Middle School
Distance Learning Handbook
SY 2021-2022

Middle School Distance Learning Guidelines

For School Year 2021-2022, the Guam Department of Education will provide support to students who opt to participate in a distance learning experience through online learning. This handbook applies to students who have selected a distance learning approach or those with a medical health condition and/or reasons and in the event the district or the school has to transition to online learning due to emergent issues. The goal is to ensure our students continue to participate in collaborative, active, and engaged learning opportunities outside of the school campus.

Teaching and Learning

ACADEMIC CONDITIONS

In order to provide a well- rounded educational experience for students, academic activities must be available across all instructional areas for each student. Online students need sufficient instructional time, structured routines and schedules, collaborative and meaningful relationships that promote a sense of belonging, and feedback as they strive to meet learning objectives and goals.

Traditional Face-to-Face teaching practices (i.e. preparation and planning, purpose, student engagement, classroom environment and culture, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment of learning, and providing interventions) also apply to teaching in distance learning. While our Priority Standards, Skills, and Topics (PSSTs) guide our instruction, educators are encouraged to design purposeful learning experiences that build on students' individuality and strengths. A comprehensive distance learning approach and experience includes activities both in the offline and online platform.

The educational teaching and practices have evolved to adapt to the "21st century skills". In order for students to thrive in today's world, schools need to strengthen the use of technology to build on the students' abilities to utilize digital literacy, critical thinking and problem solving skills to provide and teach collaborative and meaningful interactions with others. Educators must create and design learning activities that allow students to access the content and demonstrate understanding across multiple modes of learning to provide a balance between synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Across all modes of access, it is essential to create:
- **Equity in access for all learners and**
- **Access that best supports each student's ability to succeed.**

Synchronous	Asynchronous
Synchronous learning happens in real time with a teacher and students online at a scheduled virtual platform: ● Virtual classroom instruction and live webinars ● Checking in with students via instant messaging or video conferencing ● Assignment check-in ● Online discussions ● Interaction between students in breakout groups or group presentations ● Live reflections ● Focused activities with real-time interaction ● Office Hours	Asynchronous learning does not require real time interaction, instead, content is available online for student to access when it best suits their schedule without a teacher present through: ● Pre-recorded lectures, readings, or podcasts ● Tasks assigned from a website or learning management system ● Video demonstrations and worked problems. ● Quizzes, assignments, and applications. ● Recorded reflections ● Analytical groups Additional time spent on activities that require little to no technology may include but not limited to: ● Journals / Workbooks ● Writing pieces ● Performance tasks

The following are teacher expectations for online learning:

❏ **PREPARING FOR ONLINE LEARNING:**

o Attendance at all school preparedness meetings to support online/distance learning.
o Attend and participate in digital platform training to enhance the virtual classroom experience.
o Develop class syllabus to guide the course expectations and obtain approval from your administrator by the first Teacher Work Day.
o Set online expectations for students and provide training: Student training will consist of but not limited to:
  ▪ Overview and practice of the official DOE digital platforms in the event of a school closure.
  ▪ Expectations for appropriate online behaviors (Language, attire, digital etiquette, etc.) during class time and when participating in any breakout groups or online chats, etc.
  ▪ Explain how academic performance will be addressed with online learning.
  ▪ Explain your attendance and behavior expectations.

o   Collaborate with other colleagues and/or department members to design learning experiences.
o   Provide whole group or individual orientations to ensure all students and parents know and understand the tools and procedures for participating in distance learning.

