



TREASURE VALLEY

CLASSICAL ACADEMY

TVCA Distributed Learning Guide

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Overview

Perpetuating our Mission

An education founded in the liberal arts and sciences is a deeply humane thing and thrives on—indeed requires—personal conversation between faculty and students. Not only do students and teachers participate in the so-called great conversations, but the faculty live a life of inquiry with each other and ought to model that for students.

When we move to a distributed learning platform, our way of education is immediately challenged. If we want to perpetuate our mission of *training the minds* and *improving the hearts* of our students, we must recognize the limitations under which we must now work.

The answer to ensuring the wellbeing of our mission has less to do with academics and instruction, and more to do with the care and assistance we offer our families. This is particularly important for us as a first-year school. If we do this well, our families will feel connected rather than isolated and supported rather than abandoned.

Social distancing, while necessary under the present circumstances, is anathema to building our present and future school community. We are living through a truly historic event and the stress our families are dealing with right now is unprecedented. Many of them are facing challenges they never faced before, and this seems particularly true in our rural setting. It is also worth noting that above and beyond everything else parents are dealing with, they did not sign up for school at home. While some will excel and use the flexibility wisely, many will not know what to do without structure and routine. Families that have experience with home schooling will probably be good at it, but not all visions of home schooling are the same.

While most of us will rightly want to focus on how to *train the minds* of our students under the present circumstances, we must soften our expectations for what we think students can accomplish in terms of academic schoolwork in this environment. Information technology will allow us to create structure through daily “live” engagement time with students and high-quality recorded lessons in the core and special subjects. This can be supplemented with assigned reading time and homework.

However, these necessary and well-intentioned things will be ineffective without continual outreach and intentional engagement with students and their families. In fact, this outreach could be the best way for us to perpetuate how we *improve the hearts* of our students, short of daily physical contact with them. How we—the faculty and staff—demonstrate and live out our character in these times that stress our everyday habits will speak volumes to our students and families. We have a unique opportunity to demonstrate professionalism, calm confidence, and responsibility through the examples we set for others. If we can meet this challenge with intelligence, compassion, and grace, we will do a lot to promote the long-term mission, community, and well-being of our school.

Operations

Communications

Staying in touch with families is an all-school effort and one of the best ways that we can reduce the anxiety and stress of the whole community. All communications should be professional, well-crafted, and exemplify the school's virtues. Communications expectations are outlined below:

- The school will issue daily updates to our parent community (as appropriate) and will also feature a weekly edition of *The Sentinel*.
- Employee-wide Zoom video conferences will be held weekly on Fridays at 3:00pm.
- Homeroom teachers are expected to:
 - Call each household at least once per week (perhaps more with struggling students).
 - Issue weekly electronic newsletters to include: general academic information and guidance, organizational recommendations for parents to sustain an orderly schedule at home, general tips and advice (perhaps from other families), and lighthearted items (e.g. constructive social media tidbits, family reading time recommendations, etc.).
- Student Services staff are expected to:
 - Call each household with a student with special needs at least once per week.
- Phone communication with families should take place during school hours if possible (8:00am – 2:30pm) and should make use of school phones as much as possible.

School-as-Hub

As an essential business (service provider) and in accordance with Governor Brad Little's Order to Self-Isolate (Section 8/f/xi, page 7) dated 3/25/20, the school will remain open as a hub for the purposes of facilitating distributed learning operations. All employees who come to the school must practice disciplined social distancing by maintaining a six-foot separation distance to the greatest extent possible.

Faculty members may individually decide if and when to work at school or work from home. Staff should coordinate their daily efforts with Mr. Lambert and Dr. Condra.

Staff

Customer service and support are a priority, especially during this time.

The goals throughout this distributed learning period are to:

- Provide support to faculty and parents wherever possible.
- Support and participate in daily distributed logistics at the school (meal and academic materials distribution and collection, IT support to faculty, etc.)

- Continue and sustain planning for AY20-21 including facility projects, campus expansion, curriculum and supply orders, furniture orders, etc.

