

REMOTE LEARNING PLAN



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CHESHIRE
ACADEMY

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Remote Learning Plan

Cheshire Academy

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Mission Statement

Cheshire Academy is an internationally minded college-preparatory school that challenges its students to maximize their potential by developing the confidence, character, and critical thinking skills that enable them to thrive as global citizens.

Academic Vision

Cheshire Academy students grow increasingly capable of independently observing, questioning, explaining, interpreting, and analyzing the world. Our academic process begins with what students know and want to know, and develops active learners who reflect on their growth and the implications of their learning.

Overview

Cheshire Academy is committed to delivering a rigorous and supportive academic experience for all students. To be prepared for occasions when external circumstances impede the Academy's ability to have an open campus for instruction, the Academy has developed the remote learning plan detailed in this document. This plan prioritizes the student experience and is modeled after the best of what an in-person Cheshire Academy education provides for students. In addition to providing frequent supportive one-on-one and small group interactions with students, this plan ensures the continuity of the classroom experience and intellectual engagement even as students and teachers interface virtually.

The following remote learning plan outlines an approach to maintaining instruction, learning, assessment, and feedback using digital and online resources in the event of an extended period of remote learning or campus closure. Information regarding Academy plans in the event of an emergency are communicated by the Head of School or the Office of Marketing & Communications. This document focuses primarily on the platforms and pedagogy that teachers will use to ensure continuity of learning should an event cause a disruption in campus operations.

Remote Learning Plan

In the event that campus is closed for an extended period of time, the Academy will implement the remote learning plan. We believe that with flexibility and creativity, we can provide students with meaningful opportunities to continue their learning that are modeled after the on-campus experience of a Cheshire Academy education. The remote learning program detailed below aims to support each individual student's learning and well-being while continuing to promote a sense of community and a fellowship of learning. Following the announcement of a campus closure from the Head of School, students and families should expect additional information and instructions from academic administrators and teachers.

Depending on the cause for campus closure, the Academy may be required to delay the initiation of the remote learning plan. If there is little to no advance warning for campus closure, the Academy will communicate with families on the timing of the start of remote learning as early as possible. One likely scenario is that the first two days of campus closure would be dedicated to teacher preparation and designated as workdays for all Academy employees, either remotely or physically, depending on campus conditions. Students would then be expected to begin engaging in remote learning on the third day of a campus closure. If there is more advance warning for the campus closure, the start date of remote learning may fall at any designated time. Detailed communication with students, parents/guardians, and employees through email and the Cheshire Academy website will include the exact date for the beginning of remote learning for students.

We recognize that a shift to remote learning requires our teachers, students, and families to make adjustments, and that the new approaches may feel unfamiliar and challenging for all of us at times. Therefore, all are encouraged to approach the transition with patience and flexibility. In a remote learning environment, interruptions to learning may occur for a number of foreseeable and unforeseeable reasons. Our teachers and administrators appreciate this reality and will be, first and foremost, supportive and flexible when working with students and families throughout the implementation of this plan.

Navigating the Platform

By utilizing familiar tools, our students can adapt easily and smoothly to a remote learning approach. Therefore, the "My Cheshire" Portal will host all asynchronous content, which comprises most of the curriculum, assignments, feedback, and communication provided to students.

Course Bulletin Boards will be utilized for posting Weekly Plans (see the Asynchronous Course Content section).

Topics pages will be utilized for gathering and sharing course resources.

Assignments, Discussions, and Assessments will be utilized for organizing and sequencing the work for students to complete.

Progress will continue to display students' grades in each course.

Gradebook Notes will be utilized to provide assignment-specific written feedback for students, where appropriate.

Official Notes will continue to be utilized to communicate personalized, narrative feedback to individual students.

Messages will be utilized for group communication regarding notifications or changes to asynchronous content or scheduled live class sessions.

My Day → Schedule will reflect the students' daily advisory sessions, required live class sessions, and optional live office hours that are scheduled each day.

Zoom will be utilized to host all live portions of the remote learning environment. Students will be issued detailed instructions for accessing their live Zoom meeting invitations for each class. Live class meetings are required according to the schedule listed in the Weekly Academic Schedule section.

Curriculum and Instruction

Asynchronous Course Content

Asynchronous is the term we use for course materials that teachers have prepared for students ahead of time, to complete at their own pace between scheduled live class meetings.