❑ **DURING ONLINE LEARNING**

o   Design lessons and/or activities that students are able to work on independently, which may require little to no supervision.
o   Provide instruction based on grade level Priority Standards, Skills, and Topics (PSST).
o   Streamline communication and offer clear expectations through constant communication with students and their parents through email, newsletter, websites, etc.   Online learning may require collaborative and ongoing communication with students and families to ease anxiety, answer questions and provide support.
o   Technology Acceptable Use Form must be completed by parent and student prior to the first synchronous class session.
o   Leverage formative assessment practices to grow student's ability for independent learning.
o   Provide timely feedback to support student learning.   Respond to all gdoe email/phone calls within 48 hours.
o   Continue to collaborate with colleagues to enhance the quality of online learning.
o   Synchronous classes are to be held during the student's regularly scheduled time.
o   Utilize the Powerschool/PowerTeacher Gradebook to document attendance and home-school communication. Teachers are required to take attendance daily.
o   Maintain Google Classroom or the district's adopted Learning Management System daily.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Schools operating Online Learning models are required to meet all Guam Education Board policies and standard operating procedures for instructional time. Each middle school will have their set bell schedule students will follow and the approved GDOE SY 2021-2022 School Year Calendar. Teachers will provide synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities during scheduled class times. In addition, teachers will be available for intervention/ help during scheduled class time and office hours*

Definitions:

❑ *Instructional Day*: The time in a standard school day, from the beginning of the first scheduled class period to the end of the last scheduled class period, including passing time for class changes and excluding breaks for meals.

❑ *Instructional Time*: The time during which a school is responsible for a student and the student is required and is expected to be actively engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities and/or learning assessments to meet curriculum goals and PSSTs.

Instructional time shall include:

❑ Synchronous and asynchronous learning experience planned and guided by a teacher.

❑ Time that a student spends on district-wide assessments.

❑ Time may also be spent on virtual field trips, assemblies, and/or conferences.

GRADING AND PROGRESS REPORTING

The grading policy for online learning will be developed by the District. (PENDING) The grading policy will allow students to understand the progress with the Priority Standards, Skills, and Topics (PSST) and define what students are expected to learn next.

Teachers are required to:

❑ Implement the grading policy. Ensure that the grading policy is included in the syllabus.

❑ Evaluate goals and objectives based on progress benchmarks for students supported under the ESL program, an IEP, and/or 504 plans.

❑ Monitor student progress

❑ Regularly report progress to students and families, in alignment with DOE standard operating procedures.

PowerSchool is the official information management system utilized by the Guam Department of Education. Teachers will use PowerTeacher Pro in PowerSchool as the mechanism to report official grades, document student progress and parent communication, and record attendance. It is designed as a vehicle for effective, on-going, and open communication between the school and home. The PowerTeacher Pro Gradebook feature allows teachers to input grades and other pertinent academic information for parents and students to view. Therefore, every GDOE teacher will be responsible to input grades and attendance daily as part of their professional accountability. *(REF: SOP# 200-006)*

Procedures for grading and progress reporting:

❑ GRADES
  ▪ PowerTeacher Pro Gradebook records are to be updated weekly at a minimum.

- Teachers are to input all assignments, tests, quizzes and any other components that determine the students' grades.
- Final grades for progress reports and report cards will be submitted according to the GDOE School Year calendar.

❑ ATTENDANCE
- Attendance should be recorded daily per period in PowerTeacher Pro Gradebook.
- Attendance records are to be updated daily (i.e., Unexcused Absence, Excused Absence, Absent, or Tardy). (Board Policy 411)

Operational Conditions for GDOE Middle School Online Program

Thoughtful consideration of school operations will be an essential aspect of operating schools under a comprehensive online learning model. Many design features of operational structures and functions that are present in in-person attendance will require redesign for a virtual context.

NUTRITION

Providing secure, guaranteed access to nutrition services remains a critical public service in the context of this health pandemic. Nutrition must be prioritized and sustained, regardless of whether students are learning on or off site. GDOE will provide Grab and Go meals on a designated day of the week for Online Learners. Non-perishable meals for breakfast and lunch for a 5-day period will be prepared and packaged for distribution at the school site or designated location.

ATTENDANCE AND TRUANCY

The ability to continue to monitor attendance, as a proxy for engagement, is arguably one of the most important ways schools can help ensure equitable access to student learning and account for student wellbeing during a pandemic across any instructional model. The primary rationale for documenting student engagement with high-quality attendance data is the relationship between student attendance and student achievement.

