



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY
PACIFIC REGION
UNIT 35007
APO AP 96376-5007

July 28, 2020

Dear DoDEA Pacific families,

For the 2020-21 school year, DoDEA is providing a full-time virtual learning option for students and families with health vulnerabilities related to COVID-19 or who are concerned about returning to a brick-and-mortar school setting.

The deadline to complete a request form for enrollment in the virtual school has been extended from July 28th to July 30 (7 a.m. Friday July 31 Japan Time) to allow parents additional time to make an informed decision about choosing the virtual option. Please note, this change does not affect the sign up deadline of July 28 for teachers interested in teaching in the virtual school.

Details about how the virtual school will operate and the support that parents will have to offer in order to ensure a child's success can be found at: <https://www.dodea.edu/returntoschool.cfm>.

We have received many questions regarding the number of courses high school students will be able to take in the virtual school. While the DoDEA Virtual School has found that high school students who take more than 5 online courses struggle to be successful, if families want their high school student(s) to be enrolled in 6 virtual school courses they will be allowed to do so in order to receive a full year of credit. Students can also opt to take two courses over the summer to remain on track to graduate.

Attached to this letter are two Frequently Asked Questions documents to further inform your choice of the best learning environment for your child. These FAQs address the most common questions we have received regarding both the full-time virtual and brick and mortar school options, and also specifically address services available in the full-time virtual school for students with disabilities. You can find more resources, including a parent guide detailing our Pacific 2020-21 Return to School Plan and a video depicting what in-person school will look like, at: <https://www.dodea.edu/Pacific/return-to-school.cfm>.

For questions regarding the virtual school, please email vslearningoption@dodea.edu.

We look forward to welcoming your student back to school for the 2020-21 school year in the learning environment that best meets the needs of your family.

Yours in Education,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lois J. Rapp".

Lois Rapp
Director, DoDEA Pacific Region

Questions about Full-time Virtual School

Q: What will the schedule look like in the virtual school?

A: The schedule in the virtual school will be both student and teacher directed. Students will be able to access the instructional content and assignments 24/7 allowing for student scheduling flexibility. Teachers will provide regular office hours and ongoing support and engagement as needed by individual students. Parents will need to support students and help them establish a schedule that ensures they are reviewing content and completing assignments in a timely manner.

Q: How much screen time will be required in the virtual school?

A: The amount of screen time required for students will depend on the grade level of the student, the speed at which each student can complete the review of the content and completion of assignments, and also on the courseware that is being procured. Since students are able to access the instructional content and assignments anytime as provided by the teacher, students can take regular breaks from the computer.

Q: How does the full-time virtual learning option differ from the remote learning implementation we experienced in the spring?

A: Teachers in the virtual school will not generally be developing and delivering lessons as they did in the spring in remote learning. The courses being procured will include all of the instructional content and assignments that students will have access to 24/7. Teachers will be providing regular times (office hours) to answer student questions and address student needs.

Q: Are English language learners going to receive ESOL program services in the Virtual School?

A: DoDEA is examining how existing ESOL teachers in schools can provide these services to students in the virtual school. Students who qualify for ESOL services and whose parents have selected for them to attend the Virtual School will be provided services according to their grade level, English language proficiency level and academic needs.

Q: Are elementary students who are receiving AAPS (Gifted Education) Levels of Service III or IV going to continue to receive services in the Virtual School?

A: DoDEA is examining how existing AAPS resource teachers in schools can provide these services to students in the virtual school. Students who qualify for AAPS Levels of Services III or IV and whose parents have selected for them to attend the Virtual School will be provided services according to their advanced academic needs.

Q: Will DoDEA offer a virtual learning option for PreK students?

A: No, DoDEA is not offering a virtual learning option for PreK students. DoDEA's in-person option is the best learning environment for young children. DoDEA PreK and Sure Start programs use The Creative Curriculum for Preschool. This curriculum provides hands-on, developmentally appropriate learning experiences through deep, guided investigations.

Q: Is there a supply list for Virtual School?

A: Students will need access to a computer and reliable internet to use the DoDEA Learning Management System, Schoology. Students will not be able to use a phone or tablet to fully access the materials of the course.

Q: Will laptops and Wi-Fi devices be issued to virtual students?

A: Students who do not have an adequate laptop or internet at home may request to check out a laptop and hotspot from their local school.

Q: Will the Virtual School have books/materials, or will it be 100% paperless?

A: Most Virtual School course materials are embedded into the virtual coursework, with the exception of six AP courses that require physical textbooks.

Q: Do high schoolers need to take summer school if they choose Virtual School?