Students will spend a large portion of their time with asynchronous course content. This content will include the introduction to and explanation of new material, review material, individual student tasks and activities, and responses to classmates. The asynchronous content is designed around learning activities, which include opportunities for students to self-assess and make progress toward mastery.

Since students have access to this content 24/7, they can view and complete the material when it fits in their schedule in between live class meetings. They will need Internet access and an Internet-enabled device to access the asynchronous content. It will be organized and posted through our online learning management system, the "My Cheshire" Portal.

In each course, students will find a Weekly Plan posted on the class bulletin board on the Portal. The Weekly Plan is a thorough syllabus for the week, with a set of tasks for the student to

complete between required live class meetings (see Weekly Academic Schedule below), as well as an agenda for each live class meeting. Each Weekly Plan may contain several tasks for a student to complete, with up to 2-3 hours' worth of work per course throughout the week.

Tasks that require online submission or grading will be seen on a student's Assignment Center, and will all be referenced and explained in the Weekly Plan. The Weekly Plan, rather than the Assignment Center, should be regularly consulted for the complete list of the week's material and tasks to be done.

Although courses vary, the strategy is to have students engage through asynchronous coursework with content that will form the basis for discussion, synthesis, or further interactive learning during the live class meetings.

Synchronous Course Content (Live Meetings)

Synchronous coursework requires students to be simultaneously logged into the virtual classroom at the same time as their teacher and classmates. Synchronous sessions are also referred to as live meetings. During these meetings, students will need to have Internet access and an Internet-enabled device with a camera, a microphone, and earbuds or a headset. The live meeting application that will be utilized is called Zoom.

When students log in to a live class, they are expected to be on camera and able to participate through audio for the duration of the class meeting. When they log in, students will automatically be muted by Zoom. Students can unmute and mute themselves throughout class to make contributions, according to the teacher's expectations. If for any reason a student's video or audio is not working during a live session, teachers will be flexible and work with students to ensure that they have been able to engage with the necessary content from the meeting.

For their academic coursework, there are three types of live meetings that students will attend:

Live Class Meetings. For a given class, these are held during one 50-minute block and one 30-minute block each week. All classmates and the teacher will log in simultaneously with video and audio enabled. Students must have completed the required asynchronous material prior to each live class meeting, as detailed in the Weekly Plan.

Live Extra Help. For a given class, these are held during one 25-minute block per week. The teacher will be logged in and students can log in as needed to get extra help.

Partner or Group Meetings. When necessary for coursework, students will be shown how to meet virtually with each other in pairs or small groups.

Note that the conditions that have caused the campus to close may necessitate an adjustment to the synchronous (“live”) schedule at any time. Changes to live meeting times or frequency will depend on the conditions of campus, the access of both teachers and students to the required technology, and the health and wellness of the members of our community. If necessary, live class meetings will be replaced with recorded sessions or alternate assignments that will allow students to continue to progress with their learning asynchronously until live classes can resume. Adjustments may be necessary for individual teachers or courses or for the entire academic program and will be communicated through email and the Cheshire Academy website to students and families.

**Cheshire Academy Remote Learning
Weekly Academic Schedule**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 – 8:50 a.m. A Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required	8:00 – 8:30 a.m. E Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	8:00 – 8:25 a.m. A Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional	8:00 – 8:30 a.m. A Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	8:00 – 8:50 a.m. E Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required
	8:40 – 9:10 a.m. F Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	8:30 – 8:55 a.m. B Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional	8:40 – 9:10 a.m. B Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	
9:00 – 9:50 a.m. B Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required	9:15 – 10:05 a.m. Community Events (50 min) - Clubs, Student Leadership, etc. Parent Q&A	9:00 – 9:25 a.m. C Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional	9:15 – 10:05 a.m. Community Events (50 min) - Clubs, Student Leadership, etc. Parent Q&A	9:00 – 9:50 a.m. F Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required
		9:30 – 9:55 a.m. D Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional		
10:00 – 10:50 a.m. C Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required	10:10 – 10:30 a.m. Advisory (20 min) Required	10:00 – 10:25 E Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional	10:10 – 10:30 a.m. Advisory (20 min) Required	10:00 – 10:50 a.m. G Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required
	10:40 – 11:10 a.m. G Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	10:30 – 10:55 F Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional	10:40 – 11:10 a.m. C Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	
11:00 – 11:50 a.m. D Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required	11:20 – 11:50 a.m. H Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	11:00 – 11:25 a.m. G Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional	11:20 – 11:50 a.m. D Period (30 min) Live Meeting Required	11:00 – 11:50 a.m. H Period (50 min) Live Meeting Required
		11:30 – 11:55 a.m. H Period (25 min) Extra Help Optional		
12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Faculty Meeting	12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Faculty Meeting	12:00 – 1:00 p.m. Lunch	12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Faculty Meeting	12:00 – 12:30 p.m. Faculty Meeting
12:30 – 4:00 p.m. Independent Work Time	12:30 – 4:00 p.m. Independent Work Time	1:00 – 2:00 p.m. Academic Committee (Faculty)	12:30 – 4:00 p.m.* Independent Work Time * Health Team (Faculty) Meeting @ 1:00 p.m.	12:30 – 4:00 p.m. Independent Work Time

