

Lower Merion School District



Continuity of Education Plan

School District	Lower Merion School District
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Goal of Plan

Lower Merion School District will continue to provide equitable access to our educational program through planned remote instruction. The District is committed to meeting the needs of all students. Educators will seek connection and engagement with every student to ensure continuity of learning.

Overview of Plan

Lower Merion School District plans to offer continuity of education for all students in the most appropriate and accessible ways possible. This will be achieved through *Planned Instruction*. *Planned Instruction* is formal teaching and learning similar to that which occurs in a classroom setting. Within this process, teachers plan courses of instruction of new concepts/skills aligned to grade-level standards. Additionally, teachers will offer opportunities for enrichment, extension, intervention and review.

Expectations for Teaching and Learning

The design of the teaching and learning incorporates maximum flexibility for families navigating these challenging times. Instruction will be planned to be primarily delivered asynchronously. However, scheduled real-time instruction will also take place and will be offered synchronously for students in grades K-12. At times, this real-time instruction may be for an entire class; others times for a small group. Additionally, teachers may be inviting students to virtually join them for small-group

conferencing and other instructional activities such as literature circles or morning meetings. Student participation with synchronous sessions is encouraged but not required.

In grades K-5, instruction will focus on new learning and will include reliance on technology for asynchronous, or recorded, instruction. Teachers will be focusing on essential core skills that support grade level mastery and provide foundations for future learning. Synchronous opportunities will be offered daily including holding Morning Meeting. Building teams will develop schedules to support increased small group student interactions. Special area teachers (Art, Music, FLES, PE, and Library) and specialists will also be providing resources and synchronous learning opportunities to connect with students. Teachers will communicate specific expectations for assignment submission. This will include how and when work should be submitted.

In grades 6-12, instruction will focus on new learning and will be offered both synchronously and asynchronously. Teachers have dedicated two-hour blocks throughout the day, scheduled by subject area, in which they synchronously connect with students. This could include direct instruction, small group-conferencing or instruction, or discussion/consultation. Similar to how feedback is provided to students throughout the year, teachers will continue to offer guiding questions, suggestions, amendments of misunderstandings, and/or possibilities for extension or application so that students can deepen their understanding or improve performance. Teacher assignments on Blackboard contain a task for students to complete and the expectations for successful completion of this task. After an assignment is formally submitted, teachers offer feedback regarding how effectively a student met the expectations of the assignment, highlighting positive aspects of the students' performance to be applied in future contexts and recommending suggestions for future academic texts and/or amending misunderstandings.

Communication Tools and Strategies

Blackboard will be the primary platform used for communication of learning expectations with students and families. Teachers are available for regular office hours. These specific times are posted on each teacher's Blackboard. This time can be used for parent and student questions. Teachers and school personnel communicate via email, phone, and/or videoconferencing, depending on circumstances. Email remains the best way for students or families to communicate with school personnel. Relevant District-wide communication and resources related to the school closure can be found on the school district website at: <https://www.lmsd.org/departments/health/coronavirus-response>

Access (Devices, Platforms, Handouts)

Planned instruction will be delivered primarily electronically via Blackboard and videoconferencing platforms. As such, device access and connectivity for students is important. Device access and connectivity has been assessed in multiple ways, including individual contact with families, and is being monitored on an ongoing basis. As of 4/13/20, the District has distributed over 600 devices for students.

Grades 9-12: High school students had previously been issued school laptops (MacBook Air). They can request technical assistance by submitting a helpdesk ticket at <https://helpdesk.lmsd.org>.

Grades K-8: Chromebooks have been issued to students in need of a device. Elementary and middle school parents/guardians can request technical support by emailing techsupport@lmsd.org or by calling the Lower Merion School District helpdesk at 610-645-1899.

Staff General Expectations

To the extent possible, all professionals are available to support students, staff, and families. This includes, but is not limited to, teachers, school counselors, nurses, social workers, librarians, and mental health professionals. There remains a structured day in place for staff that includes opportunities for synchronous connection and instruction with students. Email communication expectations remain consistent. Non-emergency communication beyond the workday or on the weekends should expect return communication the following work day. Staff will continue to fulfill their professional responsibilities, including but not limited to collaboration with colleagues around lesson design, instruction, and assessment.

Student Expectations

Students are expected to fully engage in the Continuity of Education plan during every scheduled school day. The skills that are included in the instructional program have been deemed essential for academic success. Essential skills do not represent everything that is typically taught in a course or grade, but rather are skills that prove to have endurance (long-standing value), leverage (value in multiple disciplines), and readiness (necessary for success in the next level/course). Students are minimally expected to engage daily in the asynchronous learning of the essential skills and learning activities outlined by teachers. Student attendance is connected to this engagement.

