Benton Community School District

Virtual Learning Plan

COVID-19 EMERGENCY

2020
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Introduction & Goals

The purpose of this document is to provide information on educational opportunities for students at Benton Community. This plan will have information on guidelines for virtual learning, communication, responsibilities, and more. For the purposes of these recommendations, a remote learning day is defined as educational programming designed to provide continuation of learning for students under conditions that prohibit the learner and instructor from being in the same physical space. This plan is partially written on guidance provided through the Illinois State Board of Education Remote Learning Plan.

This recommendation document accomplishes these goals by:

● Providing transparent access to information for all education stakeholders (staff, families, students, etc.)
● Ensuring all parties have a common understanding of terminology and best practices necessary to provide all students with equitable and continued access to high-quality education while acknowledging the diversity of contexts for schools/families/students
● Communicating minimum thresholds of what will be offered for all students
● Promoting innovation and outside-of-the-box thinking

The ultimate goal of this plan is to provide direction, information, and resources to ensure that:

● All students have opportunities for continued learning that focuses on critical standards
● Steps are taken to minimize instructional loss to the extent to which we can control
● Students and families are given routines and structures to ensure they stay connected to schools and learning

To accomplish these goals, we uphold the following principles in this plan:

● All students and families should have access to quality educational materials and to the supports needed to successfully access those materials to the extent to which we can control
● It is still possible and imperative that students access meaningful/high-quality educational materials that align to state standards
● It is imperative that students and schools/teachers maintain a personal connection that supports necessary, rigorous academic work in a manner that is respectful of students’ contexts (their mindset, feelings, responsibilities, etc.)
● Simplicity is best during this time -- simplicity of the framework, of communication structures, of expectations
● Support the whole child -- their mental health, nutritional needs, and safety needs
● Parents need access to clear information and ample resources
● Teachers will need support, encouragement, and compassion to ensure their success and resilience
● Benton Community will work to support remote learning that addresses the needs of all students and families by taking into consideration language, diverse learning needs, home living situation, access to technology, access to parental support, and access to transportation. Our most vulnerable student populations still need us the most.
Underpinning these recommendations is the need for resilience, critical and creative thinking, thoughtful responsiveness, and empathy to help ensure that students continue to grow personally, academically, and linguistically.

Essential Grading Recommendations

Under a Voluntary Participation Path

- The emphasis for schoolwork offered, reviewed, and completed during the remote learning period is on **learning**, not on compliance.
- No learning task can be either communicated or collected as if it is counting for a grade at the time of the school closure.
- Feedback can and should be provided to students who do choose to share their work with teachers. This feedback should be high in quality and not lead students to believe they’ll earn a certain grade based on their performance.
- A focus on keeping children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning should be our first priority during this unprecedented time.
- For performance-based courses, alternate methods of voluntary participation may include the use of video, electronic submission, etc.
- Dual credit policies have been developed and our partnership with Kirkwood has been addressed with those directly impacted.
Consistency in Virtual Learning

Developing consistency for remote learning on which students can rely is key as they and their families adapt to unprecedented changes in education and society, in general. Successful, consistent remote learning includes:

- Clearly articulated goals for each task that is aligned to a standard
- Cross-curricular collaboration to focus instruction
- Options for students that tap into students’ interests, readiness levels, and learning styles while providing families flexibility
- A mix of real-time, flexibly timed, technological options, that avoids penalizing students for their choice
- A common platform where students can access work and find support and resources
  - At Benton Community, we will use
    - Elementary: Seesaw
    - Secondary: Schoology/Google Classroom/Email
- A clear plan of communication involving the school, teachers, students, and families.
- Genuine interest and effort in supporting students’ social, emotional, and academic growth.

Since home will be the new virtual learning classroom, it is critical that virtual learning must work in a multitude of family and home contexts. Benton Community distributed a survey to families to collect information on the home learning context via email, social media, and the school website on Monday, April 6. [BC Parent Survey]

General Guidelines

Communicating with Students

- Maintain classroom customs and norms as much as possible
- Ensure students understand the voluntary nature of the tasks if working within the voluntary path and provide reminders about the importance of learning is about learning rather than the grade
- Remind students how to best communicate with the teacher and, when appropriate, peers (a social-emotional learning opportunity). This should be done within the LMS (Seesaw, Schoology) or via school-issued email.
- Ensure all students have access to information through at least one form of communication (phone, video, email)
- Students can expect a teacher response within 24 hours of posing a question or requesting support. Solutions or full support may take longer than 24 hours at times, but initial confirmation of the request for additional support will be provided by the teacher within 24 hours.
- Maintain regular communication and set a minimum threshold for contact
  - MS/HS - Priority days? Schedule for Zoom
  - Elementary - Class meetings? Late afternoon?
  - 8:30-4:30 - “Help desk” provided by ICs

Last updated 4/9/20
Communicating with Families

● BC surveyed families to identify needs and follow through to provide for those needs. Individual communication for those indicating specific needs also took place with building administrators.
● To the extent possible, BC will communicate with families in the language they are most comfortable
● BC Staff will provide recommendations on how to support the whole child
● BC will provide families with resources on accessing the information being provided. (ie: Zoom video, Seesaw support, etc)
● BC will provide weekly communication in the form of a district or building-based newsletter.

