A Parent Guide to Distance Learning

Menlo Park City School District

March 16,2020

Distance Learning Terms

Here are two key terms that will help you navigate the transition.

Synchronous

Students learn at the same time.

Communication happens in real time.

Possibly more engaging and effective.

Allows for instant feedback and clarification.

Examples
Video conferencing, live chat, live streamed videos.

Asynchronous

Students learn at different times.

Communication is not live.

Possibly more convenient and flexible.

Allows students to work at their own pace.

Examples
Email, screencasts, Flipgrid videos, blog posts/comments.

edublogs

Communication during Distance Learning from MPCSD

During Distance Learning, MPCSD will continue to communicate regularly and post updates at https://district.mpcsd.org/Page/2424.

In addition, you will receive daily communication from your child(ren)'s teacher(s) or his/her teaching partner. Please see the email and/or ParentSquare post from your teacher(s) on March 12 for information about how each teacher will be sharing assignments.

During this time, MPCSD is obligated by the state of California to continue to track student "attendance." Because of this, parents have ***one communication requirement***: we need each family to submit attendance for each child via the SchoolMessenger app (also known as Safe Arrival). Attendance may be submitted daily or for a range of dates. Choose the "Attending School Through Distance Learning" reason. Your child will be recorded as "present"

To ensure you are kept well-informed:
- Please watch for and read any messages from Superintendent Burmeister/MPCSD in your email and posted to our district website.
- Please watch for and read any messages from your teacher(s) via email or ParentSquare.

For Questions About …	Contact
A course, assignment, or resource	Your child(ren)'s teacher or teaching partner(s)
A technology-related problem or issue	distancelearning@mpcsd.org
A personal concern regarding your child	Your Child's Counselor
Other issues related to distance learning	Theresa Fox, tfox@mpcsd.org

Calling in Attendance

During Distance Learning, teachers are not able to "take attendance" as they traditionally do. Thus, we will be *relying on parents to submit attendance for all children*. We have attempted to make this easy for you. Please follow these step-by-step directions:

- *Download the SchoolMessenger (Safe Arrival) App on your phone* (while we highly recommend the app, if you prefer not to use it, you may report an absence from the link on your school's website).
- On the App, *select "Attendance" under the dropdown main menu*.
- *Select the purple "+" button* and then your child's name.
- *Using the drop-down menu select "Multiple Day"* (this is important if you don't want to have to log on each day).
- Using the next drop-down menu *select "Attending School through Distance Learning."* If you choose this option, your child will be marked "present."
- On the next screen *select March 16, 2020, as the first day of absence*.
- Just below First Day, *select March 26, 2020, as the last day of absence*. (Spring Break is scheduled to begin Friday, March 27; you don't need to select Friday as the last day.)
- In the upper right-hand corner, *press "Send."*

And that's it. If you follow these directions, you won't have to log back on to mark your child "present;" they do, however, have to complete the assigned work if you mark them present. If your child is sick and you need to mark them absent because they will not be able to complete the work in the time assigned, you may follow the same process to "call them in sick."

Thanks for your assistance in making this happen. The only way we can get credit for "keeping school open" and not have to make days up during the summer is to have proof of participation in "Distance Learning."

Resources for Parents and Families

- Common Sense Education has published vetted resources for parents to find educational video games and apps and ways to assess if an online tool is useful for learning.

- Zero to Three published guidance on how to talk to kids about the COVID-19.

- Colorín Colorado developed Multilingual Resources for Schools to use in communicating with families of English learners.

- NPR developed a comic strip to support information sharing with kids about COVID-19.

- BrainPop has made a short video explaining COVID-19 in friendly accessible language and engaging content.

- PBS Kids published guidance on how to talk to kids about the coronavirus.

- Newsela also published resources to help students understand coronavirus.

MPCSD's Distance Learning Platforms + Tools

MPCSD teachers are using one of 3 primary platforms for Distance Learning in K-5, and 3 platforms in 6-8th grade. Please note that your child's teacher is sharing assignments each day using whichever platform is already part of your child's daily instructional blended learning program.

Seesaw K-5	● Seesaw is a learning sharing platform used by many classes in K-Grade 5. Learners regularly post evidence of learning in Seesaw and teachers share feedback with learners there as well. During Distance Learning, teachers who already use Seesaw will use Seesaw to share video messages as well as assignments with their students. Students can access Seesaw by first logging in at the Clever website (https://clever.com/in/mpcsd) or on the Clever app using their district username and password or QR badge (K-2). Once they are logged into Clever, they can launch the Seesaw app or go to the Seesaw site.
Google Classroom Gr.2-8	● Google Classroom is another learning platform used by some classes in grades 2-8. During Distance Learning teachers will post their lessons/modules on their Google Classroom pages, possibly facilitate online discussions and accept submissions of student learning. Google Classroom also includes a calendar where assignment deadlines can be tracked. Students go to https://classroom.google.com, log in with Google, and select each teacher/class from the landing page.
Altitude Learning Gr. 3-7	● Altitude Learning is another learning platform used by some classes in grades 3-7. During Distance Learning teachers will post their lessons/modules in their Altitude courses, accept submissions of student learning, and give feedback to students on their progress. Students access the platform at http://mpcsd.altitudelearning.com and log on with their Google account.
Edmodo Gr. 6-8	● Edmodo is another learning platform used by some classes in grades 6-8. During Distance Learning teachers will post their lessons/modules to their Edmodo courses and accept submissions of student learning. Edmodo also includes a calendar where assignment deadlines can be tracked. Students access the platform using the Edmodo app on their school-issued iPad.