A: The DoDEA Virtual School has found that high school students who take more than 5 online courses struggle to be successful. However, if families want their high school student(s) to be enrolled in 6 virtual school courses they will be allowed to do so in order to receive a full year of credit. Students can also opt to take two courses over the summer to remain on track to graduate.

Q: If we choose the virtual option for high school, can parents seek out other resources for their student to complete the necessary credits in order to graduate, so they don't have to take summer classes?

A: It is up to the parent to determine whether their student should take any additional coursework outside of what is being offered by the virtual school. However, if you are seeking to have outside coursework count toward graduation requirements, we strongly encourage you to consult with your local school counselor. The counselor can ensure the coursework you're considering meets the requirements for the student's graduation plan. It is also important to note that outside coursework requires principal approval.

Q: I understand that parents asked for a universal platform for remote learning. Can you explain how this will work, and how it differs from the virtual school platform?

A: All brick-and-mortar school teachers will have a Google Classroom landing page with links or directions to their assignments. The hope is that this will simplify things for the parents by providing consistency with the landing pages of each class. During our spring implementation of remote learning, parents shared that it was too confusing to remember what platform each of their children's teachers were using, especially for families with multiple children at different grade levels and different schools. Teachers can link to Schoology resources from their Google Classroom; however, parents will see consistency across the Pacific in the use of Google Classroom as the platform through which their child will access remote learning.

The Virtual School will use Schoology as the platform through which students will receive instruction.

Q: Will those students who choose Virtual School have the option to attend electives in the building so they can stay on track to graduate on time?

A: No, students enrolled in the full-time virtual school option will not be able to enroll in elective courses at their local brick-and-mortar school.

Q: If we are PCSing into the DoDEA Pacific Region after school starts can we enroll our kids in the full-time virtual option?

A: In general, families that PCS following the start of school will still have the option to enroll in the full-time virtual option. Please work closely with your local school, as there are several important factors to consider including PCS date and the curriculum in which the student was previously enrolled.

Q: Will virtual students have opportunities to build friendships with classmates?

A: Absolutely! The Virtual School focuses on building community in the online environment. Students will have opportunities to engage with their peers during group instruction and group assignments.

Q: How will Virtual School address IEPs?

A: The virtual instruction option is available to all families. For parents of students who have an Individualized Education Program or 504 plan, the case study committee/504 team will convene to work with the family and the DVS to determine a free and appropriate public education for the student.

Q: If I enroll in Virtual School and it is not working for my kids, can they return to in-person school?

A: Families must commit to one semester in the Virtual School. Families will have the opportunity to switch their enrollment to in-person school at the semester mark (students enrolled in Virtual School first semester may enroll in in-person school second semester).

Q: Our family is expected to PCS away from DoDEA Pacific Region in early February. Could my children continue using DODEA virtual learning to finish out the year?

A: Please work closely with your local school on your individual situation. There are several important factors to consider, including where your family is PCSing and the grade of the student.

Q: What curriculum will the full-time Virtual School use?

A: We are currently in the process of procuring courseware for the Virtual School. The curriculum will be standards based and aligned to the DODEA College and Career Ready standards and is specifically developed for each grade level in the online learning environment.

Q: Where can families send additional questions related to the full-time virtual school option?

A: Families with additional questions about the DoDEA full-time virtual school option can email vslearningoption@dodea.edu.

Questions about In-Person School

Q: How will outdoor/recess time look like with social distancing?

A: Students will not be required to wear masks if they are actively engaged in outdoor play unless local installation guidelines require them to do so. Social distancing will be encouraged outdoors, and students will be able to wash their hands before and after playground use. Hand sanitizer will also be available.

Q: If my child begins the year at a brick-and-mortar school but we decide we are not comfortable with face-to-face instruction, can we switch to the full-time virtual option?

A: In order to ensure adequate staffing, parents interested in full-time virtual school for the first semester must enroll by July 28. At the end of the first semester, parents will once again have the opportunity to enroll in the full-time virtual school option. All students enrolled in brick-and-mortar schools will transition to remote learning should the installation move to HPCON Charlie.

Q: Will the student to teacher ratio be adjusted to accommodate social distancing in classrooms?

A: DoDEA Pacific will implement social distancing to the greatest extent possible; however, we do not anticipate significant changes to class sizes. We will spread out desks to the greatest extent possible, utilizing clear physical barriers to provide additional separation between students. We will also employ other mitigation strategies, including wearing face masks, healthy hygiene practices, and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces.

Q: How will you enforce the use of masks? What about students who cannot wear a mask?

A: Parents are their child's first teachers. We encourage families to talk with their child and demonstrate proper use of face masks prior to the return to face-to-face instruction. Parents of students with health concerns that may prevent them from wearing a mask should contact their school principal to discuss other options.