Student Support and Clubs

Attendance

Teachers will continue to take attendance at required live class meetings on the “My Cheshire” Portal, as they do when on-campus school is in session. Similarly, advisors will take attendance at each required advisory session.

If a student needs to miss a required live meeting for any reason, parental permission will be needed to excuse the absence. Absences can continue to be reported to the Office of Community Life via voicemail or email.

Advisory

Mandatory live advisory meetings will occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Advisors will use this time to make sure that students are engaged with their learning and feel set up for success to manage their work and schedules with the new online learning expectations. Advisors will also have discussion questions planned each day to touch base with students about their well-being and to continue building supportive relationships. Any all-school announcements or resources that are shared will also be reiterated during Advisory meetings.

Extra Help

Rather than an extra help window each day in which students can visit any teacher (as in the on-campus daily schedule), each course has its own extra help period for 25 minutes per week. These live extra help meetings are optional, and students are encouraged to drop in with questions about asynchronous work or other course material.

Math Lab and Center for Writing

Center for Writing support will continue to be available throughout the academic day during periods of remote learning. This will be accomplished through one-on-one live meetings with the Center Director. Teachers will encourage or require students to take advantage of this resource for applicable assignments and will help students coordinate these live meetings to occur during mutual free or extra help periods.

The Math Lab will not continue to operate during periods of remote learning. Students will have a 25-minute extra help block available in every course to seek extra help directly from their teacher, which can be especially useful for students looking for additional support in math. In addition, all math

teachers will be open to arranging live one-on-one extra help sessions during mutual free periods with students, by appointment.

Library

The Library will remain virtually “open” as a resource for students during periods of remote learning. In addition to the online resources that students can access through the library website, students can arrange one-on-one or small group live meetings with the librarians for support with specific assignments.

Roxbury Academic Support

Roxbury Academic Support will continue to operate at all four levels (Roxbury 1, 2, 3, and 4) using live one-on-one meetings facilitated by the Roxbury instructor, in addition to written communication. Modifications to scheduled meeting times will be communicated individually with students and parents/guardians. Roxbury reports will continue to be recorded each week by teachers and weekly Roxbury communication to parents/guardians will continue via the already established protocol of either email, phone call, or a combination of the two.

College Counseling

College Counseling will continue operations as usual, using live one-on-one meetings for individual counseling and Zoom meetings for small group sessions, scheduled during students’ free periods. Additional resources from College Counseling can be found on the Portal Resource Board.

Clubs and Student Leadership

Student clubs and student leadership groups will continue to meet during periods of remote learning. The schedule for these meetings will be determined by a group’s faculty advisor(s) based on mutually convenient times or during the Community block on the schedule and communicated to students via Portal messages and/or email.

Technology Requirements

Device Requirements

Cheshire Academy's existing BYOD (bring your own device) program requires that every student bring a portable digital computer to school each day. Acceptable devices have included laptops and tablets, while using a smart phone as a sole academic work device is has not been recommended.

The laptops and tablets that students have been using under the BYOD program should be sufficient for the requirements of remote learning. However, for ease of use, it is strongly encouraged that students use a PC, Mac, or Chromebook if possible. For students relying on a tablet, it is recommended that they use a keyboard attachment for typing.

The one additional requirement for remote learning is to ensure that the device is equipped with a camera and a microphone. Alternatively, a student could use a separate camera attachment and either a separate microphone attachment or a headset/earbuds with a microphone built in. Smart phones are equipped with cameras and microphones and can be used in the short-term for live meetings, as needed.

Students will also need reliable Internet access during periods of remote learning. Families concerned about the device or Internet requirements of the remote learning plan should communicate with our Director of Technology for support or to inquire about technology available for loan.

Live Meeting Logistics

Teachers will continually help students navigate the world of virtual meetings, and students are likely to teach their teachers a few things as well. None of us will be experts at this overnight, but expertise will come with experience.

