



Middleton-Cross Plains
Area School District
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Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers of MCPASD Students in Grades 5-12,

Welcome to the 2020-2021 school year! We hope that this message finds you as well as can be as we all embrace social distancing and prioritize safety. Clearly, self-care is essential right now in order for our community to thrive in ways that get us back into school buildings for in-person learning as quickly as possible. We acknowledge that beginning this school year virtually elicits many strong emotions for students, families and staff members. The purpose of this letter is to communicate our plans for secondary learning and for supporting students and families as we launch the school year. No matter what model we have to use, we intend on making this school year positive, engaging and appropriately challenging.

In preparation for various possible methods for launching learning, multiple work groups met over the summer to construct plans for navigating teaching and learning during this very unique year. Knowing the landscape will likely change, we are moving forward with planning stable learning and transitions. We are committed to communicating with you frequently and we thank you for your patience and grace as these times require us to be flexible and adaptive.

Emergency Distance Learning vs Intentional Virtual Learning

Educators agree that the distance learning practices that were put in place in the spring were emergency plans, not close to our best teaching or learning. The virtual learning plans designed for this school year are more intentional and rigorous. Virtual learning will include explicit instruction, learning new content, increased face-time with teachers and classmates, learning challenge options, student feedback around learning targets, and increased support for student engagement.

Social-Emotional Wellness and Connection

Our most important responsibilities include student safety and learning. Beyond physical safety, we care deeply about the social-emotional well being of our students and believe strong relationships with students and families are critical. To begin building these relationships, advisers and teachers will begin to learn about each student's interests, goals, and dreams for the year. This information gathering and relationship building will take place starting on or before September 1st. You may receive more information from the school regarding the methods for learning about your student.

Once the school year has started, there will be times when students will have one-on-one conferences with teachers, whole-group class meetings and small group time with classmates to support social growth and emotional wellness. Staff members will also connect with each family to check on how things are going, answer questions, and provide any necessary support. We know that children are typically okay when the adults around them are okay. We will do our best to partner with you in supporting every learner. To the extent possible, please try to be upbeat about virtual learning around your child so that the school year begins with positive energy. Our staff will be welcoming your child with enthusiasm, encouragement, love and smiles!

Technology and Instructional Materials

All students in grades 5-12 will receive a Chromebook for instructional use during this school year. Beyond this technology, there may be classes for which students will receive additional physical learning materials. These resources may include journals, math manipulatives, writing tools, and books or other supplies that support learning. Information regarding pick up of technology and materials will be sent to you very soon. In the meantime, consider setting up a learning space with your child with basic supplies like writing utensils, notebooks, other paper, sticky notes and creative supplies. We will also have some of these basic supplies available for those who need them.

The online learning platform we will use for all students in grades 5-12 this year is Buzz. We received feedback that it was challenging for families if they had children on multiple learning platforms. Having all students on one platform is an

effort to streamline and simplify our structures for parents and caregivers. Students will receive guided training and practice using Buzz right from the start of the year (September 1st) and information and videos will also be sent to parents and caregivers to learn about Buzz prior to school starting. If you are interested in learning about Buzz sooner, [this site](#) offers an overview.

Instruction

Rest assured that virtual learning this year will have an emphasis on explicit instruction of rigorous new learning. While students will be learning away from the school building, staff will be teaching most often from their classrooms. The classroom space, tools, and resources in the room will be set up to support virtual teaching and learning. Staff will be designing learning opportunities using our district curricular materials that support priority standards in all content areas. At the start of each week, teachers will articulate plans and expectations for the week using a consistent landing page in Buzz. Foundational instruction will be provided and various challenge levels offered to support students when they need practice with a skill and to engage them on deeper levels with enrichment opportunities. Our staff will be focused on providing clear and consistent feedback and communication with students and parents about learning and student growth.

Weekly Schedule

You will be receiving a more detailed schedule from your child's school, however in an effort to support your family in planning, you will see some general schedule notes below. Our goal is for weekly schedules to be consistent and predictable:

- Students will engage in both synchronous (live/face-to-face) and asynchronous (independent) learning throughout the week.
 - Synchronous learning is live with educators, so students must be on a computer at a particular time (examples may include a whole class advisory meetings or instruction time, small group instruction, or one-to-one conferences).
 - Asynchronous learning is independent learning (examples include pre-recorded lessons/direct instruction, collaborative work within shared documents/tools, skills practice online or offline via expected learning activities).
- Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays will include a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning for students.
- Wednesdays are designated as asynchronous learning only. (Staff will be involved all day in professional development and collaborative planning.) While there will be no live teaching and learning on Wednesdays, it is expected that students will continue to follow a schedule and engage in learning opportunities that teachers provide.
- Efforts will be made to communicate times for connecting in small groups and for one-to-one conferences with students well in advance for ease of planning by students and parents/caregivers.
- Estimated time spent each day, without movement breaks or a lunch break, is about 4-5.5 hours of learning.
- Our staff is committed to working with families to ensure students are as successful as possible. For example, we will be working with families to support learning even when students cannot make a synchronous learning time.

You likely have additional questions at this point. Note that if you have an elementary-age student, you should have already received similar communication; the differences are mostly in the learning platform and specific schedules.

There is still much to be planned and decided and we promise to communicate decisions to you as quickly as possible. We thank you for your patience and support and look forward to partnering with you to make this a positive start to your child's school year.