1. Philosophy of Virtual Learning and Essential Questions

Marist School recognizes an irreplaceable value in the relationship between a faculty member and students, much of which stems from the sustained, in-person contact that occurs on a daily basis in the school setting as teacher and student dynamically co-navigate the learning process. As such, virtual learning cannot fully replace or replicate that and requires different tools and a different mindset on the part of the instructor as well as the students. In addition to offering a practical guide to shifting from in-person to virtual learning, this document is meant to help faculty think through how to select their content, adjust their instruction, and assess student learning.

Often when a virtual learning plan is initiated, it is in response to a situation that requires it. Such situations usually carry with them some immediate need to cease normal school operations. The goal of virtual learning is to allow as little disruption to the student experience of the academic program as possible by creating a learning environment where the most essential, core material can continue to be taught and assessed with the tools available. This requires us all to think differently about what we teach, how we teach it, and how we can assess it.

While this can feel understandably overwhelming at first, it is also an opportunity to practice innovation. It can be freeing to realize that you have the opportunity to teach something you love and know a lot about in an entirely different way. Because replicating your lesson will be a challenge, you can and should consider questions such as

- What are the most essential parts of each lesson?
- What are the things that are so closely tied to the heart of my course that I must make sure students understand them?
• What are the things that are important but students can move on from my class not having sacrificed a fundamental understanding of the material by not having learned it?
• What alternative methods of assessment will allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the material?
• How can I leverage technology as an effective means to provide social interaction, student content production, and meaningful feedback?
• How can I use students’ experiences with and expertise in social media to foster a meaningful learning environment?
• How can I create learning experiences where students are still learning from each other?
• How can I leverage the fact that students are at home in my lessons?
• What are the special needs of students during a crisis and how can my class help students confront and cope with the current crisis in a way that offers comfort and consolation?

These and other questions are most certainly going to come up, and it’s important to use the time available, as limited as it may be, to plan. Much of this document is aimed at helping you do just that. With the exception of some logistical requirements (class schedule, taking attendance, etc.), we recognize that not much of the below is prescriptive; this is intentional. We trust you as professionals to make thoughtful, informed (or at least as informed as they can be given the situation) decisions about what to teach. Our hope is to demonstrate the potential that exists in virtual learning and let you make choices that match your course and teaching style, while still providing a consistent routine for students.

2. Schedule, Logistics, and Communication

Moving to virtual learning produces some logistical challenges regarding how and when classes meet. Here is some information about how we will handle those things and some minimum expectations regarding the same. Much of the goal of these logistics is to establish a sense of normalcy, even in relatively abnormal circumstances.

Communication—Google Classroom will continue to be a primary method of communication between teacher and student. Consider, though, that how you used the tool before, most likely as a re-enforcement of things you said or communicated in class, may not be sufficient in virtual learning. Communication itself is fundamentally different when taken up virtually. For example, you may need to put things into Google Classroom before a virtual class so that students can access it or refer to it during instruction. Similarly, you will want to be clear with students about how you will use Google Classroom in these different conditions so they know to change their habits as well.

You will also want to establish clarity around when and how you will communicate with students and when and how you will expect them to communicate with you. Since much of the communication to come will be virtual, it will be important to establish clear expectations about the rules of engagement for your class. Additional guidelines for online communication are below.

Attendance and Prayer—Student attendance must be taken for each class period in PowerSchool, and we will continue to ask parents to report student “absences” through the attendance office. The most direct way to achieve this
will likely be to have all students log on to Google Meet at the same time. Each virtual class should begin with prayer, just as it would if we were in the school building.

**Schedule**—We will publish and adhere to the following schedule. We have chosen a schedule that we hope meets the needs of both students and teachers. For students’ learning, we recognize that having structure and routine is important and will decrease the amount of confusion and increase the effectiveness of virtual instruction, especially initially. We also realize that for faculty, maximum flexibility is a benefit when it comes to managing personal and family life during a crisis. In curating the schedule below, we have tried to offer as much structure for students while offering as much flexibility for faculty.

The scheduled time for your classes is not meant to indicate that you are actively online with all of your students for the duration of that period. Instead, you might have a beginning of class check-in to take attendance and assess student needs before having students review a pre-prepared video or PowerPoint or have an experiential learning opportunity (a bit more about that is below under *Pedagogy*). Then, near the end of the period, you might have another check-in time to announce homework or answer any questions about the lesson or work students were completing during the period.

The minimum expectation is that you have direct contact with students in each of your classes each day, including taking attendance, and for a minimum of 75 minutes each week cumulatively. “Direct Contact” includes class gatherings such as through Google Meet. This provides some flexibility about how long you spend on a given day with each class.