To ensure that students are completing 180 days or equivalent number of contact hours of instruction, school personnel should work closely with students and families to complete a full academic year. School faculty and staff should contact parents daily when a child is absent. Student attendance and school policies and procedures governing student absences can also be found in Board Policy 411.

The school should:

❑ Provide families with clear and concise descriptions of student attendance and participation expectations as well as family involvement expectations.

- ❑ Use positive outreach as a mechanism to build strong engagement and attendance patterns and relationships with families;
- ❑ Center equity in all outreach and communication efforts with parents and caregivers. This includes honoring home language and culture and considering the strengths and needs of students;
- ❑ Establish that a student's physical and emotional wellbeing is in place before engaging with the curriculum: and
- ❑ Promote student engagement and consistent attendance through culturally responsive and relevant scheduling decisions that promote whole student wellness.

Policies, Definitions, and Guidance for Online attendance:

Compulsory School Attendance (17 GCA § 6102)
"Any parent, guardian or other person having control or charge of any child who is at least five (5) years of age and has not reached the age of eighteen (18), not exempted under the provisions of this Article, shall send the child to a full-time day school for which such schools are in session, except that the starting date of school for children five (5) years of age…"

Non-Compulsory Attendance (17 GCA § 6102)
Any student of non compulsory age (18 and above) and are not required by law to be in school.

Online Attendance and Absence for the school day:
- ❑ Attendance must be taken at least once for each scheduled class that day for all students enrolled in the GDOE Middle School Online Program.
- ❑ Attendance includes both participation in class activities and interaction with the teacher during the designated instructional period, or interactions with substitute teachers carrying out the lesson plans.
- ❑ Interaction can be evidenced by any of the following or reasonable equivalents:
  - ▪ Participating in a video class;
  - ▪ Communication from the student to the teacher via chat, text message, communication app or email;
  - ▪ A phone call between the teacher or substitute teacher and the student;
  - ▪ Posting completed coursework to a learning management system or web-based platform or via email; or
  - ▪ Turning in completed coursework on a given day.
- ❑ Monitor and address chronic absenteeism.
- ❑ Update student attendance on the PowerTeacher Pro Gradebook.

Excused Absences

The school administrator shall have the discretion to decide whether an absence is considered as excused. A child who is absent (excused) shall be given the opportunity to make up the work missed in class. Absences incurred for any of the following reasons are to be considered excused:

❑ When absence is addressed in a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or Educational Accommodation Plan (EAP).

❑ When a student is ill for two (2) days or less, a parent note must be submitted by the second instructional day. However, a student absent for three (3) or more consecutive days, two or more alternating days due to illness is required to provide a written certification from a physician indicating the illness and the duration from which the student should be excused from the online classes. In addition, school administrators may require written certification from a physician for any number of days of absences due to illness if a student's past attendance records show patterns of illness or reasons for the absences due to illness which the administrator finds questionable.

❑ Students have scheduled medical or dental visits.

❑ Student has a death in the immediate family. 5 GCA §5601 (g) defines immediate family as mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, guardian or caretaker, brother, sister, stepbrother or stepsister, spouse, grandparent, and child.

❑ Students are required to appear in court or other legally related proceedings.

❑ Off-island travel, which has the prior approval of the school administrator. Off- island travel where the absences of the child exceed 25 or more days, the parents shall withdraw their child from school.

❑ Natural catastrophe or disaster.

❑ Participation in authorized school related activities or compliance with administrative actions taken by the school, such as field trips, conferences called by administrators or counselors, suspensions, or injury, etc.

❑ Observance of holidays recognized by a religion of which the student is a member. Parents shall present evidence of religious affiliation.

Chronic Absenteeism

Research indicates that students are considered chronically absent when they miss 10% (18 days) of school in a year. Chronic absenteeism factors excused, unexcused, and out of school suspensions. The most important ways schools can help ensure equitable access to student learning and account for student wellbeing during a pandemic across any instructional model is through high-quality student attendance. Chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy is grounds for requiring a student to return to in-person attendance.

