

Students Online

2021/10/12

Student/Parent Responsibilities

Dear Parents and Students:

As we move well into the new school year, I want to remind everyone of all of the responsibilities that need to be fulfilled in order for our students to enjoy a successful year at Students Online. There are several key components to Online learning that must be adhered to in order for learning to take place, for student success, and, ultimately, for continuing with Students Online.

Although we deliver alternate learning - as opposed to brick and mortar traditional schools - we have our own set of policies, guidelines, and rules that must be followed, in order to be a part of our program, and for our program to be successful.

Our name. We are Students Online! We are not ADLC, or a broker for ADLC, or another name for ADLC. We are Students Online, and as the name so accurately describes - we deliver our program - ONLINE! We are in the infancy of digital learning and will grow with time and experience. Our Math and some of our High School Science courses still require some paper to be distributed, simply due to the fact that there are still no workable apps available to support these curricula. I do expect that within the next few years this will be a problem we will look back on as a past irritant.

As a digital platform, Students Online is not for everyone. Alternative learning is growing exponentially on a daily basis. There are many platforms and various ways districts deliver their alternative education programs. BTPS' platform is Hapara. This is not THE platform and it is not for everyone. It is our platform, and we believe that what it offers our students and teachers is superior to any other platform out there, and it is digital wherever possible.

Attendance/reporting. One of the key components of Students Online is connecting students with teachers. It is imperative that our students keep in touch with their teachers on a regular basis. We want to make Online learning as real and authentic as we can. This means that we need to be in communication with each other on a regular basis. This is not a nicety but a necessity! Gone are the days in which our students stayed virtually anonymous throughout the school year. Our policy is one which students MUST be in continuous contact with their teachers all year long. This ensures that the student has someone at hand, to support them when needed, and to report their learning and struggles to. It enables the teacher to better understand each student's progress, areas of growth, and areas that need more support.

When this communication occurs on a regular basis learning becomes a continuous process, and not one which stops and starts throughout the year. It allows students to stay caught up, and possibly even ahead in their studies. It allows the teacher to adapt to each student's learning style, strengths, and weaknesses.

Each of our teachers have developed a communication plan. It is the responsibility of our students and parents to adhere to these plans and/or adjust them to the satisfaction of both student and teacher. Failure to communicate to a teacher within a reasonable time period may in fact result in a meeting with myself and all involved parties in order to facilitate a satisfactory communication plan.

Assessments. Assessments are difficult for Online students and teachers, simply due to the nature of Online learning. I know that COVID has increased the barriers for authentic assessment 10 fold. All assessments that require school supervision can be done at Dewberry, or in Vermilion, at the Outreach Centre, throughout the day. ALL Diploma course assessments **must** be completed at a BTPS school.

I know as a former administrator in a traditional BTPS school environment, I was able to support supervision of these assessments on a regular basis. This may or may not be available at your local school. If not, we can direct you to a BTPS school site that can provide this support. They do not have to be at Dewberry or Vermilion, but they do have to be written under the supervision of a BTPS school administrator.

All other assessments may be done at home but are encouraged to be completed at a BTPS school. Having said that, COVID protocols have severely hampered this process and home assessments may be the only method of delivery in many of these cases. With that in mind, authentic writing must still take place. This means student assessments that are completed at home must take place in a Google or Zoom meet. Cameras and microphones must remain live throughout the assessment. Student support will only be allowed where an ISP is in place. Any student activity that may be considered questionable, will be requested to cease immediately. Failure to do so may result in early completion of the assessment.

Course load. Students no longer receive an entire year's worth of work. We are trying to emulate a classroom environment in which students are given course work that may last a day, a week, or in some cases even longer. Any student who is enrolled in multiple courses and wishes to focus on only one or two courses, **MUST** let the instructor know of their intentions. There is nothing wrong with this direction, but the teacher must know so that he/she is not waiting for work that will be done at a later date.

In closing, I want to again remind everyone that Students Online is a great alternative to traditional schools. It allows students and parents the freedom to have direct engagement in their child's learning, pace of learning, and the ability to timetable curricula throughout the year.

As stated above, Students Online may not be the answer for everyone looking for alternative education. Independent learning, digital curriculums, assessment protocols, attendance and meeting requirements, all must be taken into consideration when considering Students Online. Students Online requires our students to work on a digital platform (Hapara) which in turn requires the necessary supportive internet connection. We do not support printed materials, but we will accept any student work that has been printed and uploaded, or digitally returned in the manner set out by the teacher in the course outline.

Students Online is a great response to those looking for alternative education, but it can only work effectively if all of the responsibilities are adhered to.

Barry Scinski, Principal
Students Online