**Remote Learning Schedules**

**Wednesday, March 18: All Classes, 9 am start**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 9:40</td>
<td>Period 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50 - 10:30</td>
<td>Period 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40 - 11:20</td>
<td>Period 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:30 - 12:10</td>
<td>Period 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:10 - 12:40</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 - 1:25</td>
<td>Period 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35 - 2:15</td>
<td>Period 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:25 - 3:05</td>
<td>Period 7</td>
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**Friday, March 19 – BLOCK B, 8:30 start**

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>Period 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:10 - 11:40</td>
<td>Period 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:40 - 12:10</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 - 1:45</td>
<td>Period 7</td>
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**Thursday, March 19 – BLOCK A, 8:30 start**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
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<td>10:10 - 11:40</td>
<td>Period 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:40 - 12:10</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 - 1:45</td>
<td>Period 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:55 - 3:25</td>
<td>Period 4</td>
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**Monday, March 23– All Classes, 9 am start**

<table>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 24 – BLOCK A</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>Period 1</td>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, March 25 – BLOCK B</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:10 - 11:40</td>
<td>Period 2</td>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 26 – BLOCK A</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:40 - 12:10</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, March 27 – BLOCK B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15 - 1:45</td>
<td>Period 3</td>
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This Wednesday and subsequent Mondays are meant to provide a shorter period for teachers to outline the week and introduce a topic. The longer block periods are designed for students to complete longer assignments or have experiential learning.

**Tutorial**—You will notice the absence of tutorial on the schedule below. While you might choose to run tutorial during the usual time by appointment with an individual student or a group using Google Meet, it is also acceptable for you to think of a different way to track student struggles and challenges and to respond to them. You might create an online form that students can use to submit questions, possibly in real time during a lesson, or have it be a static resource that
students post questions on, which you later respond to, and other students might see. You might try using [https://padlet.com/](https://padlet.com/) as a means to have students post questions and respond in lieu of tutorial.

3. Pedagogy, Assessment, and Learning

Virtual learning initiated during a crisis will challenge you to identify the central ideas and themes, key events and people, most representative works and essential skills that students need to learn and will challenge you also to consider new means to teach and assess those. Here are some preliminary thoughts on ways to approach that, recognizing that your colleagues will also have many that they will use. We certainly encourage such collaboration and sharing and will work to create an easy resource for teachers to share things that are working well...and maybe some things that just didn’t.

Additional synchronous virtual learning tips come in an addendum at the end of this document.

**Pedagogy**—teaching virtually offers the freedom to change the model of teacher as distributor of knowledge to teacher as facilitator or experience designer. This is the perfect time to consider how to create experiences for your students. Here’s some examples, just to get you thinking,

How might you send your students on a virtual scavenger hunt to identify the differences between the approaches of Tesla and Edison, as well as the competition between them, as they discovered AC and DC current?

How might you have students create their own ‘teacher’s edition’ poetry textbook having to identify and select poems that meet certain requirements and use certain literary devices?

How might you have students use their own yards or a nearby public park as a way to explore the theme of interdependence?

How might you have students use baking as a means to teach measurement or proportion?

How might students use household objects to study geometric figures and demonstrate an understanding of geometric principles?

How might I provide aesthetic guidelines for students to make a Duchamp-style readymade?

In short, there are many opportunities we have through virtual learning that we might not think of or take advantage of in our more traditional setting. Keep in mind, too, that students will be having a lot of screen time on account of virtual learning; you are welcome to keep that to a minimum.

Because of the virtual environment, it will be even more important than ever that it is clear to students what the goal of each lesson is because they may be lacking the typical visual clues (a whiteboard with teacher notes and pertinent pages in a book or expected outcome, for example). Be sure to start each lesson with a statement about what the purpose of the lesson is and preview what you will be doing for the remainder of the class.

**Assessment**—Just as virtual learning provides opportunities to change how we teach, it also requires that we change how we assess student mastery. Because we are not aware of any way to provide proven test security
through an online platform, we will have to get creative with our assessments of virtual learning. In short, virtual assessment looks more like student production or student performance, rather than tests and quizzes. A quick overview of that is here, https://www.thoughtco.com/ideas-for-performance-based-activities-7686. In these models, students create materials or give a performance that demonstrate learning. There are many tools or means for students to do this, including some that are still relatively traditional. Here are some guiding questions as you consider how to create virtual assessments.

- How might students demonstrate clear knowledge through performance?
- How might students utilize podcasts or videos as a means to demonstrate understanding?
- How might a learning journal or diary help students capture and demonstrate what they are learning virtually?
- How might I use student-designed assessments?
- What are the kinds of things students might create that will demonstrate learning?
- How might students design and conduct their own experiments?