Tardy

Students who report up to seven (7) minutes after the start of the virtual session are tardy. The accumulation of tardies are not used for a habitual truancy petition however students may be referred for disciplinary action.

Technical Absence

A student who is tardy for more than 8 minutes from the beginning of the virtual session will constitute a Technical Absent (TA) from the class. Additionally, students who log off for periods of 8 minutes or more during a virtual session will be marked with a TA for the session. Administrators will be guided by the ODR when addressing habitual technical absences.

Power Announcement – Attendance Alerts (SOP 200-006)

Teachers are required to take daily attendance for the school day. Attendance should be recorded daily per period in Power Teacher and attendance records are to be updated daily (unexcused absence to excused absence or absent to tardy). Attendance alerts will be sent out to parents/guardians at approximately 9:00 am and 1:00 pm via Swift messaging. Attendance must be entered for the respective sessions prior to the designated alert times.

Truancy

The GDOE Truancy and Attendance mission is to further the Guam Department of Education's mission, School Attendance Officers/School Resource Officers assist all students identified as having attendance problems by working to prevent truancy and reduce the high dropout rate. The team reports all violations of the Truancy Statutes to the courts.

As stated previously, the most important ways schools can help ensure equitable access to student learning and account for student wellbeing during a pandemic across any instructional model is through high-quality student attendance. Chronic absenteeism and habitual truancy is grounds for requiring a student to return to in-person attendance.

Truant (17 GCA §6401 (c))

A pupil absent from school without a reasonable and a bona fide excuse from a parent.

Habitual Truant (17 GCA §6402)

A pupil who has incurred twelve (12) or more unexcused absences in a school year, and is compulsory attendance age.

School Attendance Officers (SAOs) will investigate referrals and ensure that habitual truants are referred to the Superior Court of Guam.

School Attendance Officers (SAOs) – Special Deputy Marshals (SDM)

Employees of SSSD who work with schools to proactively help students stay in school, investigate referrals, and ensure that habitual truants are referred to the Superior Court of Guam.
Discretion to Petition to Court:
Board Policy 411 states, the Superintendent has the authority to determine whether to petition to the court when students are habitually truant. When students have accumulated 6 or more days of unexcused absence, school administrators will complete and submit a Student Attendance Referral Form (SARF) to the assigned SAO. The SAO will investigate and determine whether the school has exhausted all

interventions required. If not, they have the discretion to return the SARF for the school to implement interventions. If yes, the student will be petitioned to the court.

Regardless of whether or not a school has completed all interventions, the SAO will conduct an investigation based on the information available. The results of the investigation will be provided within five (5) working days from the date of SARF.
Intervention: "An act to prevent or alter a result or course of events." An intervention is mainly but not limited to those listed on each level of the Office Truancy Referral Form (OTRF).

Please refer to the GDOE Student Conduct Procedural Manual for the procedures for truancy referrals to school administrators for both compulsory and non-compulsory aged students. (p. 56)

CLUBS, EXTRACURRICULAR AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Enrichment activities and participation in clubs or organizations outside of the school day reinforce student leadership, encourage student attendance, and promote strong school culture.

Students may avail themselves and access additional activities to the extent possible. It is important to foster student voice by ensuring opportunities to participate in identity-affirming student organizations/clubs virtually.

Student and Family Support

For distance learning to be successful, schools must create the conditions that allow for students and families to actively engage in school while online. Schools must ensure equity and access to learning, partner with parents and families, and be mindful of students' mental, social and emotional health.

EQUITY AND ACCESS

Equity is the provision of personalized resources needed for all individuals to reach common goals. In other words, the goals and expectations are the same for all students, but the support needed to achieve those goals depends on the students' needs (Equity Education, 2019).

