



# ***Georgetown Connects***

## **Remote Learning Plan**

These are strange and unprecedented times that require a different approach to teaching and learning. “School”, as we knew it three weeks ago, has completely changed, yet our mission has not. While the challenges are many, educating our children is still Job 1, even though our approach must change. ***Georgetown Connects*** is our district’s way of implementing a remote learning plan that continues, first and foremost, to support the social, physical and emotional wellbeing of our students as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of learning at home. Beginning Monday, April 6, 2020, we will build upon the model we have been using to provide reinforcement and enrichment by adding additional structure, routine and meaningful connections with teachers and other school staff.

Remote learning will never replicate the classroom setting with regard to content, pace and rigor of the curriculum or the valuable interaction between students and teachers. However, our goal in ***Georgetown Connects*** is to continue engaging students in academically meaningful ways that include online learning and opportunities to explore the natural world, pursue topics of interest, apply creative and critical thinking and engage in self directed learning. Our goal moving forward focuses on deeper learning and higher levels of student engagement so every child can succeed with remote learning. We know that some students will require additional support and challenge, and ***Georgetown Connects*** can be customized to meet their needs.

We do not know what the future holds in the next couple of months, but you have our promise that we will do our very best to implement ***Georgetown Connects*** with the best interests of our staff, students and families in mind. Please understand that the next couple of weeks will be an adjustment, but very shortly I am confident that we will settle in and things will move along smoothly.

I would like to bring your attention to several important components in our ***Georgetown Connects*** plan which are highlighted below.

1. How to Access Information
2. Focus of Learning

3. Expectations for Students
4. Meaningful Engagement Strategies
5. Feedback and Grading
6. Supporting Students

### **1. How to Access Information**

**Penn Brook-** In order to consolidate access to information, all Penn Brook teachers will use Google Classroom to post assignments and notifications, provide links to resources and exchange feedback with students. Assignments will be posted on Google Classroom every Sunday evening for the week. This may include a daily schedule, assignments and a choice of enrichment activities.

**Middle High School-** All teachers in grades 7-12 will use Schoology to communicate with students. All assignments, rubrics, instructional and supplemental resources and feedback will be done on this platform. The school has developed a revised schedule identifying specific days when subjects will be taught throughout the week to help students organize their time and focus. Subject area teachers will post information for students in accordance with this schedule.

### **2. Focus of Learning**

Teachers will continue to deepen understanding and reinforce skills that have previously been taught until they are ready to move forward with curriculum. In order to provide some normalcy and consistency for students, teachers will move forward with the curriculum, although expectations for content will be modified significantly due to our remote learning schedule and the need to continue to offer enrichment opportunities. For the first couple of weeks of **Georgetown Connects**, teachers and students will need time to adjust to using remote learning tools, so they will continue to provide deeper learning and reinforcement of existing content and skills. A major goal of teachers is to ensure that lessons are accessible to the range of learners in your classrooms.

Remote learning does not just mean online learning. We will consider the amount of screen time we are expecting of students and will balance this with other activities that allow for self directed learning, choice and access to other disciplines (physical education, music, art, library, technology electives) that support the whole child.

Students should be able to complete most assignments independently, and parents should provide a level of support similar to what is required for homework. We recognize that many parents are working from home, and it can be difficult to take on the role of teacher. With this in mind, **Georgetown Connects** is set up to provide students with greater structure, routine, opportunities for academic engagement and meaningful connections with teachers for instruction and support.

### **3. Expectations for Students**

All students are expected to actively engage in the remote learning opportunities assigned by their teacher(s). For the past three weeks, participation was optional but in *Georgetown Connects* we are expecting that all students will be engaged as they would if they were in school. While traditional grades will not be given at the secondary level, student engagement will be tracked on a Credit/No Credit basis. A priority for teachers will be to provide meaningful and timely feedback and for students to be actively engaged. Students who are not engaged will be contacted by their teachers to encourage participation and offer assistance. In addition, if at any time the teacher or parent becomes concerned that a student is disengaging or struggling emotionally, he or she will reach out to the other to coordinate additional support and resources for the student. Nothing is more important than students feeling connected to the people who care about their well-being.

Students should plan to spend up to 3 hours per day on remote learning activities. This will be determined by the developmental age and independence of the students. Teachers will convey expectations for time spent to students and families directly. The scheduling of remote learning is at the discretion of the family, unless there are specifically scheduled remote meetings, lessons or classes that are arranged with the teachers.