4. Virtual Learning and Personal Privacy

We realize that many of you will be conducting class from your home and that each person has a different standard when it comes to maintaining her or his personal privacy, and we want to be clear about maintaining personal boundaries even while conducting school remotely. Here are a few things that we hope help with that.

1. Students will be asked to be in summer uniform, avoiding any possible inappropriate attire, such as pajamas. Of course, you should not be in pajamas either and be dressed according to faculty professional dress guidelines, at least what can be seen on camera!

2. There is no obligation that the teacher be on camera for the duration of any lesson. Use your judgment as to when and for how long to appear on camera. To ensure privacy, you can put a sticky note or piece of masking tape over your camera.

3. When you do have class and appear on camera, pick a non-descript area of your home that you feel does not reveal anything you would prefer to keep private from students.

4. We realize that those who have young children will need to be attentive even while delivering a virtual lesson. Given these circumstances, and following your comfort level, it is understandable that a child be nearby or possibly seen and heard on occasion. A similar standard applies to any fuzzy friends you might have! Ion says, Thank you!
5. What to do if you don’t know what to do

1. If you are having trouble with the technology—email helpdesk for live, immediate assistance. See the email from helpdesk to reference the process.

2. Teaching and learning questions and suggestions: work with your colleagues, department chair, the academic dean, dean of faculty, or principal.

3. Attendance issues—if a student is habitually tardy or absent but not marked absent in PowerSchool, contact Mike Trapani.

4. Students who are academically or emotionally struggling—counselors and the MAC are available for them and for you even remotely.

6. Coda

We know initiating a virtual learning plan takes us into some unchartered territory. I believe that it’s been since 1918 that the school had to cease on-campus operations for this long. Thanks to Amelia Luke, we know that the school was out for two months that year because of the Spanish flu. Marist has done this before, and we can do it now. I have all the confidence that we will continue to live our mission as we are able over these next few weeks, and I appreciate and know that you will do your best to work with our students and will do all we can to support you.

We continue to work to help you prepare and will also be transitioning the work of the Counselling and Campus Ministry offices to a virtual environment as well. More information will come about that soon.
ADDENDUM

The following is adapted from Sacred Heart Prep School in California and might be useful.

TEN TIPS FOR RUNNING A VIRTUAL SYNCHRONOUS CLASS

1. Plan ahead how long students will be required to be online and what offline learning looks like.

2. Login ahead of students and greet them when they enter “class.”

3. Set up Chat parameters. We recommend either no chatting or public chatting only. We do not recommend allowing students to chat privately.

4. Use the private chat feature as the instructor to catch up late students or to nudge students who are not jumping in.

5. Once class begins, change your settings to mute students on entry.

6. Take attendance on PowerSchool at the start of the class period.

7. Begin class by sharing your screen and toggling over to your Google Classroom/portal class. Show the update that you posted for the class; this should have the outline of the work for the week. Walk students through the update. Show them where the resources for that week are located. Show them where the assignments/assessments are posted.

8. Preview your objectives for the virtual class and any expectations you have of them during the call (notes, participation, response online after class, etc.)

9. After previewing the week and your objectives, move on to your presentation, discussion, etc. Enjoy, for a brief moment, the luxury of teaching in a dress shirt and pajama pants.

10. About five minutes before ending class, go back to your Google Classroom/Portal page and remind students about the upcoming work for the week. This may seem overly-redundant. Just remember: this will be a monumental shift for students and they will need all the clarity and support they can get.

RUBRICS AND RESOURCES FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS

Discussion boards are excellent ways of fostering peer-to-peer learning. The optional rubrics and resources below are simply meant to make your life easier. You are not required to use them. You absolutely may edit, adapt, or build on them.

Setting Clear Expectations

When online is the only option for students to share their ideas and questions with one another, it’s important to set clear expectations for posting. Here’s an example: “Please post your first response by 10PM on Tuesday night. The post must be at least 250 words in length and reference the readings. Be sure to use MLA format.
for your citations. You must respond to three of your classmates by Friday 10PM. Follow-up posts must be substantive (at least 100 words) and move the discussion forward. Simply saying, “I agree”, etc. will not earn credit.”