Audio Troubleshooting

- Students should use a headset or earbud-style headphones for live meetings. They should not use their computer speakers without headphones, as this can cause feedback or an echo for other people in the meeting.
- Teachers will show students how to mute and unmute themselves to make contributions to the discussion. When not speaking, students should remain muted so as not to create feedback or an echo.

Video Troubleshooting

- Students need a reliable Internet connection, which may need to be wired if the strength of a WiFi signal cannot be relied upon.
- If the video is not working, students should make sure that any other programs using the camera are closed or try restarting their computer and logging back into the meeting.
- For video best practice, students should set up the camera so that light is in front of them and their device is angled to show their face.
- Maintaining an up-to-date browser and checking for software updates on a monthly basis is recommended. It is also recommended that students reboot their computer or device on a regular basis to minimize issues.

Expectations for Live Meeting Etiquette

- Students should try to be in a quiet place for class, as best as they can.
- Students should not eat or drink anything other than water when on camera. This can be distracting for classmates.
- Students should remove distractions like social media and texting during live meetings.

Technical Support

Technical support inquiries should be sent via email to support@cheshireacademy.org. Urgent troubleshooting requests during periods of remote learning can be directed to the Director of Technology at 203-439-7232. These will be handled as quickly as possible but, as in all components of this plan, we encourage patience and teachers will be flexible with students experiencing technical difficulties.

Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

We recognize that a shift to remote learning will require our students and families to make adjustments. A partnership with parents and guardians, especially those of our day student families, is essential for the success of the remote learning plan. The academic leadership, teachers, and advisors are available to guide students as much as possible, but there are things that parents/guardians can do to help students be successful as well.

Help your child establish a regular schedule and stay engaged with their learning.

- Help your child establish and maintain a routine, including a regular bedtime and wake-up time each day.
- Familiarize yourself with the weekly academic schedule and encourage your child use their breaks during the school day to stand up and move around.
- Begin and close each “school day” with a brief check-in.
- If you check on your child throughout the day, remind them to consult the Weekly Plan for each course. Even when they are not in live class, there will always be meaningful learning tasks to complete.

Create a dedicated learning space.

- Help your child identify a place at home that can serve as a dedicated workspace for online learning, where they can “go to school” each day.
- A space that is clean, neat, and free of distractions (e.g. cell phones, TVs, video games), with a strong WiFi signal and outlet access, is ideal.
- If an open, central location in the home will be sufficiently quiet, this will help your child avoid feeling isolated and will allow you to monitor their screen activity if you are nearby.
- Consider telling your child that couches and beds are off-limits for online learning.

Encourage independence and allow for productive struggle.

- Online learning creates the perfect opportunity for students to develop self-monitoring skills, independence, self-reliance, and confidence.
- Stay engaged with your child’s learning, but allow them to grapple with problems and come up with ideas for tackling them.
- Refer your child back to their teachers for extra help (scheduled twice per week for 45 minutes) if they seem stuck or discouraged, and our teachers will help your child reframe their questions and approaches.

Enable your child to maintain social contact with peers.

- It is important for your child to stay in social contact with their friends and classmates during a campus closure, virtually or in-person, as permitted.
- Classes can foster study groups and advisory and clubs can offer extracurricular interaction, but purely social interactions that are student-driven will help your child stay connected and feel a part of the community.

Encourage physical activity and monitor student stress and wellbeing.

- Physical movement and exercise are vital to maintaining health, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving concentration and focus. Try to ensure that your child is getting the same amount of physical exercise during remote learning periods as they are used to getting.
- Remind your child to eat healthy foods and drink water throughout the day.
- We ask that parents also monitor student stress levels and reach out to your child's advisor or the school counselor for advice as needed.

Academic Frequently Asked Questions

How will the Academy ensure that my child is continuing to learn?

Through well-researched templates, digital learning tools, frequent communication, and professional development, teachers have worked closely with the academic leadership to develop remote plans that ensure continuity of learning for our students. Approaches to remote teaching and learning are often not the same as approaches to in-person teaching and learning. During remote learning, both asynchronous and synchronous lessons are carefully designed to prioritize (1) active student engagement with content and (2) frequent feedback on progress toward learning objectives.

How will my child be graded? Will my child earn credits towards graduation?

Nothing will change in this regard. All students will continue to earn letter grades in each course, and the gradebook will remain open for students and parents/guardians to be able to monitor progress. Grades will be entered into the official academic transcripts, adhering to the academic calendar deadlines.

