



BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

STUDENT HANDBOOK

2020-2021

Raising the bar, Closing gaps, Preparing for our future



Navigating the Virtual Classroom Environment:

Student Edition

An Addendum to the Baltimore County Public Schools Student Handbook



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A Message to Students from the Division of School Climate & Safety

The health and safety of students and their families, as well as the health and safety of employees and their families, remain a top priority for Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). The pandemic that this country is currently experiencing has resulted in BCPS taking the unprecedented action of opening completely virtual in the fall. As a means of ensuring the safety and well-being of the greater school community, BCPS will provide students with online instruction for the start of the 2020-2021 school year.

With the systemwide implementation of online instruction, establishing clear expectations for student behavior is important for a successful virtual classroom experience for everyone—students, parents, teachers, and administrators alike. This student handbook addendum is intended to provide all BCPS stakeholders with guidance for participating in virtual classrooms that are conducive to the high-quality of teaching for which Baltimore County Public Schools is known.

This student handbook addendum contains information specific to online learning. As an addendum, this supplement to the student handbook should be used in conjunction with the full student handbook to develop an understanding of expectations for students attending BCPS. Whereas the full student handbook serves as a reference for understanding in detail the system’s code of conduct, students’ rights and responsibilities, and the disciplinary process in a face-to-face environment, this addendum to the student handbook addresses those aspects of participation as they relate to a virtual classroom environment.

As in years past, during the opening week of school, students and parents/guardians will be required to electronically sign a statement acknowledging that the student handbook has been received and that the expectations for student behavior have been understood. For this school year, however, that electronic acknowledgment for the full student handbook will extend to cover the information in this addendum. Students and parents/guardian will need to read all information contained in the student handbook and this addendum.

Michael Zarchin, Ed.D.
Chief of the Division of School Safety and Climate

A Message to Students from the Student Member of the Board

Students and families, this past year our school system and communities were challenged tremendously with the prevalence of the Covid-19 pandemic, increased racial tensions, and social, political and economic uncertainty. We have all seen great changes in our lives, but our students persevered and made their voices heard.

As we open this year in a virtual setting, it is paramount that our school system provides an equitable education to all students and makes imperative changes or additions as deemed necessary. The creation of this year’s student handbook culminated months of scrupulous planning and scrutinizing of past procedures and new procedures that are pinnacle to the fruitfulness of our virtual reopening.

I encourage students and families to review the handbook and this addendum to better understand students’ responsibilities, rights, and the code of conduct for the virtual semester and future in-person reopening. We are in this together; let us all make the most out of this year!

Joshua Muhumuza
Student Member of the Board

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Introduction

Online learning presents situations that are unique to the virtual classroom. This student handbook addendum addresses aspects of online learning as related to:

- Creating a safe and orderly learning environment,
- Managing the virtual classroom effectively,
- Planning and preparing for meaningful instruction,
- Using technological hardware and software appropriately,
- Attending, participating and engaging in online learning,
- Understanding the discipline process
- Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation, and
- Dressing appropriately for the virtual classroom.

PREVENTION

The full student handbook is laid out in a manner that reflects the Office of School Climate’s framework for creating and maintaining positive school environments. That framework is grounded in three components: *prevention*, *logical consequences*, and *restoration*. With students participating in online learning from their individual homes, this student handbook addendum focuses on the area of prevention as a means of establishing and creating a positive online experience.

Prevention is about proactively understanding the Code of Student Conduct and abiding by it rather than facing disciplinary consequences after a violation has occurred. In the online environment, students need to be aware of their role in establishing and maintaining a positive virtual classroom environment that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning.

Virtual Classroom Environment

Safe Learning Environment

The Board of Education of Baltimore County is committed to ensuring that every student learns in an

environment that is safe and secure and conducive to receiving a quality education. That safe and secure environment extends to students who are learning in virtual classrooms.

Administrators and teachers understand the importance of providing a safe, predictable, and positive virtual classrooms for students. Some practices used in the physical classroom can be adapted to virtual classroom experience.

In the virtual classroom environment, however, communicating with teachers is essential to a positive online experience. Students should communicate regularly with their teachers about their academic performance and any situations that may hinder their academic progress. Teachers play an integral role in establishing and maintaining safe and supportive learning environments.

Virtual Classroom Management

Understanding how each virtual classroom operates is important for students to participate positively. During the opening of school, students should become aware of each teacher’s expectations for managing their virtual classroom.

Managing the Virtual Classroom

In preparation for online instruction, students should follow their teachers’ direction regarding the following aspects of the virtual classroom environment:

- Background scenery
- Audio
- Video/camera
- Chat box
- Hand raising
- Student-to-student interaction

Teachers will inform students how to proceed with these features of the virtual classroom. Following the lead of the teacher can significantly increase the efficiency with which virtual classrooms operate and prevent disruptions to the learning.