Communicating with and Among Staff

● BC has established norms for communication that align with current practice. BC Zoom Norms
● Email will continue to be the main mode of communication to and amongst district staff
● Other communication tools or structures that have been put in place to support ongoing, transparent, communication include:
  ○ Staff FAQ
  ○ Instructional Coach support @ CL/DT meetings
  ○ Weekly Teacher Leader Meetings
  ○ Staff Meetings
  ○ COVID-19 Curriculum & Instruction Re-entry Plan

Responsibilities for Each Group

The intent in creating and sharing responsibilities for stakeholders is to provide clarity to the role we all play in educating in any learning environment. The responsibilities below are intended to serve as a starting point for a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities we all must hold. The hope is that this shared understanding will ensure an environment that will create stability and relieve anxiety as everyone is aware of their role within the larger context.

This list may be edited as we work through any virtual learning experience.

| District & School Responsibilities | ● Develop thoughtful, accessible remote learning plans using stakeholder input, when possible. |
| | ● Support schools in planning and implementing remote learning plans. |
| | ● Share resources in the community (physical, health, social, emotional). |
| | ● Implement virtual learning plans |
| | ● Communicate regularly with all stakeholders through either email, phone, Facebook, or the school website. |

Last updated 4/9/20
● Support teachers in planning and implementing virtual learning plans by providing opportunities to engage in professional learning around the topic.

Teacher Responsibilities
● Provide virtual learning opportunities that are tied to prioritized content in a manner that aligns with expectations that have been communicated
● Acknowledge student/parent questions within 24 hours
● Provide feedback on student work.
● Communicate regularly with students.

Student Responsibilities
● Review virtual learning opportunities that have been provided through Seesaw, Schoology, Google Classroom or email.
● Share work you've completed through optional virtual opportunities with teachers if you would like feedback.
● Ask clarifying questions when you need help or don’t understand
● Be respectful to yourself, teachers and peers.

Parent/Caregiver/Family Responsibilities
● Review information that has been shared with you from Benton Community.
● Review information that has been shared with your student(s) from teachers through email, Seesaw, Schoology, or Google Classroom.
● Reserve a space for students to complete virtual learning work.
● Encourage students to get enough sleep.
● Talk to students about their work.
● Help students establish and follow regular daily routines that make sense for your family.
● Communicate with Benton Community staff when you have a question or concern.

Social-Emotional Learning & Relationships & Health & Wellness

SEL Resources
Benton Community is working to attend to the social and emotional needs of students. Resources have been provided to the community and staff from the Benton Community Guidance staff. Information regarding support from Tanager Place has also been shared through email, social media, and the Benton Community COVID-19 site.

● Video from BC Guidance Staff - Students & Families
● Video from BC Guidance Staff - Staff
● Letter from BC Guidance Staff - Staff, Students & Families

Last updated 4/9/20
Health and Wellness

The health and wellness of all Benton Community staff and students is the fundamental priority at this time. Below are some recommendations districts can provide to their stakeholders to support the health and safety of district staff members, families, caregivers, and students:

- **Prescription Medications:** Opportunities for families to retrieve any prescription medication from the school was made available to Benton Community families following the initial school closure. Any concerns or needs in this area should be directed to building principals and school nurses.

- **Food:** Families that are having difficulty getting sufficient meals are welcome to reach out to the Food Bank resources provided on the Benton Community COVID-19 website. Also, Benton Community has provided meals to students through the school closure with funds through the USDA. Information on accessing these school meals, who can participate, and more can be found on the Benton Community COVID-19 website.

- **Exercise:** Parents should keep social distancing in mind when arranging for physical activity, and some may not have access to a safe place to do this. Resources have been shared by staff at Benton Community to promote exercise. Those resources include videos, workouts, and other exercise-related challenges that have been shared on our resource documents, Seesaw, email, Facebook, or the website.

- **Stress Management:** It goes without saying that this is a stressful situation for all of us. Everyone has different tools to manage stress. Resources have been shared by BC Guidance Staff and Tanager to support staff, students, and families in working through emotions during this time. See links above for more specific resources.