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G Suite K-8	● Google G Suite is the primary productivity platform used in MPCSD. All students beginning in Kindergarten are provided with their own Google account that includes access to Calendar, Classroom, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Slides. Typically, our classrooms do not access most of these tools until 3rd grade or later. Starting in 6th grade, students also have access to Gmail. During Distance Learning, teachers will ensure that all students are provided their Google account username and password (if they don't already have it). Google Hangout Meet has also be enabled for all students so that teachers can hold video chats with their students. ● ***If you have more than one child sharing a family device to access Google apps, you will want to set up a process for ensuring each child logs out of Google before the next child logs on. This will help students to stay focused on their own materials and with their own tools.***
Google Hangout Meet	● Teachers K-8 may opt to hold video chat sessions with students to give live instruction, to host discussions, and/or to continue to build social-emotional connections with students. Your child(ren)'s teacher will announce the date/time for these virtual meetings, and may share a link to the session. In addition, you & your child will be able to access any session by going to https://meet.google.com and logging in with your child's account. Any events that your child has been invited to will be linked on the landing page.

Additional Tools, Gr. K-5
 	
Family Tutorials:
Logging on
	K-5 teachers will give clear instructions for students if they want them to use any of these extra tools.
	● Clever -- students can use their MPCSD username and password or QR badge (grades K-2) to log into https://clever.com/in/mpcsd. They are then automatically logged into the following apps. They just click on the app in the Clever dashboard to launch it:
	   ○ Seesaw
	   ○ DreamBox (K-5 math). This link has more resources for parents to support DreamBox from home: https://padlet.com/DreamBox/HomeLearning
	   ○ Typing Club (2nd-4th)
	   ○ Lexia Core 5 (Laurel Elem., K-5)
	   ○ ThinkCentral (some 3-5th grade classrooms)
	   ○ Code.org
	● Some teachers have linked additional tools to Clever, including:
	   ○ ELA: Raz-Kids, Newsela, Epic!, Words Their Way, Benchmark Adelants
	   ○ Science: Mystery Science
	   ○ Math: Reflex Math, Freckle

Tips for Distance Learning in your Home

Create an Optimal Learning Environment	- A shared family space so that you are accessible to check-in, monitor progress, and assist/support. - A Quiet-Study/Learning Zone: Family agreement that the space is a "learning" space and learning expectations apply (non-distracting from peers, outside noise, avoid a child's bedroom, etc.) - Have resources/materials accessible (i.e. markers, paper, rulers, etc.) for your child to be successful with their activities. Plan ahead and review due dates to have materials ready. - Proper desk/table and ergonomic seating that allows your child(ren) to be comfortable when learning.
Begin/End each day with a check-in	- Start and finish each day with a simple check-in with your child(ren) - Look at grade level assignment calendars together to review anything that is due. - Check in with their virtual learning platforms to find any updates for the day. - Review if any of their teachers have office hours that day and write questions down together that may need to be answered. - Finally have a discussion and ask - What are you learning today? - What are the learning goals? - How will you spend your time? (consider setting a schedule that can be easily followed by your children) - What resources do you require? - How can I help? - Submit the daily attendance School Messenger. Please note: This brief conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize and set priorities. Parents should establish these check-ins at regular times each day and possibly even write down a schedule for the day with further check-in times.
Routines and Expectations for Learning at Home	- Set regular hours for learning. If possible, align these hours with the hours that your children are most attentive. These may be different for different children, respective of age and workload. - Write down a schedule for each child (or if appropriate, have your child create a schedule) with built-in breaks for snacks, outdoor movement/ exercise and playtime. Check off items as completed -- children love the sense of accomplishment! Younger children might also be motivated by short goals, i.e. "complete two activities from your teacher and then we'll play a family game." - Just as cellphones are kept in backpacks at school, you might also keep cellphones away at home until assignments are completed (or use as a social break after a certain number of assignments are completed). - Maintain regular sleep routines and wake times.

Tips for Distance Learning in your Home

Establish "Think Time"	● One challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Headphones can be a great opportunity for learners to focus and avoid distraction. Depending on the devices available in your home, you may also need to stagger the online work time for each child.
Encourage Exercise	● Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. ● Plan regular opportunities to get up and move around ● Go outside and play and/or encourage your child(ren) to do something helpful around the house
Support their Learning Socially	● Distance learning opportunities may include collaborative group assignments/projects. Monitor these for/with your child(ren) as online social interaction will enhance the experience for your child(ren). ● If the teacher offers an "office hour" try to join in, as this can be an opportunity for peer-to-peer feedback, group discussions, sharing ideas, etc. ● In addition to the "check-ins," regularly engage with your child(ren) about what they're learning throughout the day. Completing lessons with your child is one way this can be accomplished.
Maintain Social Opportunities for your Children	● If available, plan times your child(ren) can interact with others (same compound, family members, club/activity, etc.) ● Monitor your children's social media use, especially during an extended campus closure. Older students will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as TikTok,, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Facebook are not official, school-sanctioned channels of communication.

Tips for Distance Learning in your Home

Responsible Use of Technology	When completing work online, joining video calls and/or participating in virtual discussions, students should be sure to: ● Use respectful behavior and language. ● Stick to appropriate topic discussions. ● Send only appropriate video transmissions. ● Use only appropriate icon, emoji, and avatar submissions. ● Wear school appropriate clothing if attending meetings via video. ● Be honest and use academic integrity by not plagiarizing or copying others' work ● Not falsify information about oneself or impersonate others online.
Create a Support Network	Everyone is encouraged to ask themselves: ● Who in the neighborhood might be able to look after several family's children? ● How can a neighborhood or friendship group use a rotation schedule to provide supervision for students? ● Who in the neighborhood is really "tech savvy" and willing to help teach others how to use the online tools that are available to MPCSD students? ● How might older siblings and students be able to support the learning of younger children? ● In what ways can neighbors and friendship groups share technology tools?