**Resource: Discussion Board DOs and DON'Ts for Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Explain before you post. Complete the reading or preparation work before you write.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Post your response early to give your classmates more time to reply. Check back later to see what comments have been added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Explain your opinion and use examples to help others understand your points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Post something that furthers the discussion and shows depth of thought. The best part of a discussion board is that you get lots of think time before you post. Use it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Reply to several of your classmates’ posts, adding examples or asking questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Remember that it is harder to tell when something is a joke online. Use humor sparingly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t</td>
<td>Agree with everything you read. It makes for a really boring conversation. Politely disagree when you have a difference of opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t</td>
<td>Reply to the same people each time. Try to bring in other voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t</td>
<td>Get personal. Focus your criticism on ideas and arguments, not on your classmates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t</td>
<td>Bring the outside in. No inside jokes, references to people who aren’t in the conversation, or comments you wouldn’t say face-to-face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Tips for Discussion Board Prompts**

Discussion board prompts are just like the prompts you use to start discussions in your class. You just need to adjust them a bit since you will not all be in the same room answering these orally. If you need a bit of assistance with this, here are some things to consider:

- **Think about the learning you want students to gain from the discussion.**
- **What do you want to see in the responses?** Convergent ideas (how, what, why), Divergent ideas (predict, if...then), Evaluative ideas (opinion, defend, what if)?
- **Since you want to avoid yes and no responses,** how might you frame the question in such a way that students have to think before posting and not just answer off the top of their heads?
- **Remember,** just like in a face-to-face class, sometimes questions just flop. Don’t give up; just adjust. Feel free to post a response that clarifies what you are looking for, gives more instruction, or poses a completely new question.
- **Once you launch a discussion board,** monitor it as you would in a face-to-face class. Avoid jumping in too soon or over-responding. You don’t have to respond to every post. Remember you set it up to where they have to respond to their classmates. Allow the exchanges to take place.
- **When responding,** be sure to model how you want students to respond. Consider including links to support your statements, quotes (cite them), restating a portion of the post you are responding to, and using the name of the student(s) to whom you are responding.

**Hacking the Discussion Board for Global Feedback**

The discussion board platform is also a great place for providing global feedback to students, just as you would in class if you were using a student sample to retool thesis statements or craft a stronger hypothesis. Just
because we're learning online doesn't mean students have to learn in isolation. We can still insist on an environment in which mistakes are expected and growth happens in community. Ask students to post a draft of their project check-point. Tell them you will give feedback directly on the discussion board (and that students will receive their grade privately). This will likely feel very awkward at first. We often aren't used to learning and stumbling with an audience. It can be a very vulnerable feeling. Remind students that we learn more deeply when we learn in community. They’ll be surprised how much they grow by seeing the insights of classmates and the feedback to their challenges, which may someday be their challenges, too. Early replies from you to a few students will be seen by, and shape, the responses of other students.

**Rubric: Grading Discussion Board Posts**

Recall that you can add a rubric to any Schoology assignment and click the boxes to score student work. Here’s a sample that you could use or adapt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4.5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Response clearly addresses all elements of the prompt. Exhibits attention to detail and mastery of the topic. Student evaluates and synthesizes course concepts, theories, or materials appropriately, using effective examples and supporting evidence.</td>
<td>Response addresses the prompt and demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic. Student applies and analyzes relevant course concepts, theories, or materials, using examples or evidence for support.</td>
<td>Response addresses some elements of the prompt. Student summarizes course concepts, theories, or materials. Post may reveal some gaps in understanding or familiarity with content.</td>
<td>Response does not adequately address the prompt. Student relies on statements that are unsupported by course concepts, theories, or materials. Post demonstrates misunderstanding of content and/or a lack of sincere effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Thought Leader. Asks good questions for classmates to consider. Responds to multiple peers in a manner that advances the discussion. Draws connections between comments. Takes risks in developing new ideas.</td>
<td>Engaged Participant. Asks thoughtful, open-ended questions. Builds off of previous comments in the discussion board. Responds directly to peers in a manner that adds meaning to the discussion.</td>
<td>Skimming the Surface. May ask clarifying or perfunctory questions. Responds to peers in a manner that demonstrates superficial engagement with their ideas.</td>
<td>“Post and Go” Student does not make meaningful contributions to the discussion community. Does not respond to peers, even when prompted to do so. May disrupts the community with discourteous behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style &amp; Format</td>
<td>Meets or exceeds required word count. Post(s) are practically perfect grammatically. Student consistently provides academic citations for ideas not his/her own.</td>
<td>Meets or nearly meets required word count. Post(s) may include a few errors that are minor enough that they do not distract the reader. Student references sources for ideas, but may do so inconsistently.</td>
<td>Meets at least 80% of the required word count. Post may include errors that distract the reader but do not detract from the argument. Student does not provide citations for sources.</td>
<td>Falls significantly short of the required word count. And/Or post contains multiple flaws that seriously confuse the reader. Student does not engage sources, and thus, none are cited.</td>
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Adapted from the University of San Francisco Educational Technology Master’s Program scoring guides and the Phillips Exeter Academy Harkness Discussion rubric.