Estimated time dedicated daily by students in the essential learning activities:

- Grades K-2
 - Literacy: About 60 minutes of literacy activities (30 minutes for a required assignment and 30 minutes for choice, extension, or engagement activities).
 - Math: About 30-60 minutes of math (half on required math activities and half on extensions or choice activities).
- Grades 3-5
 - Literacy: About 60-120 minutes of literacy activities (half on required assignments and half on choice/extension opportunities).
 - Math: About 60 minutes of math. This may include a combination of required, choice and application/extension activities.
- Grades 6-12
 - Learning activities for each course are designed to take approximately 30 minutes for students to complete. Knowing students work at different paces, student work should not exceed 30 minutes per course per day, and no more than 150 minutes per week, inclusive of reading, watching videos, or written tasks. Some learning activities include multi-day activities assignments designed to be chunked into smaller pieces and completed over the course of multiple days.
- Grades K-12 (Recommendations for all students)
 - Students should dedicate minimally 15-20 minutes per day of independent reading with a book of their choice.
 - Students are encouraged to engage in the synchronous opportunities that will be offered daily including, but not limited to, direct instruction, consultation or small

group instruction, group discussion, morning meeting (K-5), and enrichment through special area/elective classes.

Attendance / Accountability

The expectation is for students to be in attendance, as measured by engagement, in the Continuity of Education plan daily. The District will monitor attendance using a work completion model. With a work completion model, student work products will reflect engagement in instructional activities, whether those be synchronous or asynchronous. Most learning activities and planned instruction will be in an asynchronous model in order to flexibly account for the uniqueness of each family and student home situation. However, there will also be synchronous learning opportunities for students daily. Students not engaged in synchronous or asynchronous work will be marked absent. School personnel will reach out to students and families there is concern that students are non-participatory.

Good Faith Efforts for Access and Equity for All Students

Through the just and fair distribution of resources based upon each individual student's needs, the Lower Merion School District strives to meet the needs of all students. This is done through differentiation of instruction, support, and resource allocation. Instructionally, teachers will continue to provide differentiated instruction for students. Support teachers (e.g. Special Education, Math Support, Reading Support, English Language) are creating learning activities and/or are providing support through differentiated instruction and/or individualized support plans. These supports are communicated directly from the Support teacher to the family. Students will have opportunities for synchronous sessions with support teachers in addition to their classroom teachers.

Regarding distribution of resources, device and connectivity needs for all families have been assessed. Devices have been distributed to students in need. The District is providing free meals regularly to families.

Special Education Supports

The District remains committed to providing meaningful access for all students including our students with disabilities. We are committed to providing a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Students with IEPs, GIEPs, and 504s will continue to receive the supports and services outlined in these plans, to the extent possible. Case managers will continue to work with general education teachers on accommodations and modifications to assignments to ensure access to the general education curriculum. Additionally, as appropriate, special education staff will provide instruction in areas identified within the student's IEP or GIEP. Related Services such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Vision Support, Hearing Support, etc. will be provided through a teletherapy approach. Once schools are permitted to reopen, the student's IEP team will provide the IEP that was in place when schools initially closed and will make an individualized determination as to whether, and to what extent, IEP revisions may be needed.

EL Supports

Students who are identified as English Learners (ELs) will continue to receive instruction in language acquisition. English Language Development teachers have contacted parents/guardians of EL students to ensure expectations have been effectively communicated and to ensure the needs of students are being met. ELD teachers are working with families to maintain consistent access to communication in the family's preferred language.

Gifted Education

Students with IEPs, GIEPs, and 504s will continue to receive the supports and services outlined in these plans, to the extent possible. Case managers will continue to work with general education teachers on accommodations and modifications to assignments to ensure access to the general education curriculum. Additionally, as appropriate, special education staff will provide instruction in areas identified within the student's IEP or GIEP. Annual IEP/GIEP/504 meetings will be held virtually. A Student Services team member will contact families to schedule a time for the meeting. Meetings will be held via phone conference or Zoom.

Building Contacts

Questions and contacts regarding class assignments may be directed to classroom teachers.

Building-level contacts of the school principals:

- Harriton High School – [Mr. Scott Weinstein](#), Principal
- Lower Merion High School – [Mr. Sean Hughes](#), Principal
- Bala Cynwyd Middle School – [Ms. Sarah Stout](#), Principal
- Welsh Valley Middle School – [Mr. Christopher Hall](#), Principal
- Belmont Hills Elementary – [Ms. Robin Klaiber](#), Principal
- Cynwyd Elementary School – [Dr. Dan Martino](#), Principal
- Gladwyne Elementary School – [Ms. Veronica Ellers](#), Principal
- Merion Elementary – [Dr. Toby Albanese](#), Principal
- Penn Valley Elementary School – [Mr. Scott Mitchell](#), Principal
- Penn Wynne Elementary School – [Mr. Shawn Bernatowicz](#), Principal

Resource Links

- [Lower Merion School District website](#)
- [LMSD COVID-19 webpage](#)
- [LMSD Guide for Families to Flexible Instruction](#)