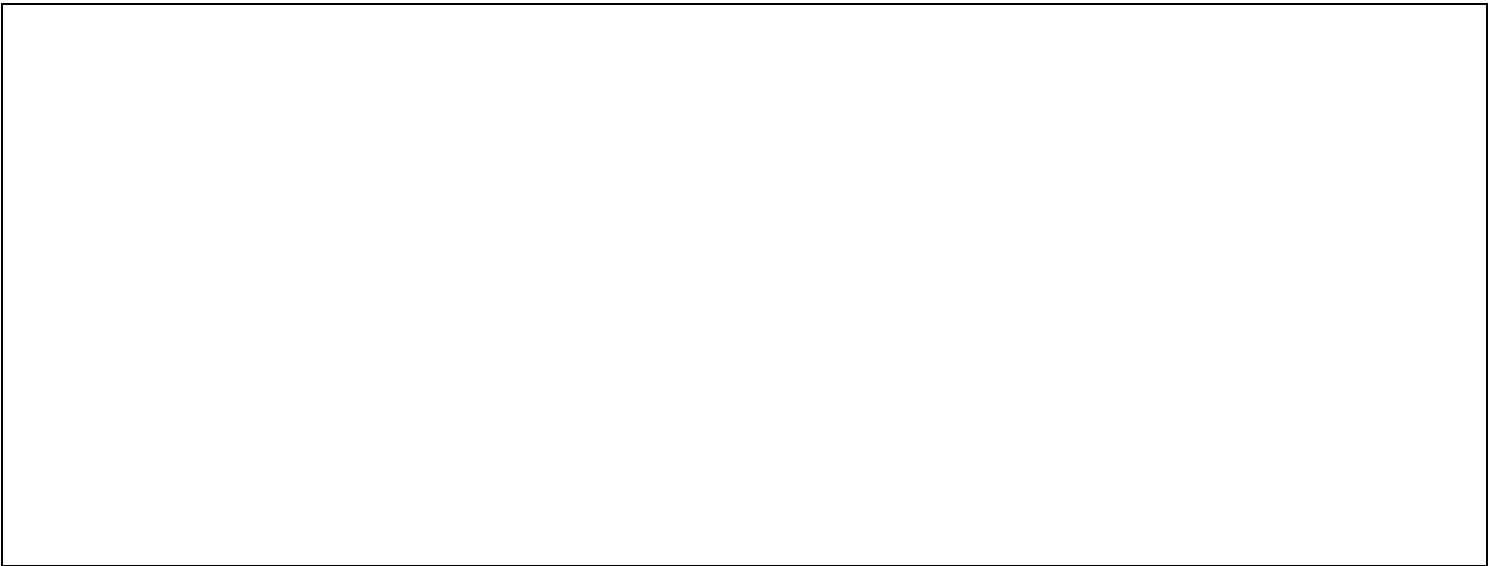
Please list the expectations for the number/ minutes that teachers will be expected to connect virtually with their students as well as expectations for office hours.

Expectations for Lesson Plans & Posting Weekly Content

Please provide how and when lesson plans will be turned into the principal or department chair and when weekly content should be posted for students and parents to access.

Hybrid Planning Guide

If the school is forced to limit its capacity for students, faculty, and staff, please provide what type of schedule you will follow and how you will determine who will come each day.



Class Guide

Teacher Name:

Grade:

Subject:

Learning Platform:

FAQ's About Our Class:

Where will assignments be posted?

When will assignments be posted?

How will students turn assignments in?

When can students expect feedback?

When will we video conference (Zoom)?

When will office hours happen?

What should I do if I have a question?

Please name the files that you submit as: (Ex. Last Name_Period_Date_Assign#.PDF)

Other Apps or Resources:

App or Resource	How do I get to it?	What's my username?	What's my password?