

Dear Parents and Guardians:

## **Remote Learning 2.0 Plan**

Our administration has been working diligently to enhance our remote learning plan to ensure a smooth start to the 2020-21 school year. Our fully remote learning plan 2.0 is significantly different from our eLearning schedule from this past spring. Based on the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) guidance, schools must provide learning activities for a minimum of 5 hours daily for grades 1st - 12th. ISBE is not expecting or suggesting that these 5 hours of instruction consist exclusively of live streaming screen time. Rather, the 5 hours of daily learning activities may include real-time instruction, pre-recorded videos (simultaneously viewed remotely or in-person), structured learning activities such as question/answer sessions, whole class, and/or small group instruction, and written activities.

Additionally, ISBE recommends students receive a minimum of 2.5 hours per day of synchronous virtual learning. “Synchronous learning” occurs when both teachers and students are online at the same time. When students are working independently offline, this is referred to as “asynchronous learning.” Teachers will be prepared to offer synchronous learning, in a live-streaming format, at every level throughout the school. Synchronous learning, in a live-streaming format, will occur whether students are learning remotely from home or upon returning to a hybrid model in the future. Teachers will plan to teach these learners simultaneously on a daily basis. During synchronized instructions, students will follow their regularly scheduled classes remotely to prevent scheduling conflicts for students, parents, and other academic classes. Students will log into their classes and participate in the lessons based on their daily schedule.

Synchronous lessons may be recorded by the teacher and posted for viewing at a later date or time. It is also possible that lessons will be pre-recorded, or other selected videos will be used as an instructional resource during synchronous learning. In these situations, teachers will be available to guide lessons and facilitate student discussions. Synchronous learning activities are not required to last a full class length and may last anywhere from 10 minutes to 30 minutes depending on a student’s grade level.

All New Connections Academy students began the school year at home through remote learning on August 13, 2020. Students will slowly be phasing to in-person instruction beginning August 31, 2020 and parents/guardians should have received an email of their students' expected in-person return date. Please note that this expected return date is subject to change. The normal 20-21 school calendar will remain in place and no “makeup” days will be needed at this time.

Below are some highlights of Remote Learning 2.0 in addition to some important information related to the start of the new school year.

- **Daily Schedule:** Students in all grade levels will have a consistent daily schedule, whether they are learning remotely or in-person. First through twelfth grade students' classes will be spread out over a 5 hour day. The schedule is as follows depending upon the student's grade level.
  
- **Instructional Plan:** Our first priority is to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff while continuing to provide learning opportunities that focus on critical academic standards. While we are slowly phasing students back into the building, teachers will develop instructional plans that utilize a mix of synchronous instruction in which teachers meet virtually with students, and asynchronous instruction in which students independently complete lessons and assessments. Each class taught will include "facetime" with the teacher.
  - Students will receive consistent live (synchronous) instruction throughout the day.
  - Their daily schedules will look just like when students are in-person with their groups, related services and PE.
  - The curriculum will continue to be fully aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards
  - New Connections Academy will support students' social-emotional growth through the use of live instruction and student collaboration.
  - The opportunity to build a community of learning and re-establish interpersonal relationships.
  
- **Instruction During Remote Learning:** All learning objectives, and academic resources for remote learning will be posted in Google Classroom. Students are required to login to Google Classroom to access their lessons on all days in which they are working remotely. Students who need assistance should reach out to their classroom staff via email or through Google Classroom.
  
- **Length of Remote Lessons:** Daily remote lessons in our fully remote model will continue to provide students with new learning experiences. Asynchronous lessons will be designed to be about 30 minutes in length. Synchronous lessons will last anywhere between 10 and 30 minutes, and will be scheduled during the times indicated on the students daily schedules. All lessons will be focused on reviewing previous skills from last year, and addressing key skills and academic standards for the current course.
  
