



**YELLOWSTONE**  
ACADEMY

**Student & Family Handbook  
Distance Learning Addendum  
2020 - 2021**

As a result of COVID-19, Yellowstone Academy will begin the school year in a remote, distance learning setting. Teachers will use Google Classroom to facilitate their classes. Yellowstone Schools will continue to monitor national, state, and local guidelines and recommendations for safety to make decisions regarding remote learning or face-to-face instruction.

This document is an addendum to the Yellowstone Academy 2020 - 2021 Student & Family Handbook (the “Handbook”) to address policies specific to distance learning, and it will be in place until our return to campus. Some of the policies included herein are intended to complement the Handbook, some are intended to reinforce the Handbook, and some are intended to replace their corresponding policy in the Handbook. Context should make these distinctions clear; but if there are any questions, please reach out to the school office (713-741-8000 and [lcross@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:lcross@yellowstoneschools.org)).

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## A NOTE TO OUR FAMILIES ON DISTANCE LEARNING

Yellowstone Academy has committed to beginning the 2020-2021 academic year with distance learning, and we will continue along that path until relevant state and local authorities deem it safe for schools to return to in-person instruction.

We know that distance learning will continue to be an adjustment for families and teachers, but as a small school, we are in a unique position to overcome some of those difficulties and thrive. Our team is continuously working to ensure that learning is accessible and productive for students. There will be a balance of synchronous class time and asynchronous assignments and activities to balance high-impact student learning, student health and wellness, and other family non-academic responsibilities. We are constantly seeking ways to support our students while at home, and the Yellowstone Academy Leadership Team has crafted distance learning policies that we think will best serve our students.

However, it is important to acknowledge that distance learning will present challenges for our students and families, and acknowledge that those challenges will look different for every Yellowstone Academy student. In this setting, students and families will have more responsibility for their education because teachers won't always be able to pick up on a confused look or notice mistakes as students work in real-time. Additionally, we recognize our students may have greater distractions and increased non-academic responsibilities while at home.

With all of that in mind, we need your help to ensure our students find ways to make online learning work, while also prioritizing their health, safety, and wellness. For most, this will mean:

- Creating a daily routine, with significant protected time for school work;
- Finding a low-distraction physical space within your home;
- Being particularly mindful of their coursework and upcoming assignments;
- Regularly checking for course announcements and other communications from teachers;
- Reaching out to their teachers and other school staff when they face issues - academic or otherwise.

We have no doubt that our students are up to this challenge. Our team promises to be there every step of the way to guide and encourage, and we know that it is a blessing to walk alongside you in this work.

Thank you,

Candice Lapid  
Principal  
Yellowstone Academy

## **ACADEMICS**

### **Academic Honor Code**

Yellowstone Academy maintains a strict Academic Honor Code which will be adhered to during the period of distance learning. Please review it (available in the 2020-2021 Student & Family Handbook).

In a typical classroom setting, there are many built-in norms that naturally encourage students to remain academically honest. In an online course, many of these barriers are removed; and the temptation to cheat can be strong. As a result, it will be even more imperative that students self-monitor their academic progress, hold themselves accountable to the appropriate conduct, and be honest with the level of their own understanding. To do otherwise deprives themselves of a true learning experience.

In addition to the temptation for students to cheat, it may also be tempting for parents to provide a level of support which deprives the responsibility for learning from the child. As in a typical school year, the goal of distance learning is for student growth and skill mastery. If a child needs additional instructional support, it's important to reach out to the teacher for strategies and help. Now more than ever, we must create open lines of communication and work sanitized hand-in-sanitized hand to ensure student learning.

### **Learning Platform for Remote Instruction**

Yellowstone Academy teachers will use **Google Classroom** to conduct daily online live lessons, assign students work, and provide various learning tools and communication. Every student has a school-assigned email address which they will use to access their Google Classroom. In addition, parents must provide an email address for enhanced communication and participation. Teachers will also be available for office hours and other support as needed and communicated with parents.

### **Grading and Evaluation**

During the COVID-19 crisis, Yellowstone Academy moved to a Pass/Fail grading system. As we resume distance learning in the Fall 2020 semester, we will continue with a Pass/Incomplete grading system. We will re-evaluate the grading system at the end of the first grading period.

Teachers shall record the minimum number of grades for the first grading period:

<b>Subject:</b>	Reading	Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Bible	Specials
<b>Grades:</b>	9	9	18	9	9	Conduct only	Conduct only

### **Altered Weekly Schedule**

During school closure at the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, we found that students and staff were challenged by the lack of synchronous learning and daily routine of teacher-student interaction. We have redesigned our daily schedule to optimize the amount of live synchronous learning and asynchronous independent work that students have.