The Department recognizes that different students need different resources to achieve the same goals and objectives as their peers. Each student has a unique set of needs, talents, and resources that require teachers to respond in different ways to each individual student. Inclusive teaching address and refers to a variety of teaching approaches. Inclusive teaching strategies contribute to an inclusive learning environment in which all students feel equally valued. In order to address equity in a distance learning environment, some key considerations for teachers to include:

- ❏ Create a collaborative environment for every student to participate. Ensure all students are afforded the opportunity to provide feedback, input and engage in discussions.
- ❏ Use positive reinforcement. Encourage positive student engagement.
- ❏ Provide opportunities for students to share their own experiences and perspectives. Allow for diverse talents and styles of learning. Ensure all students feel their contributions and perspectives are equally valued and respected. Equally value contributions by gender and race during class.
- ❏ Accommodate individual learning differences and prioritize accessibility. If feedback reveals that some students cannot complete certain assignments or participate in projects, it is important for teachers to provide interventions and assistance.

MENTAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

The best way schools can help students catch up academically is to ensure they feel relaxed, safe and connected to their friends and teachers as they return to the classroom. Supporting the mental, social, and emotional health of students in distance learning is a priority for GDOE. One of the best ways to meet the social and emotional needs of children is to help them develop the social and emotional skills they need to be resilient. Supportive interactions are the foundation for building strong, healthy relationships with children. Communication allows educators to gain insight on student safety concerns, feedback and traumas.

In order to address mental, social and emotional health, some key considerations for teachers to following:

- ❏ Ensure a positive self environment that addresses safety, belonging, self-care and mental health of each student as a foundation for learning.

❏ Use Zoom or Google Meet for regular check-ins with students to build trusting relationships.
❏ Prioritize mental, emotional, and physical care and connection by considering creating a check-in using a google form, that asks about a positive part of their day. Offer choices such as "I'm great," "I'm OK, "I'm struggling, " or I'm having a hard time and would like a check-in."
❏ Be mindful and proactive in recognizing changes in mental, social, and emotional health of your students and refer students to school guidance counselors.
❏ Consistent social interactions can help students cope with the changing situation and provide a sense of stability in difficult times. It is important for teachers to give students routines and consistency.
❏ Attend/participate in training offered by the GDOE.

PARTNERING WITH PARENTS, FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

It is important for schools to build better relationships with parents at the classroom and school level. Schools must create new ways to communicate information and partner with families on academics. Building positive relationships with families forms the foundation of student success. Consider the following to build relationships with parents, families and caregivers:

❏ Familiarize families with the school's distance learning plan. It is important to communicate basic information and disseminate regular updates to keep families connected with the school. Teachers may send emails or initiate phone conversations in order to facilitate a more personal connection or follow up with a student. Various social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) and school websites have been extremely popular for posting school announcements.
❏ Connect individually with students' parents and families by phone or email to build relationships with families and report students' progress.
❏ Support families with tips to be successful in distance learning:
  ▪ Suggest a daily schedule that can support remote learning, especially if students have limited internet access.
  ▪ Provide families with "check-in prompts" they can utilize with their child. (i.e., *How did your schoolwork go today?* Are you learning anything interesting? Was anything challenging? Is there anything you want your teacher to know?)
  ▪ Make sure parents know what to do when their child is stuck: who should they contact to ask for help? Can they direct their child to a set of online resources?

Digital Learning Needs for GDOE Middle School Online Program

Ensuring equity for every student, no matter the location or situation, is foundational for any instructional model. Educators and students must have equitable access to the resources to ensure that a virtual classroom is consistent across the board. It is important to note that each of the elements of digital learning is essential for both the student and the educator, and the elements must be available both during and after school hours. Each of these digital learning needs include considerations for security and privacy. Please refer to the GDOE Board Policy 379 and 836 which provides guidance on the *Education Technology Use* for students and parents, respectively.

Digital Citizenship
Digital citizenship refers to the responsible use of technology by anyone who uses computers, the Internet, and digital devices to engage with the class and with society on any level. It is crucial to understand how people talk and behave online.

Students are provided with instruction and resources on digital citizenship, including how to navigate the online environment safely. Students need to know about personal data, how to protect themselves, and how to protect confidential information while online. Thus, it is important to teach students about user data by focusing on their digital footprints and how they can be tracked.