- **Students Responsibilities During Remote Learning:**
  - Attend all synchronous classes
  - Fully participate and engage during class time appropriately
  - View recorded lessons when unable to attend live class sessions
  - Complete assignments and assessments as required by teachers
  - Request additional support when needed
  
- **Parent Responsibilities During Remote Learning:**
  - Review the Remote Learning expectations with your child

- Reserve a space suitable for students to complete remote learning work, if possible
  - Regularly review and monitor assignments with students
  - Set routines and schedules to help students establish and follow a routine
  - Complete attendance expectations daily
  - Keep open communication with classroom teachers
- **Textbooks:**
    - If necessary, some student textbooks will be provided to keep at home and returned back to school when reporting for in-person instruction.
    - A system for delivery and/or pick up and return of materials will be developed as necessary.
    - Students will have access to a variety of digital libraries with leveled material
- **Grading Practices:** This fall grading practices will follow the New Connections Academy grading philosophy and procedures found as outlined below. The grading policy is a vital part of the school program. Grading provides a means of determining a student's progress during the school year and a final evaluation of the skills and knowledge displayed in a given class. Showing fairness to all students is of prime importance in grading. The student must be aware of each teacher's method of grading at the beginning of each course or when the student enters the course.
- **Letter Grades:** The letter grade is the percentage of the earned accumulative points in relation to the possible points available through the quarter. The letter grade is a culmination of participation points, classwork, homework and test/quizzes. The standard grading policy is:
    - 90% minimum for A
    - 80% minimum for a B
    - 70% for a C
    - 60% for a D
    - The following procedures will also be enacted to meet the needs of our students while the school day is impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic:
      - Late work will be accepted for full credit until the end of an instructional unit. Late work turned in after the conclusion of an instructional until will be accepted per teacher discretion.
      - Students taking a course through one of our online platforms (Edmentum Courseware or Edgenuity) must complete coursework in a timely manner and will be graded based on the completion of work.
      - Students will earn grades based on the work that they submit during the course of the semester.
      - Teachers must have at least one grade per week in the gradebook. Regular feedback to students in a blended setting is critical in supporting

their learning. This will also facilitate the implementation of additional needed academic supports for students.

- Students will be provided the opportunity to redo or make corrections on completed assignments.
  - Progress reports sent out 5 weeks prior to end of quarter/semester
  - Report cards will be provided at the end of each quarter from grades 1st thru 8th and mid-term grades will be provided for 9th thru 12th in October with final grades for high school students in December.
- **Student Attendance:** All students must complete the daily online attendance form. The form will be available on their Google Classroom homeroom.
    - New Connections Academy will adhere to the ISBE guidelines regarding attendance and communicate these expectations to parents.
    - If your child is sick, and unable to participate in their daily learning activities, the parent/guardian must call New Connections Academy to report the absence. Failure to do so will result in an unexcused absence for that student.
    - Parents/guardians of students who are marked unexcused will be contacted via SchoolMessenger to inform them of the absence.
  - **Related Services:** Related service providers, including Individual Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Speech Therapists, Music Therapists, Art Therapists, and Drug and Alcohol Counselors, will continue to meet their student's IEP minutes during remote learning.
    - Related service providers will set up scheduled weekly sessions with the students on their caseload via Google Meets or via phone.
    - Group Therapy will be provided during their designated class time.
    - They will also be available for student check-ins during the day as needed.
  - **Tech Tools:**
    - **Chromebooks:** If any student needs a chromebook at home, please contact your principal and we will arrange to either have one picked up during school hours in a drive-thru format or dropped off to the students house if no one can pick it up.
    - If your home environment does not have reliable WIFI access for your child, please contact your child's school for information on low-cost WIFI providers.
    - NCA will continue to use Google Classroom for assignments and daily schedule
    - Google Meets for live instruction (synchronous)
    - Students will also be using online educational programs that they are familiar with such as: Edmentum, Exact Path, Pearson Realize, McGraw Hill, etc.
    - Per parent request, Teachers have also provided paper and pencil work to students who felt the technology was not appropriate for their child. For students who received paper and pencil, teachers will check in with parents via email to see if students need assistance with any work and coordinate a time to provide

support to the student. Teachers will also inquire as to when it is appropriate to send additional work and will put all work in the mail and notify administration of having done so.

- **Technical Difficulties with Chromebooks/School Software:** If a student is encountering difficulties with their Chromebook, or with other software supported by New Connections Academy (i.e., Google Apps, Lexia, Edmentum, Edgenuity, Pearson Realize, McGraw-Hill, etc.) please contact your classroom teacher. The teacher and student will troubleshoot the problem together. If the teacher cannot resolve the issues, they will immediately notify the principal. If the principal cannot resolve the issue, then a ticket will be submitted to our IT department.
  - Troubleshooting can include such things as: scheduling a time to bring in the chromebook, staff member making a homevisit to troubleshoot, exchanging out chromebook, etc.
  