During our distance learning timeframe, we will use the following schedule:

Distance Learning Live Lesson Schedule Monday - Friday		
	PK3 & PK4	KG - 4th
9:00 - 10:00	Class 1	Class 1
11:00 - 12:00		Class 2
1:00 - 2:00	Class 2	Class 3

- Prior to the first day of school, teachers will reach out to all families and students to participate in virtual parent orientation and share the student’s class assignment.
- All students have daily independent work, activities, and/or projects for ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies.
- Students who are identified as needing additional help in Math and ELA will have additional time scheduled for support in those subjects.

We anticipate resuming a more traditional schedule when we return to in-person instruction. However, please keep in mind that we may have phased return to school that begins with a hybrid model with physical distance requirements before we are allowed to return to full in-person instruction.

### Attendance and Tardiness

Please reference Yellowstone Academy’s full attendance policy in the Handbook. There is an expectation that students will attend all synchronous class sessions scheduled by their instructors and be present, on time and ready to work and engage. Therefore, **attendance will be taken while distance learning and unexcused absence and tardy points will be given, per policy.** Students found to “fake” attendance during virtual learning will be held accountable and may be subject to disciplinary action. Students will also be expected to virtually attend or participate in activities or events in which student presence is required unless otherwise stated or communicated.

Some important attendance policies are highlighted here:

- Teachers will take attendance at the beginning of class and report it to the main office for recording in Skyward;
- Teachers will submit student attendance for each live-lesson class;
- If a student is no present for a live lesson, a teacher or administrator will reach out as a reminder;
- Any absence, excused or unexcused, will be reported and recorded in Skyward by the main office;
- Pre-arranged absences need to be approved by a parent and communicated to the teacher a minimum of 24 hours in advance;
- Illness needs to be reported immediately to the main office by the parent/guardian and no later than 9:00 AM on the day classes will be missed;
- Parents/guardians should report absences to the front office and/or by emailing Ms. Cross (713-741-8000 [lcross@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:lcross@yellowstoneschools.org)).

## Course Materials

Yellowstone Academy-owned materials (e.g., laptops, textbooks, novels) may be provided to students for their use in courses during this time. These materials are the property of Yellowstone Academy, and Yellowstone Academy will charge for anything damaged, lost or not returned.

Guidelines for the distribution and return of these materials will be issued in communications separate to this document. If you have any questions or concerns, please direct them to Mr. Gunn (713-741-8000 [dgunn@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:dgunn@yellowstoneschools.org)).

## Video Conferencing

Video conferencing and live group chat sessions are essential components of the learning process and help improve the connectedness of our school during distance learning. As with the use of social media, students are required to adhere to school policies pertaining to these areas in the Handbook, and to observe the following regarding the distance learning environment:

- Students must be punctual to the live conferencing sessions scheduled by the teacher. Teachers will be monitoring attendance and students may be receiving class participation grades.
- Ensure your technology works properly and frame the camera correctly.
- Good online manners are vital to a productive and supportive online learning environment. Students are to meet school expectations in the live online session as expected in the regular in-person class, especially because the **SESSION MAY BE RECORDED**.
- Do not **spam** your classmates. Spamming occurs when you or your instructor or classmates receive numerous unwanted messages. To avoid spamming your class members, do not send email to the entire class when it is unnecessary and do not send commercial advertisements or electronically forward "chain mail" to your classmates.

The following student principles apply to all distance learning activities, including video conferencing:

- We respect each other's voices and time by using our own voices to positively resolve conflicts within our school family by referring classroom conflicts to our teachers to be resolved after class.
- We preserve a positive learning environment by supporting all of our school family and raising our hands or using the chat feature to ask questions or add comments in our discussions. When not speaking, we keep our microphones muted but cameras on.
- We understand the power of language, so we use the appropriate language for the occasion and location in our school family, including speaking and writing in complete sentences.
- Show trust and pride in our ability to care for our school family, by celebrating when other students succeed and always asking if we can help when they struggle.
- Value our class space and time by limiting distractions - putting away cell phones and other devices during class.
- Advocate for our needs while being conscious of other needs in our school family.

Yellowstone Academy utilizes Google Meet as our primary video conferencing software - which allows us to meet face-to-face with our students. Each Google Classroom has a unique Google Meet link which can only be accessed by an internal, Yellowstone Academy student email address which has been added to that particular Google Classroom. In live lesson sessions, students are not required but are **highly encouraged** to keep their cameras on. This helps to build community and relationships between faculty, staff, and students. We recommend that students find a space in their home with good lighting but minimal objects in the background. A table, with a blank wall behind them works great for this.