Synchronous Instruction

Synchronous instruction refers to instruction that occurs in real-time, where the teacher and the students are present at the same time and can interact with each other. Synchronous instruction is as close to traditional in-school instruction as possible in a remote learning experience.

Like in-person instruction, the teacher begins the class with an opening activity. The opening activity is generally followed by the teacher identifying the objective of the lesson and engaging the students in an instructional sequence that consists of:

- **Direct instruction** – the teacher demonstrates for students what they should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson.
- **Modeling** – the teacher breaks down the intended learning in small steps so that students begin to process the intended learning.
- **Guided practice** – the teacher walks students through the learning process as students practice the process at the same time.
- **Independent practice** – the students work by themselves to process and practice the learning introduced by the teacher.
- **Assessment** – the teacher reviews the students' work and provides feedback that will assist the student in learning what was intended.

Asynchronous Instruction

Asynchronous instruction refers to instruction that is undertaken independently as students log in at different times and work individually to complete assignments that have been posted ahead of time by the teacher. During asynchronous instruction, there are no real-time interactions possible between the teacher and students.

For asynchronous learning, students will log in to Schoology at their convenience and engage in pre-planned learning activities, such as:

- Completing an individual assignment
- Meeting one-on-one with the teacher
- Working with classmates on a group

assignment

- Viewing a previously recorded lesson
- Watching an instructional video
- Taking a test or a quiz

Students' success with synchronous and asynchronous instruction in the virtual classroom is dependent upon student's appropriate use of the technology available. BCPS has provided guidelines for students to follow when using hardware and software.

Acceptable Use of Technology

The success of each student's experience with online learning is grounded in the student appropriately using the hardware and software available to promote academic growth. BCPS has clearly defined guidelines and expectations for students' use of technology.

Student Responsible Use of Technology/Internet

Students shall be held responsible for the appropriate use of BCPS technology and will be subject to disciplinary action for any violation of the *Technology Acceptable Use Policy (TAUP)*. Students are required to be safe, secure, and responsible digital citizens when using BCPS electronic devices, networks and internet. Students must agree to the following:

I am responsible for:

1. My language.
2. How I treat others.
3. Respecting the intellectual property rights of others.
4. My student-authorized computer account and all activity conducted through my account(s).
5. My use of the BCPS network.
6. Protecting the security of the BCPS network.
7. Protecting school property.
8. My conduct on all online sites.
9. Following Board Policies, Superintendent's Rules, and school procedures when using BCPS technology and networks and when publishing schoolwork online.
10. I will not post photos or videos of students online without the permission of the parent of the student, or the student if the student is age 18 years or older.

The responsibilities listed here are abridged statements. A full description of students' online responsibility for using technology appropriately can be found in the full [student handbook](#) and outlined in the *Technology Acceptable Use Policy* (TAUP).

All student users of technology shall be subject to the student TAUP and the Code of Student Conduct; all local, state, and federal laws; and school procedures when using BCPS technology and networks and in their use of social media. Violations may result in loss of access to BCPS technology and/or networks, disciplinary action, and/or criminal prosecution or restitution. Student violators will be disciplined in accordance with Board [Policy 5550, Student Behavior Code](#).

Attendance in the Virtual Classroom

Student Responsibility for Attendance

Students with consistent school attendance often have higher academic performance. In the virtual classroom, consistent attendance is even more crucial to high academic performance. During this period of remote learning:

1. Students are responsible for establishing a daily online presence in order to be marked present each day for school.
2. Students are responsible for logging in to all virtual classes on synchronous instructional days. On asynchronous instructional days, students are responsible for logging in to Schoology.
3. Students are responsible for logging in to both learning platforms during the established school hours.

Teachers will record daily attendance in SIS. The daily attendance information contained in SIS will be the official record of attendance and printed on students' report cards each marking period.

Daily Attendance in the Synchronous Classroom

Daily attendance in the *synchronous* virtual classroom begins with each student logging into their first virtual class of the day. Teachers will take roll during that class period and record each student as present or absent.

When a student is unable to log into the first virtual class of the day, but logs into a later class, the later log-in will count toward the student's daily attendance. If a student is unable to log in to any class while class is in session but logs in to Google Meets sometime between 8 AM and 3 PM, the student will be marked present for the day. A student who does not log in between 8 AM and 3 PM or does not log in at all will be marked absent.