Q: What are the protocols if a teacher or student tests positive for COVID-19?

A: As soon as someone tests positive, families will be notified that there was a positive case within the school community. The school will close for 2-5 days for a thorough cleaning. We will work in close coordination with the local installation on specifics related to contact tracing and related quarantines, and criteria for returning to school.

Q: How are you ensuring social distancing is maintained for younger children who may not understand?

A: DoDEA Pacific will employ mitigation measures to protect students, including social distancing to the greatest extent possible, the use of clear physical barriers on desks and tables, healthy hygiene practices, face masks, marking traffic patterns on floors, and displaying signage to serve as a reminder of these measures to students.

Q: Do teachers have to wear masks when they are up at the board doing a direct instruction and students are seated at their desks?

A: Each classroom will look a bit different based on space and layout. For example, when teachers are at the front of the classroom and can maintain social distancing, they can remove their masks while they deliver instruction. When moving around the room to deliver individualized instruction to students, the teacher would wear a mask.

Q: How do you plan to ensure course rigor when/if remote learning is put back in place?

A: Following our spring implementation of remote learning, we identified best practices and lessons learned that we are incorporating into our plans for future remote learning requirements. Students will be familiar with the Google Classroom platform, as it will be blended into classroom instruction.

Q: How will staff be trained on the new procedures? How will parents know who is responsible for ensuring students maintain distancing?

A: Staff training on all new procedures and protocols will be conducted the week prior to school starting. Teachers will be responsible for ensuring students follow the appropriate procedures in their classrooms.

Q: If my child has sensory and special learning needs that require accommodations in the in-school setting. What protections will my child have if they cannot wear a mask?

A: Student safety is our top priority; please contact your local school for a specific accommodations plan tailored to your child's needs.

Other Questions

Q: Could DoDEA Pacific consider a hybrid option where students come in every other day or week?

A: Schools across the world are enacting various return to school schedules to best meet the needs of their communities. It is important to consider the local environmental conditions of these communities, which vary from our environment here in the Pacific. While a hybrid option may work for other schools, DoDEA Pacific has opted for full-time in person school with enhanced mitigation measures like masks, hand sanitizer, and clear plastic barriers. We are confident these mitigations will allow students to return safely while also supporting dual-working families. The full-time virtual option is available for families who have health vulnerabilities or concerns and prefer to keep their kids home.

Q: If my child has an IEP and we decide to homeschool, (not full-time virtual learning) can my child still receive services?

A: Yes, as long as the homeschooled student meets DoDEA eligibility requirements, they can access special-education related services.

Q: Will the DoDEA attendance policy allow for flexibility?

A: Our attendance policy will be flexible, as it has been in the past. Parents will be asked to communicate with their child's school regarding their child's absence to ensure their child has access to all assignments.

Return to School Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

Please see the below questions and answers to further inform your decision on the best learning environment for your student with disabilities.

Q: Does the DoDEA Virtual School offer services to students with disabilities?

A: DoDEA Virtual School (DVS) provides services for students with disabilities with either an IEP or a 504 plan. For students with an individualized education program (IEP), DVS delivers a continuum of services to include consultative services, accommodations, indirect services to support the general education teachers, and specially designed instruction. The special education teacher and team select interventions that target the student's needs as identified in the individualized education program. The provision of specially designed instruction does not supplant the core content but is a supplement. Students are required to complete the designated courses. Students that are enrolled in DVS also have access to occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, and other related services, as appropriate, at the brick and mortar school.

Q: My child has an IEP or 504 plan. How do I know if the virtual school will be a good fit?

A: While the virtual school is one option on the continuum of services available to all students, the virtual school learning platform may not be an appropriate setting for all students to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). For some students, an online virtual school will not meet their unique needs. Therefore, it is essential for CSC teams and/or parents to consider each student's unique learning needs when determining the appropriateness of enrollment in the virtual school.

The following factors are potential areas of considerations that can assist parents and CSC teams in determining the appropriateness of the virtual school:

- Ability to work independently
- Ability to work with technology
- Ability to remain on task with minimum prompting
- Need for functional skills instruction
- Previous performance in virtual learning
- Self-motivation skills
- Need for intensive one-on-one instruction
- Social skills deficits requiring live interaction with other students

Q: What instructional options are available for students with IEPs that present with significant needs that may not be effectively managed within DVS?

A: The brick and mortar case manager will conduct a CSC meeting to determine the provision of services based on the continuum of alternative placements, including the Least Restrictive Environment of the student, to provide the student with FAPE. The CSC will review the student's needs to include the implementation of the IEP in the school, home, or a combination of both. The determination of services is dependent upon the individualized needs of the student.