Teachers may record any synchronous sessions to be used by students who miss a class for a valid reason (e.g., a pre-arranged absence) to catch up with their missed lessons and assignments. ***A Yellowstone Academy waiver must be on record permitting those individual students to be recorded. Teachers will inform the class at the beginning that the session is being recorded.***

### **Supply List**

For the 2020-2021 academic year, all students will need to have the following:

1. Chromebook, laptop, or tablet (to be loaned by Yellowstone Academy for any student who requests)
2. Webcam (often built-in to the Chromebook or laptop)
3. Headset/earphones (to be loaned by Yellowstone Academy for any student who requests)
4. Microphone (often built-in to the Chromebook or laptop)
5. Reliable high-speed internet access
6. Pencils
7. Erasers
8. Notebooks (1/subject)
9. Sharpener
10. Highlighters
11. Wide-ruled paper
12. Colored pencils
13. Markers

Families should provide supplies for students to use at home and school once we resume face-to-face instruction. If families need help securing supplies, contact your child's teacher for support.

### **Technological Needs**

Yellowstone Academy is able to provide some resources for technology needs - including hardware. The main office will be contacting families to determine their technology needs for fully accessing distance learning.

In order for remote learning to be effective, it is important that each household has the proper devices. As a result, families who need a device will be able to borrow a device from Yellowstone Academy. Families who check-out Chromebooks or other devices in this way will need to sign a user agreement accepting responsibility for any damage to the devices. We expect Chromebooks and other devices borrowed in this way to be returned to school

when requested. Fees may apply if Chromebooks or other devices are returned damaged. In addition, we will be working to support our students and families to navigate the technology necessary to access our distance learning program. As a result, there will be technology support. Yellowstone Academy will also be sharing technology troubleshooting guides with you at the start of the school year. For questions about technology resources, agreements and support, please contact the main office.

## **STUDENT SUPPORTS**

In addition to your instructors, there are many resources to help you personally and academically. Ms. Lapid and Ms. Kerr will work together to help provide family and student supports including mental health needs, counseling services, and other physical health resources. Families struggling with basic needs such as food, clothing, and supplies can reach out to their teacher or front office for assistance. Although we will spend a portion of our school year in a remote setting, we will work to create positive school culture grounded in our PRIDE values and Bible virtues. We will organize chapel and other celebrations to reinforce our community bonds. If students need academic and/or behavior interventions, Ms. Lapid and Ms. Kerr will work with the teacher, student, and family to create a plan to ensure student growth and success.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **Information for Students**

Students are expected to regularly check their Google Classroom for updates and assignments. Teachers will assume that any communications or announcements posted to these platforms have been seen by the student.

### **Information for Parents**

Parents can actively monitor school activity and receive regular updates by signing up for Remind 101. Yellowstone Academy will provide detailed instruction for Remind 101 during orientation and the first week of school. Our regular family communication will include:

- Weekly class Newsletter - Distributed via Google Classroom
- Weekly Class/Subject Matter Updates - Weekly agenda with class assignments distributed and posted in Google Classroom
- Weekly Phone Calls - a grade level teacher will call each students families for a personal connection and check-up
- Bi-Monthly Principal Update - information for the school from the Principal and Social Worker as necessary

In order to get in contact with a teacher, we recommend email. You can find their email address in the [Yellowstone Academy Staff Email List](#).

### **Visits to School Building**

While Yellowstone Academy typically encourages parents to visit school buildings, during this time of distance learning, parents and guardians are encouraged to use electronic media, i.e., phone, e-mail, text, video conference, etc... to conduct business that otherwise might be done in the school building. In an effort to limit potential exposure for students, staff and visitors, visitors to the school will be restricted to the school office or other designated spaces and subject to a COVID-19 screening. In addition, all potential visitors will be asked to register with the main office prior to visiting the school.

## **DISCIPLINE**

Yellowstone Academy's Student Discipline policy is one way to ensure the safety and welfare of each member of our community. Students are responsible for Yellowstone Academy's Student Discipline policy while under the jurisdiction of the school, meaning while they are on campus, coming to or from campus, representing Yellowstone Academy off-campus, or while distance learning. While many infractions that could only take place if a student on campus would not apply during distance learning, all other discipline policies will be enforced during distance learning, including the appropriate sanctions that would be incurred if found responsible for a policy violation. Please take care to review all aspects of the discipline policy in the Handbook, including those that would involve inappropriate behavior occurring online or during "live" remote instruction.

Should a policy violation be suspected in which a disciplinary hearing must take place, the hearing will be conducted virtually. Proper notification and procedures will be followed, per the Handbook. If a student is found responsible for a policy violation, appropriate sanctions, per the Handbook, will be administered.

## **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

We recognize that many of our students face unique challenges during distance learning. While many situations may be remedied by engaging with one of the above support systems, if you are experiencing any special circumstances, please reach out to the principal, Ms. Lapid ([clapid@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:clapid@yellowstoneschools.org)) or the social worker, Ms. Kerr ([lkerr@yellowstoneschools.org](mailto:lkerr@yellowstoneschools.org)). We are committed to working with each student to determine the best path forward during this time.