- **Restorative Interventions & Supports:** Connections staff will continue to manage school online with Remote Learning opportunities for all students and will continue to support academics, therapy and have access to our Restorative Interventions & Supports department (RIS) to connect with Intervention Specialists during this time. RIS is set up in a RIS Google classroom.
  - Students can request their therapist or an Intervention Specialist during remote learning. If a student would like to request their therapist or an intervention specialist the student can ask appropriately by letting their classroom staff, therapist or parents know. In addition, Intervention Specialists will be joining a group once a week to connect with students.
  - During Remote/Elearning students will need breaks just like at school and are able to request breaks during the day. Breaks at home are to help students regulate and help students stay in charge of their emotions. This will help them demonstrate Mastery which is part of the Circle of Courage. In addition, students will stay on task and be a positive part of the group demonstrating Belonging. For example, Students can journal, draw, listen to school appropriate music, have a mint, ask to take a break with an intervention specialist or request their therapist etc. Breaks time starts with a duration of 5 mins, but may take up to 10 minutes.
  - Students that are refusing to work or not attending remote learning will not receive a formal referral to RIS, but RIS staff will be available for more support (encourage the student to participate), if needed.
  - All staff will provide students positive feedback with expected behaviors and allow breaks when needed or requested by students. When students are having an unexpected behavior staff will offer breaks and provide redirection in the Google classroom. If the student needs more support in the Restorative Interventions & Supports they will receive support from our Restorative Intervention Specialists to help them work through any issues and get back to class.

- Students will continue to utilize the same point sheet they have in the past, however it will not be completed digitally
- **Family Contact Information:** Please ensure your contact information (including emergency contacts) is up-to-date and has been submitted to New Connections Academy as soon as possible. When choosing emergency contacts, please remember to include an adult other than the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian may not be listed as an emergency contact.. Also consider adults who are available during the day and have transportation should it be necessary to pick up your child from school. New Connections Academy uses SchoolMessenger to send out information regarding school updates so we encourage all parents to include an email address that is frequently checked on the contact information page.
- **Communication with Parents/Guardians:**
  - Teachers and Therapists will communicate on a weekly basis with parents based on the parents preferred method of communication (phone call or email).
  - School administrators will continue to use SchoolMessenger to communicate any changes or updates to parents/guardians.
  - Parents/Guardians can also check the schools website at [www.newconnectionsacademy.net](http://www.newconnectionsacademy.net) for updates as well.
  - Daily attendance phone calls via SchoolMessenger will be made to parents/guardians of unexcused student absences or absences that have not been communicated to the front office.
- **IEP Meetings:**
  - All students will continue to receive all services as outlined in their IEP.
  - All IEP meetings will be held in-person or virtually as preferred by parent/guardian.
  - New Connections Academy will continue to conduct evaluations in a timely and comprehensive manner as outlined in the students' domain.
  - If additional data is needed via individual evaluation, the IEP team will discuss the details of such testing at the domain meeting (such as feasibility, a timeline for testing, as well as how testing will be conducted). .
- **Remote Learning Planning Days** ISBE is once again allowing schools to utilize (5) Remote Learning Planning days to allow time for teachers to develop meaningful and comprehensive lessons while schools are running blended or fully remote instructional models. New Connections Academy has not dedicated specific dates at this time; however, Parents will be notified via SchoolMessenger about upcoming Remote Learning Planning Days.
  - During Remote Learning Planning Days, there will be no newly assigned work for students, but teachers will respond to any questions received from students.

- Remote Learning Planning days are still considered to be student attendance days, but will not require students to complete the attendance form. On these days, students will be responsible for catching up on coursework.
- **School Supplies:** All school supplies for students have been purchased by New Connections Academy including clear book bags as well as individual sensory tools. Students will not need to purchase any supplies or bring any additional supplies to school.

This school year will start unlike any other, but New Connections Academy is committed to delivering the best education with the highest standards. The staff-student relationships are key to success for all students, and our staff continues to be committed to student learning. New Connections Academy maintains the same expectations as if the building were open and traditional school was occurring. Our administration team continues to be available to support both students and parents. Learning will take place every school day, even though our building may not be open to in-person instruction.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the building administrator.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MS. COOK". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted.

Ms. Amanda Cook, M.Ed.  
Educational Director