Student Services

Perhaps the greatest instructional challenge we face during this time is the discrepancy among families in their ability to support their children at home. During normal times, we sustain a common school culture and common classroom cultures, which helps students who do not have the same level of home support. That general culture cannot exist in the absence of a shared structure, and some families have unique challenges creating it or finding the time to do schoolwork. Student Services' goal is to attempt to diminish the gap created by the absence of a common school and classroom culture.

This is also a unique opportunity to reach out to students who are struggling. These students may not have the supports necessary to complete their schoolwork well and in a timely fashion, and this situation exacerbates the problem. The more we communicate proactively with households who may need help, the more we close the gap. This especially pertains to students who were identified as risks for retention.

IDEA and ADA

FAPE requires the same level of service for students with IEPs and 504s as we offer ordinarily. This includes direct and indirect support, evaluations, and meetings. Accommodations or modifications built in to IEPs or 504s must continue.

Busing Logistics

Daily busing is an integral part of the distributed learning plan. The purpose of daily busing is to distribute meals to families that qualify for FFRL (and other families if desired and available) and also to distribute and pick up academic materials. Each of the four bus routes will run once a day, with buses departing the school at 11:00am. To the greatest extent possible, buses will have an additional person on board to facilitate the delivery and pickup of materials. Each bus route will have one "hub" stop for families that do not normally make use of school-provided bus transportation.

School Nutrition

Treasure Valley Catering will prioritize its efforts for families that qualify for and receive FFRL services. TVC is committed to providing daily lunch meals to FFRL families. TVC will seek to supply lunch meals to additional families if desired and to the extent that these additional efforts can be supported by the food and product supply chain.

Academics

Educational Priorities

Within the context and constraints of the distributed learning model, these are the educational priorities that should be followed:

1. **Basic cognitive skills:** reading and writing (literacy) and numeracy (mathematics)
2. **Core subjects:**
 - a. English language and literature
 - b. Mathematics
 - c. History
 - d. Science
3. **Special subjects:**
 - a. Art and music
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Physical Education

General Guidance

Keeping in mind the overview in the beginning of this policy as well as the academic priorities as listed above, homeroom and specials teachers are afforded flexibility as they adapt to the distributed learning model.

We must emphasize literacy and numeracy with short lessons each day. This may be one of the best opportunities for families, outside of summer, to read as much as possible. We should underscore this opportunity for parents. In younger grades, phonics supports reading, but the pedagogy of explicit phonics is too difficult to expect from parents at home. A way to compensate for this is to provide short, daily spelling lessons and much encouragement for ongoing, grade-level appropriate reading. In the middle and upper elementary grades, grammar instruction supports reading in much the same way. We cannot expect most parents to be able to teach either phonics or grammar as we do, so our instruction in these must also be explicit and short. We supplement these basic priorities with science and history lessons each week, drawing attention to the most important elements of our curriculum.

Homeroom Teachers

In general, homeroom teachers ought to aim to provide the structure for 3-4 hours of academic work per day. This structure should encompass the following daily components:

- “Live” student engagement via the daily “live” schedule (see below) and the GoogleMeets platform. This engagement time need not be committed toward direct

instruction, but should always facilitate classroom community building and time for student questions.

- Pre-recorded instructional lessons in the core subjects (about 2 per day) at a grade and developmentally appropriate length using the Zoom platform.
- Pre-recorded instructional lessons in the special subjects (according to the schedule listed below).
- Reading time (with guidance and mentoring)
- Academic work/assignments/homework (with guidance and mentoring)

With the exception of the daily “live” student engagement session, the above components are not rigidly essential. Rather, they are to be used as a guide to daily student academic engagement. Additional components and creative, mission-aligned elements are welcome and left to individual teachers’ imagination and discretion.

Homeroom teachers must take “attendance” during daily live sessions and report this attendance to the front office.