Q: Who is responsible for conducting a meeting to review IEP/504 plans for incoming students with disabilities in the DVS?

A: The brick and mortar case managers will be the point of contact for the DoDEA Virtual School (DVS) lead special educator. The brick and mortar case managers will be the case manager for the student and will work

collaboratively with the DVS case manager. The district and DVS teams must ensure the IEP documents how FAPE will be provided to the student in the DVS.

The IEP or 504 meeting should include the required members as outlined in the DoDM 1342.12 or AI 2500.14. The brick and mortar administrator or designee and DVS administrator or designee attend the meeting. The DVS lead special educator will assist the brick and mortar case manager in reviewing IEP/504 plans and determining whether a modification meeting or an annual review meeting should be held.

Q: Who is responsible for writing the IEP/504 plan while the student is attending the DVS?

A: The brick and mortar case manager is responsible for writing the IEP/504 plan. The DVS case manager will assist with the IEP/504 in collaboration with the brick and mortar case manager.

Q: What specially designed instruction is available to students who have an IEP?

A: The CSC will determine the appropriate balance of specially designed instruction and accommodations to meet the student's needs in general and special education settings.

Q: What accommodations are available in the virtual school environment?

A: IEP/504 teams, to include the DVS lead special educator, will determine the necessary accommodations to ensure that students with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in the DVS school program and activities to the maximum extent appropriate for each individual student. DVS lead special educator will ensure IEP accommodations are implemented in a virtual environment, as indicated on the IEP, and share relevant information with the brick and mortar case manager. The designated school counselor will ensure the 504 accommodations are implemented in a virtual environment, as indicated on the IEP, and share relevant information with the brick and mortar case manager.

Q: What related services are available in the virtual environment?

A: Students with disabilities that are enrolled in DVS have access to occupational therapy, speech-language therapy, and other related services, as appropriate. The brick and mortar service providers are responsible for providing, documenting, and monitoring progress of the related services. Based on the individual student's need, the provision of services may occur utilizing a face to face or remote setting. The DVS lead special educator works closely with the brick and mortar case manager to ensure that the student's IEP is followed and that the student is receiving appropriate related services and accommodations from designated service providers.

Q: If a student is attending virtual school, can they access itinerant/related services at the school building?

A: Yes, itinerant/related services can be provided in the brick and mortar school. The provision of itinerant services in the building is determined on a case-by-case basis. The hybrid approach to services identified on the students' IEP will contain the location and delivery of services as determined at the IEP meeting.

Q: Who is responsible for monitoring timelines and conducting annual reviews or reevaluations of eligibility for special education services? This includes scheduling CSC/504 meetings, developing the assessment plans (if needed), and conducting the IEP meeting or assessments?

A: The brick and mortar CSC Chair or brick and mortar case manager leads the process for conducting annual reviews or reevaluations in close coordination with the DVS lead special educator and other members of the CSC/504 plan team. Team members from the brick and mortar may include EDIS related services staff, district assessors, district psychologists, etc. The DVS lead special educator works collaboratively where needed with the brick and mortar case manager. The DVS lead special educator and the DVS general education teacher

provides input (e.g., progress monitoring data, grades, observational data, or participation data, etc.) and participates in the annual review or reevaluation meetings.

Q: Who is responsible for collecting data for the IEP PLAAFP, goals and objectives, services, accommodations, and sending home progress reports?

A: The brick and mortar case manager will coordinate the collection and reporting of data in all areas of the IEP. The DVS lead special educator works closely with the brick and mortar case manager and is responsible for providing the base school manager with data from the student's DVS courses to inform the development of the IEP.

Q: Who is responsible for administering DoDEA system/district assessments and district testing?

A: The brick and mortar school is responsible for administering all system/district testing requirements.

Q: Who sends the parent the Prior Written Notice and other IEP related documents?

A: The brick and mortar case manager or CSC chair will ensure the Prior Written Notice and IEP related documents are provided to the parent.

Q: What should the DVS do if the student isn't progressing in the virtual school platform?

A: The DVS lead special educator will notify the local brick and mortar case manager about the student's lack of progress and will provide progress monitoring and detailed information regarding student performance and participation (e.g., completion of lessons and assignments, grades, or other observational data) to the local brick and mortar case manager for review by the CSC. In collaboration with the DVS lead special educator, the brick and mortar case manager will schedule a CSC meeting to determine the necessary support, services, and least restrictive environment required for FAPE. With the use of data, the team may determine the virtual school platform doesn't provide the student with FAPE and may need to consider other options along the continuum of alternative placements.