Students are expected to behave in accordance with school rules while participating in remote learning. Cyberbullying, harassment and abuse of the remote learning process will not be tolerated and may result in suspension from remote learning, as well as additional consequences when school resumes. Adherence to the Acceptable Use Policy is expected.

Students should select a place in their home where they can participate in any remote learning opportunities, especially video conferencing. We encourage students to be mindful of their on-line presence and the need to protect people's right to privacy.

### **4. Meaningful Engagement Strategies**

The first priority of teachers is to maintain meaningful connections with students. We realize that this is a challenging time for them, and now it is even more important for them to have the chance to regularly connect face to face with their teachers and peers. We will accomplish this in a couple of ways.

**Office Hours-** Teachers will schedule office hours two times per week for one hour at their convenience so parents and students can contact them by phone or email. Video conferencing should be arranged in advance. Each teacher will post their office hours on the platform they are using, either Google Classroom or Schoology. Since teachers will be using their private phones, you should expect to see their number blocked. Teachers will be keeping track of their outreach and communication, and if something comes up outside of office hours, teachers will respond at their earliest convenience.

**Video Conferencing-** Teachers will use Zoom or Google Meet to reach out and make personal connections with their students at least two times per week. This is primarily to promote a sense of community, provide a chance for classes to learn together and to provide emotional support individually and in small groups. Student support staff will also reach out to check in with students to make sure they have what they need, provide assistance, and/or answer questions. In participating/allowing children to participate in the school district’s online/remote learning activities, it is understood and agreed to that children’s images and voices will be transmitted over the Internet, into the homes of other students and staff, and that the school district, while taking measures to ensure secure transmission, cannot guarantee or warrant complete confidentiality of students’ voice or image while participating in online learning. It is important that we continue to respect the privacy and intellectual property rights of our school community – our teachers and our students.

### **5. Feedback and Grading**

Assignments at the elementary level will not be graded, but teachers will provide feedback and encouragement to their students. Feedback will be based on criteria such as rubrics for long term projects, grade level standards, and learning objectives. Digital platforms such as MobyMax will be used to track student progress and provide insight for student learning.

At the Middle High School, rubrics will be posted with each assignment and used to provide feedback to students. As part of the grading process, students will have the opportunity to self-reflect on their level of learning, and teachers will consider this as part of the assessment process.

As noted above, completed assignments at the Middle High School will receive a grade of Credit/No Credit based on the performance of the student and the quality of their work as measured against the rubric. A grade of Credit will not be earned simply because the student completed the assignment. While traditional grades will not be given during this extended closure, student engagement will be tracked at the secondary level. I want to reinforce that students are expected to complete all of the activities assigned by their teachers. If needed, students may ask for assistance with issues that may be hampering their progress such as time management, organization or managing expectations. Teachers will inform parents when a student is in danger of not receiving credit, and credit will not be withheld if lack of engagement is due to access challenges.

In times like these, we are mindful that our staff, students and families are all dealing with this public health crisis in different ways. As much as we might want to move full steam ahead with “school”, we also want to be sure that no students are left behind. Providing equal access to remote learning and enrichment activities on a Credit/No Credit basis levels the playing field for students that might be facing major life challenges, family obligations, loss of income, family

and student health concerns, disability, language challenges, etc. We share the concern expressed by many students, teachers and parents at the high school level who are worried about the effect this closure will have on credits and transcripts. At this point, ***Georgetown Connects*** supports the recommendation of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to suspend the use of letter grades during this time of school closure; however, we look forward to resuming the traditional grading system when school reopens.

## **6. Supporting Students**

In accordance with federal and state law, students with special needs will receive services in accordance with their IEP and the requirements of FAPE. Services will be adapted remotely to the extent possible as part of ***Georgetown Connects***. Case managers will work with parents to create schedules that work for all parties.

Classroom teachers, math and reading interventionists, counselors and behavior specials will meet regularly and work together to support students who might be in need of academic assistance and behavioral support. Students and parents should reach out with any questions or concerns to the staff member with whom your child has worked.

## **In Closing**

I want to acknowledge the hard work of the administrators, teachers and staff who have committed countless hours and taken great care to plan and execute ***Georgetown Connects***. As with any new plan, we expect there may be some bugs to work out, but I want to thank you in advance for your patience and commitment to working **with** us. We are all in this together, and there is no right way to proceed, so I will end where I began. Our primary goal with ***Georgetown Connects*** is to support the social, physical and emotional well being of our students during this time of uncertainty and school closure. They need us right now and we are there for them!