

Date: 3.22.2020

From: Administrative Team

Re: 10 Habits & Practices for Phase II Home-Bound Learning

1. Trust yourself & one another

You know your students -- what motivates and worries them, what they have for strengths and where they need more support, how they best work together and individually -- and that is our greatest tool as we begin Phase II together. I cannot stress this enough, that in the end I, with the administrative team, trust you all implicitly. There isn't one, obvious answer to educating students who you cannot see in class. Use everything you know about them logically and **trust** your instincts around what will work for them and how to help and encourage them. Rely on each other for help and ideas, share what's working and what didn't pan out the way you thought it would. If we lean on one another as a learning community we will grow stronger from this experience and our students will benefit.

2. Seek unity

When possible, create work that encompasses skill areas and grade/courses and levels. When possible teachers should try and create, for example, literacy work for the 2nd grade or assignments that are common across algebra II sections. It will help, as this situation of at-home learning extends deeper into the trimester/semester, to be more **together**.

3. Be asynchronous

Synchronous learning is in real time. As the person is teaching a lesson the students are viewing it in live time. This is a temptation for a lot of reasons, but almost no successful distance-learning programs use synchronous learning, and I am concerned it will not succeed long term. Instead, look at **asynchronous** learning options which means you create and make information/work available that students can then look at when they are able and have some reasonable deadline as to when more information/work will be posted. [Flipped classrooms](#), work posted on a classroom site, linked videos (of the actual teacher or an online source assigned by the teacher) with some kind of work product due at an appointed time, a week after the posting, for instance, would all be asynchronous.

4. Use what you know

While we will undoubtedly need to learn how to use some new tools, like [Zoom](#) or, if you haven't used it before [Google meets](#), let's also **rely** on what you already know and were using in your classrooms before the closure. Google classroom is an obvious example for many of you, but there are lots of tools you were already using that can be employed to help with asynchronous, at-home distance learning. Talk with one another and share your ideas on how to take what our students are already comfortable with and extend it to today's needs.

5. Start slow

Start with a single posting/assignment. Introduce this new way to do school **slowly**. Think about walking into a cold lake on that first swim of the season. Many of us go in a step at a time so our body can adjust. All our students need to get into the cold lake of at-home learning slowly so we can acclimatize. Once everyone adjusts we can all be stronger swimmers. Test the system with something low stakes so you can make adjustments and students won't feel as if they "failed" in the early going which will only dissuade them from continuing the journey.

6. Low floor, high ceiling

Try, when possible, to create assignments that any learner in a given group can **approach** (low floor) but that can be taken to advanced levels (high ceiling). With at-home learning, when you're not there to help the student, some students will need to be able to get a foothold on the work before taking it further, while others will be ready immediately. Think about storytelling where a preschooler can tell you a heck of a story, and someone will be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature this year. Class warm-up activities can be a low floor way to get students into the work. This will be an ongoing conversation with your colleagues and something we'll become more and more adept at over time.

7. Incentivize not penalize

This is both challenging and important. As a school system we need to **incentivize** students engaging in at-home learning. Schools are used to penalizing students when work isn't done, but when you think about our situation, with so many students in so many different living circumstances with such a wide variety of support and learning needs and styles that we have to go big on the incentive side of the equation. The vast majority of our students want normalcy, they want to engage with you and with their education, so let's celebrate that and think about a blended model of "extra credit" that can both help continue their education and build on their current grades. We want to monitor progress so we can support our students now and when school is back in regular session.

8. Prioritize contact & community

Some real-time **connection** could be revivifying. Think about creating virtual office hours or homeroom time when students can be in a space together to share, ask questions, and receive your encouragement and support. Additionally, reaching out to families, via phone, text, email, or any other mode on a consistent basis would be incredibly meaningful. Direct words from you will calm everyone's anxiety. You can also suggest ways that students can work together virtually, on group projects or for other educational purposes. I know there are unique issues for grades Pre-K through 4 who don't have devices and we'll talk about that and strategize how to compensate. Also, we will distribute devices to grades 5 through 8 so those students can participate in virtual learning.

9. Be consistent, flexible, and patient

Being very **consistent**, especially as we begin, is more important than being overly ambitious. We'll be giving sample schedules to help students orient their days. A few hours of education each day would be a great place for our students who are able to start. Collaborate so no student suddenly has 6-hours of expected work per day, for example. Know that you will have to make various adjustments along the way. Let your students know that adjusting together is fine and to be expected. Be patient. In the best of times we have to have patience with the system, our students who aren't always where we wish they would be, and with each other and ourselves. We want to model and emphasize exercise, family needs and responsibilities, ways to focus and destress, and overall health and well being.

10. Focus our efforts on the social/emotional

I believe that everything here is about our social and emotional **health**. We are going to do this first and foremost to be connected and to be emotionally strong so we can both get through this difficult time and emerge as an even more connected community and family. Take a break when you need that, reach out to your colleagues and administration, to me and if I can help I will. Time to live our [Witches Way to B](#)

General Goals & Process

- A. Provide activities & work for student to focus on, on a weekly basis
- B. Give feedback
- C. Create time to virtually or otherwise connect with classes on a weekly basis
- D. Reach out to families on a weekly basis