Will my child be sitting behind a computer all day, every day?

By modeling our remote learning schedule on our existing daily academic schedule, a student's required live sessions, optional live sessions, and free periods will be staggered at different times throughout the day and week. During their free periods and optional extra help periods, students may choose to continue working on their computer, or may work with physical materials, get up and move around, or take a break.

What about courses that are hard to replicate in an online environment?

Courses that have a significant hands-on or in-person element (e.g. ceramics, music skills and performance, lab sciences) will receive careful consideration and creative planning on the part of teachers to ensure continuity of learning. Teachers will provide appropriate alternative assignments related to the subject matter during the period of remote learning.

What resources are available to my child if they begin to face challenges with learning?

Your child's teacher is the first resource; teachers will make themselves available to speak with students and their parents directly. Cheshire Academy teachers are prepared to be flexible, adapt assignments, and accommodate student learning needs to ensure progress for each student. In addition to your child's teachers, advisors are available to provide one-on-one support. Additional tutorial writing, math, and library resources are available throughout the week by appointment. If your child begins to struggle with learning, please reach out to your child's teacher(s) and advisor so we can put additional support in place.

My child is becoming extremely anxious about the situation that has led to the campus closure.

What resources does the Academy have to support my child?

Children who experience heightened anxiety should consult with their pediatricians and/or psychologists. Our Health Team, including our nurses and school counselor, can offer referrals to parents and can coordinate with outside providers. During a campus closure, parents/guardians should monitor students' mental health and seek outside support as needed.

My child has ADHD, and prolonged time behind a computer screen can exacerbate the symptoms, making it very challenging for my child to learn. What support can the Academy provide?

The Academy's Chief Academic Officer will coordinate with the Director of the Roxbury Academic Support Program, the Coordinator of Educational Services, and the Health Team to ensure that we are honoring all student accommodation plans and providing additional support for students with ADHD and/or other learning challenges. Remote learning does allow for an increase in personalized support and one-on-one attention, and not all remote learning is dependent on extended periods of screen time. Students will continue to be assigned work that will need to be completed without screens, including reading, writing, solving math problems, and hands-on projects, and additional accommodations can be made to increase off-screen work as needed. Please reach out to your child's teacher(s), advisor, or to the Director of Counseling if you observe your child having difficulties focusing due to increased screen time.

My child is not feeling well and is not able to engage in learning. Is there a way to report an "excused absence" so they won't be penalized for not engaging in remote learning?

If your child becomes ill while the Academy is in a remote learning period or needs to miss a required live meeting for any other reason, use the established protocols for reporting your child's "absence" from school. Teachers will be flexible in working with your child to ensure that they are able to make up any missed work with extended deadlines.

My child is registered to take an upcoming standardized test (IB, AP, SAT, ACT) during a period of remote learning. Will they still be able to take it?

The academic leadership will closely monitor all announcements from the College Board, the ACT, and the International Baccalaureate Organization, and will keep students and families informed of the status of all exams. If a student is unable to take a standardized exam at the originally scheduled time, either due to cancelation on the part of the test administration or the conditions of the Academy's campus closure, we will be in communication with registered students and families as early as possible regarding options for future testing.

My child attends Cheshire Academy on an F1 Visa. Will my child's status be jeopardized?

Our International Student Coordinator works closely with the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) to ensure that the Academy has followed all SEVIS guidelines. All required information about procedural adaptations to the delivery of our curriculum will be provided to SEVP for evaluation and approval. We will remain in communication with parents/guardians of our F1 Visa students to provide updates and answer questions that arise.

Sources

The Cheshire Academy Remote Learning Plan is evidence-based and grounded in research about best practice in blended and online learning. Sources consulted in the drafting of this plan include:

Saliba, G., Rankine, L, and Cortez. H. (2013). *Learning and Teaching Unit 2013: Fundamentals of blended learning*. Retrieved from the University of Western Sydney website:
https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/467095/Fundamentals_of_Blended_Learning.pdf

Stein, J. & Graham, C.R. (2014). *Essentials for Blended Learning: A standards-based guide*. Routledge.

Vai, M. & Sosulski, K. (2016). *Essentials of Online Course Design: A standards-based guide*. Routledge.

Wicks, M. (2010). *A National Primer on K-12 Online Learning: Version 2*. Retrieved from the International Association for K-12 Online Learning website:
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Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the many schools in the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) who have shared their resources and plans for remote learning.