Homeroom teachers should consider the following questions and are encouraged to collaborate (primarily by grade level) and innovate to come up with their own answers:

- How can small reading groups take place for intervention?
- How can you offer tutoring to select individuals in an online format?
- Is there a way to encourage math fact practice with online games?
- What does a read-along look like?

Specials Teachers

Specials subject teachers should plan their pre-recorded instructional lessons in the following grade bands: K-2, 3-4, and 5-6. In general, specials teachers should make one lesson per grade band available to homeroom teachers per week. These pre-recorded lessons can include imaginative components (e.g. an online virtual tour of a famous art museum, a link to a classical music recording, a link to an online Spanish immersion activity, or a sibling or family competition for physical education or a particular type of activity such as push-ups, wall-sits, or sit-ups).

The school will implement the following schedule for specials subjects:

| School Day | Specials Subject |
|------------|--------------------|
| Tuesdays | Art |
| Wednesdays | Music |
| Thursdays | Spanish |
| Fridays | Physical Education |

Daily “Live” Class Schedule

Homeroom teachers must follow the daily “live” class schedule below. This is important both for routine as well as due to the fact that many TVCA households have multiple siblings and this requires daily deconfliction in the schedule.

| Time Slot | Level |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 07:30am – 08:45am | 6th Grade |
| 08:50am – 10:05am | 5th Grade |
| 10:10am – 11:25am | 4th Grade |
| 11:30am – 12:25pm | 3rd Grade |
| 12:30pm – 01:15pm | 2nd Grade |
| 01:20pm – 02:05pm | 1st Grade |
| 02:10pm – 02:55pm | Kindergarten |

Assignments and Homework

Homeroom teachers must provide a weekly assignment schedule by Monday. Specials teachers should coordinate any assignments with homeroom teachers. The weekly assignment schedule should be simple so that parents can easily check off what work has been accomplished. For simplicity’s sake, weekly assignments can be posted by Monday in Google Classroom.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind for assignments (homework):

- While students should turn in some work, we do not need to maintain the same level of grading and accountability for student assignments as during normal school days.
- Any assignment should have at least one gap day from when it is initially assigned until it is due.
- Core Knowledge content readers build reading fluency and generally teach subjects well.
- Be imaginative with assignments. For example, for science, encourage students to go outside to make observations to take advantage of spring and how ecosystems change during this time of year. Have them turn in a grade-level appropriate writing assignment about what they observe or have them pick something to track and report on. Use this as an opportunity to build analytical skills (e.g. graph or plot things they can observe daily outside, etc.).
- Assignments should include writing. For instance, younger students can draw part of a story and explain it, or they could draw their favorite part of a lesson and write 1-2 unique sentences about it. Older students should occasionally work with paragraphs or short creative writing assignments. An observation journal or a daily journal, with instructions on a more formal and less colloquial tone, is appropriate for upper elementary students.

Information Technology Platforms

TVCA will use the following main information technology platforms for distributed learning instruction. Faculty members who wish to take advantage of additional platforms should coordinate this with Mr. Beltran.

Google Classroom

Google Classroom will serve as the main platform for homeroom teachers. This is our replacement for the actual classroom in the school building. Additional Google Classrooms may be established at the direction of the Principal (e.g. according to student services needs, etc.).

Google Meets

Google Meets will serve as the platform for “live” engagement sessions.

Zoom

Zoom will serve as the platform for recorded instruction as well as for one-on-one or one-on-few student engagements (e.g. student services’ needs).

Distributed Learning Professional Standards

As we shift to the distributed learning model, we expect all employees to maintain the same high professional standards in our address, diction, and promptness.

- Both live and recorded video sessions should be professional in attire (as expected in the school building) as well as in setting, decorum, and tone.
- Students will look to teachers as role models. This is a tremendous opportunity for positive impact and character shaping.
- Teachers should also keep in mind that their presentations (live or recorded) are likely to be viewed by a much wider audience and therefore will serve as a reflection of what Treasure Classical Academy stands for.
- Social media guidelines remain in effect, which means employees must not engage with parents via social media platforms.