Planning for Possible Illness

First and foremost, follow the guidance, policies, and procedures of your local county health department/local health officer. The most current information always resides at the community level. These are recommendations that should never supersede local bargaining agreements, labor laws, and or local policies and procedures:

- **Staff Illness:** Upon reopening, if a staff member becomes ill, they should request a “sick leave” day through the ESS system and call their building principal. More information can be found in the BC Pandemic Plan shared by Dr. Ewell.

- **Student Illness:** A student who becomes ill should either be excused from the assignments provided during that time or given ample time to make up the work. Students cannot be negatively impacted during the remote learning period, and Benton Community will work to provide emotional support for grave illnesses.
• **Family Illness for Teachers or Students:** If the family member of a student or teacher becomes gravely ill, compassion and support for the student or teacher are the first priority of Benton Community. We will work to provide emotional support services to the extent possible, and students cannot be negatively impacted.

**Ongoing Staff Development**

Educators at Benton Community will be provided ongoing support to develop their capacity to meet the virtual learning goals. The ways in which we will work to support staff and will focus on essential skills needed for daily success.

- **Live Virtual Professional Learning:** Small-group, virtual professional development workshops to build the capacity and meet the needs of teachers. This may include sessions held by local administrators or coaches on using tools such as Seesaw, Schoology, Zoom, etc. These sessions will be offered live and recorded for those unable to attend or to go back and reference.
- **Acceptable Communication Guidelines:** Clear communication guidelines will be developed to assist Benton Community teachers, students, and parents in virtual communication. This may include resources such as documents or videos on the logistics, timelines, or etiquette of using virtual communication tools. Please also reference the communication section for this document for more details.
- **Supporting SEL:** BC Guidance Staff have provided resources to educators to discuss the emotions students may be experiencing at this time. This has been done in the form of sharing videos and slides and also offering live Q & A time.
- **CL/DT:** Benton Community team will continue to collaborate in CL/DTs per the guidance provided by administrative staff. Remember, we are in this together. Our best resource is each other!

**Content Selection/Prioritization**

As part of the Benton Community Curriculum & Instruction Re-entry Plan, CL/DT teams worked on prioritizing content for the remainder of the year.

**Goal for Prioritization**

All teachers will identify what content will be prioritized upon re-entry through meeting as a CL/DT on or before Monday, April 6th. This should be documented in the team's [Prioritized Learning Master Document](#).

**Purpose of Prioritization**

Within CL/DTs, develop a scope and sequence of material to be covered through the end of the school year. All things considered, the current plan cannot be the plan moving forward due to the loss of at least 32 instructional days (March 16 - April 30). The plan for prioritizing content moving forward needs to be group
consensus within grade levels at the elementary level or shared across the content team at the secondary level. Teams will identify prioritized instruction through the end of the semester. This will be across contents at the elementary level and course-specific at the secondary level.

Directions for Prioritization

1. First, copy your priority standards/skills/unit into the table.
2. Decide what skills have been done prior to the break, need to be done upon returning and what skills will not be covered by the end of the school year.
   a. Elementary: This should be done collaboratively. This should be a group discussion and the plan moving forward should look similar across the grade.
3. This document will be used and implemented by the team upon the return of students. If it is helpful to add notes for clarity or planning purposes, please feel free to do so.
4. Teams will submit the prioritized learning document prior to the end of the day on Monday, April 6th.
5. Questions? Please reach out to coaches or administrators.

Things to be mindful of while prioritizing:

1. What are the essential skills that have the highest leverage so the student can experience the most successful transition to the next grade/level of content?
2. Students need to have an equitable experience. At the elementary level especially, it is important that teams collaborate on this work and come to a consensus on what will be covered and what will not be covered.
3. Be mindful of a balanced experience as much as possible. You may work through things quickly that you would have normally spent more time one in order to allow for that balanced experience.
   a. ie: Don’t cancel Week 3: Fluency to “catch up”
   b. ie: If students normally spend 3 weeks on a speech, they might need to shorten the time spent dedicated to that skill
Content Delivery

Virtual content delivery will be a new and challenging endeavor for most districts are having to respond to during the COVID-19 pandemic. Delivering content in a virtual modality is a skill that must be developed, and Benton Community will provide support, resources, and professional development needed for educators to accomplish virtual learning.

