

Gwinnett County Public Schools Digital Learning Update



The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting mandate to end all face-to-face instruction in Gwinnett County Public Schools has had a profound impact on the daily lives of our students, families, and employees. In these uncertain times, we know that many of you have questions about plans for the remainder of the school year. We continue to work through some of the issues, but decisions have been made regarding a number of school-related topics. We want to share those in this publication. More information will be sent as other decisions are made and plans are finalized.

Digital Learning and the Last Day of Teaching and Learning

GCPS will continue Digital Learning Days through May 20, the last day of school. Students and staff are not in a traditional school setting, but teaching and learning is continuing every school day through digital content that is aligned to Gwinnett’s AKS curriculum and Georgia standards.

Shift to a Four-Day Week for New Assignments

Just as students need breaks during the regular school day, they also need breaks when learning digitally. Beginning the week of April 13, GCPS will implement a flexible schedule every Friday through May 8. Students will receive no new assignments. Instead, the day can be used to review material taught, make up work or redo assignments, or participate in student activities (such as book clubs, creative offerings, extracurricular offerings, etc.) and family activities.

Help for Students who are Struggling

Though the methods may be different, with staff and students in digital classrooms rather a school building, teachers continue to provide interventions and supplemental support to students who are struggling. It is more important than ever that parents help students stay connected with teachers in order to take advantage of their help.

In addition, a partnership with the Gwinnett County Public Library provides students with access to live online tutoring daily from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Using Tutor.com, students also can receive “drop-off support” 24-7 by uploading a document for tutor feedback that will be reviewed and returned at a later time. Information is available on the GCPS website or at gwinnettpl.org.

Students may experience emotional upheaval or social challenges during this trying time, too. GCPS counselors continue to work with students in need. If a parent has concerns about his or her child, they can reach out to the teacher or school to request support.

Assessments

Assessment is a critical element of teaching and learning that also has been impacted by COVID-19. Gwinnett teachers assess how students are doing through daily assignments and quizzes, as well as tests that measure students’ growth and learning over the year or semester. Here’s an assessment overview to answer some of the questions you might have.

High School Gateway: GCPS will offer a one-year waiver to seniors who have met all other graduation requirements except passing the High School Gateway. These seniors will receive a diploma without having to pass the Gateway test.

International Baccalaureate (IB) Exams: IB exams will not be administered. IB diplomas will be awarded based on student coursework. As more information becomes available, our two IB high schools (Shiloh and Norcross) will share that information with their students.

Advanced Placement (AP) Exams: College Board has announced that AP testing will take place online. Students will take a 45-minute exam online at home for each AP course exam for which they are registered. The exam questions will be designed and administered in a way to protect the integrity of the exam, incorporating a range of digital security tools.

SAT: Currently, the next SAT exam administration is scheduled for the first weekend in June. The College Board continues to assess whether it can safely hold that administration. A firm decision from the College Board will be shared with families as soon as it is feasible to do so.

ACT: When ACT postponed the April 4 test date, registered students received an email from ACT providing instructions for rescheduling on a future ACT test date at no charge. The next test dates are June 13 and July 18.

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Milestones/End of Course Tests: All state-required spring testing—including GKIDS, Georgia Alternate Assessments, and the Georgia Milestones End of Grade and End of Course tests—are canceled.

Final Exams: Final exams for middle and high school students will begin on Monday, May 11. These online exams will be developed by each school’s teachers and course teams. All students in a course at a particular school will take the same final exam.

Grading

Teachers continue to teach the AKS, following the district’s curriculum calendar, to prevent gaps in learning. Teachers continue to grade student work, with students’ DLD assignments counting toward classwork grades. Many students did not have the opportunity to take the district’s interim assessments. For those who did, those scores will only count for students if they will increase the student’s grade. Final exams also will contribute toward students’ grades.

Attendance

Teachers are not taking attendance each day; however, they are monitoring which students are participating in digital learning and are reaching out to students who are not completing assignments. All student and staff attendance incentives for this school year were suspended on March 10.

Promotion

GCPS wants to be sure that the move to digital learning does not have a negative impact on students. Therefore, we will use the following promotion criteria:

K-8: GCPS will base promotion on a student’s understanding and mastery of the AKS curriculum for his or her grade level. If a student is recommended to repeat a grade, the school or teacher will discuss it with the student’s family.

9-12: Grades continue to be important in determining students’ understanding and mastery of the curriculum. High school teachers will continue to grade assignments and tests, and students must pass their courses to earn Carnegie units to meet Georgia graduation requirements.

Summer School

If the current COVID situation is resolved in time and it is safe to hold summer school, GCPS would offer it primarily to students who had low participation in DLD and whose teachers recommend additional help based on the student’s limited understanding and mastery of the curriculum.

Access and Devices

During the first two weeks of DLD in Gwinnett, 97% of GCPS students participated in online learning. Still some families do not have reliable access to devices (computer, tablet, smart phone, etc.) or high-speed internet. Prior to Spring Break, schools provided printed packets of schoolwork for these students to complete. After Spring Break, schools began checking out Chromebooks to students whose low participation in digital learning indicated a lack of access to a usable device. The checkout program is designed to assist families identified as having the most need first. A family that can demonstrate a need for this assistance should contact their child’s school.

Provision and Distribution of Meals

GCPS has provided meals for students since digital learning started. Our ability to keep this service going is something we must continually assess. Considerations include staff safety, availability of staff and supplies, etc. The district currently is providing both breakfast and lunch, provided at no cost to the individual through the federal School Nutrition Program. A list of schools and clusters where meals are provided for pick-up and delivery is available on the GCPS website.

End-of-Year Activities

Proms— High schools that did not hold their proms before March 13 will not be able to do so as all school activities are canceled for the year. Information about possible refunds or credit will be communicated to families by the local school.

Graduations— For the Class of 2020, the scheduled graduation ceremonies are not able to be held in a traditional manner. However, the district is making plans to hold graduations virtually in May, followed by traditional ceremonies in July if conditions allow. As details become available, they will be shared by your local school.

Transcripts— Students should request transcripts through *gafutures.org*, which will process the request and send the document to colleges electronically. Any questions should be directed to the student’s high school.

Retrieving Belongings from or Returning Items to School— Schools are working on updating their end-of-year processes and will communicate to families when students will be allowed to access to the building to pick up personal belongings or return books or other items to the school.

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