

12.02.20

Dear GDS Community,

As part of our COVID-19 Response for the 20-21 school year, we developed a “Learning from Home” option for students that may be absent from campus due to family choice or following the new health and wellness policies. The faculty have done a wonderful job of adapting to the challenge of simultaneously teaching both in-person and virtual students. Overall, we feel this learning option has provided academic continuity for students that are learning from home for an extended period of time.

One area that continues to create challenges for the learning environment is when students are regularly switching back and forth between in-person and virtual learning. We believe this pattern makes it difficult for teachers to prepare their lessons appropriately and creates a disruption to learning for students that regularly choose one learning option.

When we return from winter break in January, families will be required to make a decision about their learning preference prior to the start of each interval and will be expected to stay with that learning preference for the duration of the interval. Students that have selected the Learning from Home option will be marked “Present-Learning From Home” in OnCampus, and these absences from campus will not count toward a student’s absence total for the year.

Families should plan to submit an online Learning from Home form by noon on the following deadlines if you plan for your student to learn from home for the duration of that interval.

Deadline for Online Form	Learning From Home Interval
Monday, January 4	Wednesday, January 6 - Friday, February 5
Wednesday, February 3	Monday, February 8 - Friday, March 12
Friday, March 19	Tuesday, March 23 - Tuesday, April 27
Monday, April 26	Wednesday, April 28 - Friday, May 28

Students will continue to have the ability to temporarily learn from home if they have a COVID-related absence that has been approved by the Wellness Coordinator. Parents are expected to complete the online COVID-related Absence Form to notify the school of the absence and request that their child be able to learn from home. These students are expected to return to in-person learning on the date provided by the Wellness Coordinator. Students that have an approved COVID-related absence will be marked “Present-Learning From Home” in OnCampus, and these absences from campus will not count toward a student’s absence total for the year.

We understand that many families have used the Learning From Home option this year when traveling or missing part of the school day for a medical appointment. Unfortunately, we will not be able to continue this flexibility after we return from winter break. As in previous school years, students should plan for a pre-arranged absence and coordinate with their teacher on when and how to make up any assignments. Some teachers may provide the opportunity for students to attend class virtually in order to listen in on that day's lesson, but this may not always be feasible and assignments may not be readily accessible from home. **These absences from campus will count toward a student's absence total for the year.**

When learning from home for one of the above reasons (as well as on virtual Wednesdays for Upper School), students are expected to follow the practices listed below. **Students that fail to meet these requirements may be marked absent, receive an incomplete for assignments, or be given a violation for distracting behavior.**

- Have access to wifi.
- Designate a quiet space at home to attend class, preferably with a chair and table or desk.
- Have a computer fully charged or plugged in; have all class materials.
- Make sure TV and music are turned off; use earbuds/headphones if helpful.
- Make sure the lights are on and that you are visible.
- Turn off or put away your cell phone and smartwatch to prevent distractions.
- Join each class at the scheduled time and attend for the entire period; partial periods, except those due to technical difficulties, are not permitted.
- Come to class dressed and groomed appropriately.
- Participate fully in class; eating, bathroom breaks, etc. should be handled during the breaks built into the schedule; participating in gaming, social media, YouTube or any other distractions during class sessions is prohibited.
- Be respectful to others; misbehavior or disruptions to the class will not be tolerated.

We hope these changes to our policy will improve the overall experience for all of our families. With more notice and longer intervals, we hope teachers can approach units and projects more effectively and provide differentiated expectations and instruction to better meet the needs of both in-person and virtual students.