Best Practices

- Be present and fully engaged as the instructor. Short, daily or weekly videos or phone calls can help the instructor connect with, reassure, and provide students with encouragement.
- Work within CL/DT teams to support the development of virtual learning. Teachers are encouraged to leverage the expertise and insight of each other to fully support the creation of engaging, effective lessons for all learners. This will include collaborating with special education and ESL teachers.
- Focus on engaging and accessible learning materials and techniques. Prioritize mini-lessons and short mini-lectures to keep students engaged.
- Remain flexible with pacing and student assignments. Offer students choice and flexibility such as assignments posted at the beginning of the week are due by the end of the week or before the start of the next week.
- Instructions for projects and activities should be provided in clear language to support parents as they support their children at home.
- Remote learning resources and materials, including library books, etc., to the extent possible, should be made available at food pickup sites, delivered by school bus, etc. - Doable???
- Benton Community has communicated with families that have reached out to share concerns about accessing information due to barriers such as device and internet. Solutions have been identified and the contact for support in getting access is Technology Director, Tyler Machino.
- See also communication expectations to review information on the frequency and structure for content delivery.
Supporting Student Engagement During Remote Learning

Recommended Times for Virtual Learning

The following time recommendations are presented as suggested minimum and maximum times of engagement by each student in virtual learning activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Recommended Length of Sustained Attention</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PreK</td>
<td>20 minutes/day</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>3-5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>30 minutes/day</td>
<td>90 minutes/day</td>
<td>3-5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>45 minutes/day</td>
<td>90 minutes/day</td>
<td>5-10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>120 minutes/day</td>
<td>10-15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>Class: 15 minutes/day Total: 90 minutes/day</td>
<td>Class: 30 minutes/day Total: 180 minutes/day</td>
<td>1 subject area or class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Class: 20 minutes/day Total: 120 minutes/day</td>
<td>Class: 45 minutes/day Total: 270 minutes/day</td>
<td>1 subject area or class</td>
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Suggestions for Additional Activities

The intent in sharing suggestions for additional activities comes from a place of supporting student engagement. Students should have access to varied enrichment opportunities. In addition, students and families are encouraged to support academic skills and social-emotional health through activities that extend beyond virtual learning work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mind</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Sprit</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Family</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Reading, e.g., independent reading, listening to someone else read, audiobooks</td>
<td>- Take a walk</td>
<td>- Listen to music or sing</td>
<td>- Clean up your room</td>
<td>- Write a letter to someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Puzzles, Word Searches</td>
<td>- Dance</td>
<td>- Playing (inside or outside)</td>
<td>- Do age-appropriate chores</td>
<td>- Play board games with a family member</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Write a story or in a journal</td>
<td>- Exercise</td>
<td>- Creative arts</td>
<td>- Gardening</td>
<td>- Tell jokes or riddles</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Count money</td>
<td>- Fine/gross motor activities</td>
<td>- Coloring or drawing</td>
<td>- Fix something broken</td>
<td>- Build a fort and tell stories in it</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Draw a map of your neighborhood</td>
<td>- Stretch or do yoga</td>
<td>- Imaginative play</td>
<td>- Take care of pets or plants</td>
<td>- Offer to help someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Building with blocks or Legos</td>
<td>- Play a sport</td>
<td>- Meditate</td>
<td>- Cook or bake</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Listen to a podcast</td>
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<td>- Do something you’ve been avoiding</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Watch a documentary</td>
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Last updated 4/9/20
Resources

Iowa Department of Education (DE)
- Iowa Department of Education Guidance Documents
- Iowa Department of Education YouTube - Webinars posted

Benton Community School District (BC)
- COVID-19 Website
- Curriculum & Instruction Re-entry Plan
- MS/HS Student Optional Virtual Learning Opportunities
- BC District Assessment & Reporting Information
- Video from BC Guidance Staff - Students & Families
- Video from BC Guidance Staff - Staff
- Letter from BC Guidance Staff - Staff, Students & Families
- Benton County Resource List
- Q & A from BC Guidance Staff - Staff
- Food Bank Resources
- Tanager Place Access to Services - Staff, Students, & Families
- Zoom Etiquette - Audience - Staff
- Zoom Etiquette - Audience - Students & Parents
- How to Zoom Doc - Audience - Staff
- How to Set Up Zoom/Share on Seesaw - Video
- Zoom How-To for BC Students & Families Doc
- Schoology Support - Audience - Staff
- Class Meeting Support - Staff
- How to Zoom - Audience - Students & Families

Elementary Specific Information
- Virtual Learning Zoom Times, Links, Expectations

Secondary Specific Information
- MS/HS Student Optional Virtual Learning Opportunities
  1. Feedback Specifics

Last updated 4/9/20
i. Comment specific to students on skill or understanding of content.
ii. At least one sentence.
iii. Not only an auto generated comment from PowerSchool.

2. Office Hours
   a. Weekly meeting times with links to be shared with students and families

3. LMS
   a. Schoology is available in the paid form for those interested in using.