Privacy and Security
It is important to pay close attention to FERPA, COPPA, CIPA, and OSIPA laws and also look specifically for references to how student data is used by computer applications. Thus, the GDOE Online School will limit the Learning Management Systems to Schoology.

Infrastructure
There are many infrastructure elements to consider, including but not limited to: availability and viability for streaming live video (bandwidth and speed), cost and data limits, and distance from home to location(s) where wireless access is available.

- ❏ GDOE with the Office of the Governor provides the *Providing Access to Home (PATH)* program to qualifying students in order to provide reliable Internet access for student learning.
- ❏ GDOE with the Office of the Governor provides the *Providing Access to Home (PATH)* program for teachers.
- ❏ GDOE provides Community Learning Centers (CLC) for families to access after school hours.

Devices for GDOE Middle School Online Learning
Identifying the most appropriate devices for students and staff is a critical element in planning for the GDOE Middle School Online Program must inventory current GDOE issued devices and ensure all cleaning protocols are carefully followed. Students may access their GDOE student

accounts and virtual platforms with their personal devices or a GDOE issued device. To participate in the GDOE Middle School Online Program:

- ❑ every student must have a computing device capable of using online learning;
- ❑ device must be for the exclusive use by the student;
- ❑ cellphones are not adequate computing devices to support online learning;
- ❑ devices must be able to support learning software and accessing the internet;
- ❑ every educator that is assigned to teach or support students online must have a computing device capable of using digital learning software and accessing the internet;
- ❑ every device must be equipped with a filtering mechanism for compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act;
- ❑ devices issued by the GDOE must be configured, with appropriate apps, and maintained by the school/district.

Parents/students may submit applications to acquire computing devices at the student's school. Student and educator technical support/help desk will be provided at the school and through the GDOE FSAIS office. Parents may call or email the school for further guidance.

Software Systems for Comprehensive Distance Learning

Software systems provide the means to interface the curriculum and learning tools with teachers and students. A Learning Management System (LMS) is a platform that provides a digital way to disseminate information, allows students and educators to communicate, and is also capable of tracking students' assignments and evidence of learning. Together, a learning management system (LMS) and an online meeting platform comprise the software system for the GDOE Middle School Online Program. Schoology is the official LMS for the Guam Department of Education (GDOE). Online meetings happen via a web browser application or software downloaded on a computer or mobile device. With online meeting software, participants connect with one another via virtual meetings, also known as webinars, web conferences, or video conferences.

Components of the LMS have been considered and is not limited to:

- ❑ The systems are familiar to educators and students (compatibility to the District's student information system (*PowerSchool*), access to whiteboards, discussion forums, shared authoring spaces, videos, e-book, or articles);
- ❑ is age appropriate;
- ❑ quality of the digital learning experience is enhanced when a single system is used across a school for consistent student and parent experience;
- ❑ compiles a list of all the software solutions and communicates with parents and students, their options for consent and participation;
- ❑ systems reviewed and recommended by teachers.

Digital Content for GDOE Middle School Online Program

Determining the source for digital content is one of the most important decisions schools and districts stand to make as it relates to student learning and engagement. Teachers will determine the digital curriculum content best suited for the learning guided by the PSSTs and GDOE curriculum.

Professional Learning & Training for Comprehensive Distance Learning

Professional learning and training is paramount for the successful implementation of the GDOE Middle School Online Program. Educators have been faced with learning entirely new ways of teaching that require new approaches to technology and sustaining student engagement.

GDOE will provide ongoing professional learning and training to all school staff around best practices in comprehensive distance learning as well as technical "how-to" training for operational functions.

GDOE has identified educators within the district who have expertise in areas of distance learning. These individuals may provide support to classroom teachers through the following:

❑ Supporting project based learning and the use of education technology in an effort to build collective capacity.
❑ consider assignment of an instructional coaches to regularly drop-in and support real-time feedback and instructional support to teachers;
❑ establish virtual professional learning communities that include early adopters of digital tools to build and develop teaching practices; create virtual learning walks to share and build professional practice;
❑ develop shared understanding for high quality teaching using common frameworks for virtual instruction.