Daily Attendance in the Asynchronous Classroom

Daily attendance in the *asynchronous* virtual classroom requires each student to log into Schoology any time between 12 AM and 11:59 PM. Designated teachers will use log-in data from Schoology to record each student as present or absent for the day. A student who does not log in at all during school hours will be marked absent.

Period-by-Period Attendance

In addition to logging in and being counted present for the day (daily attendance), secondary students should log in to all virtual classes scheduled for the day. Logging in to all classes will allow attendance information to be collected on a period-by-period basis. This period-by-period attendance may be used to establish daily attendance in cases where students are not able to log in during first period. Inconsistent period-by-period attendance will not be held against students.

Elementary school teachers will take attendance at the beginning of the school day and at the end. Taking attendance twice per day will allow teachers to mark present any students who may have logged in to class after the initial attendance was taken.

During the period of remote instruction, students are not required to submit notes when they are absent from the virtual classroom or account for their tardiness in logging in to a class session.

Participation in the Virtual Classroom

Closely related to students' attendance is the concept of *student participation*. Students' academic success in the virtual classroom is dependent upon not only attending for the day, but how often students log on to each class and actively participate.

Student Participation

Whereas daily attendance seeks to capture students'

log-on as a single event encompassing the entire school day, participation is defined as the frequency with which students log on to all classes and interact throughout the school day. Google Meets and Schoology can be used for measuring student participation.

Engagement in the Virtual Classroom

Attendance and participation are both indicators of student engagement. Students who attend and actively participate are more likely to be engaged in promoting their own academic success. Whereas attendance and participation measure the frequency of logging in, engagement is a measure of the integrity of those log-ins.

Student Engagement

Engagement in the virtual classroom is defined as the process of measuring the quality and quantity of work uploaded by a student to the learning management system over a specified period. Engagement is measured in terms of assignment completion and the grades earned on graded assignments.

Scope of Authority

The behavior code outlined in this addendum applies to all students enrolled in Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS). Additionally, the code of conduct applies in all situations in which students are involved.

Therefore, a student may be subject to disciplinary responses when he or she commits an act or acts while at home when such acts can be shown to pose a threat or danger to the safety of other students, staff or school property; and/or the act or acts prevents the orderly delivery of the online instructional program.

The aim of this student handbook addendum is to provide students with information that will help to prevent violations of the school system's code of conduct while participating in the virtual school environment.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct

The Board expects all students in BCPS to recognize their individual responsibilities to adhere to the *Code of Student Conduct* while on school property and

when participating in school-sponsored activities. Even when adapted for learning in the virtual classroom, the code of conduct requires students to:

- A. Attend classes daily.
- B. Engage in the learning process.
- C. Be prepared with materials that are appropriate for online learning.
- D. Demonstrate positive behavior and language and respect.
- E. Accept responsibility for their actions and education.

The offenses identified in the Student Behavior Code do not authentically translate to the virtual classroom. The majority of the offenses are premised on behavior occurring either in schools, on school property, or during school-sponsored activities. With students, faculty, staff, and administrators participating in online learning from remote locations, the threat to physical harm and building safety is significantly mitigated for everyone.

Implementing the Code of Student Conduct

In the virtual classroom, teachers are primarily responsible for helping students abide by the code of student conduct. In addressing student conduct, however, a tiered system of support that leverages teachers, resource personnel, and administrators allows for shared accountability and responsibility for the online environment.

Student Discipline

With any incident of student misbehavior, school administrators must make informed decisions about whether a student's actions constitute a violation serious enough to pursue beyond the teacher and school level.

If a student's misbehavior is also a violation of the law, as determined by local authorities, there may be legal consequences for the student. The school system's disciplinary process is separate from the criminal and civil processes employed by the Baltimore County Police Department.

Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation

Students should familiarize themselves with the expectations for computer use outlined in *Technology*

Acceptable Use Policy (TAUP). Computers should not be used as a means of cyberbullying.

Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation

The Board of Education prohibits bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and intimidation—even in the virtual classroom. With students’ time on computers increased, the virtual classroom becomes a platform conducive to cyberbullying.

- **Cyberbullying** is defined as a communication classified as bullying, harassment, or intimidation that is transmitted by means of an electronic device, including the use of social media sites, telephone, cellular phone, computer, tablet or any other electronic device.

Students who engage in behaviors that constitute bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation, make false accusations, and/or commit acts of reprisal or retaliation related to bullying, cyberbullying, or intimidation will be disciplined.

Reporting Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, or Intimidation in the Virtual Classroom

Students may report bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or intimidation without fear of harmful consequences. A student who is a victim/target of or witness to bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or intimidation should report the incident to an online staff member or report the incident using the [Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form](#).

Teachers who witness bullying or receive information about bullying need to complete a report.

Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting Forms may be also be submitted to the school administrator via email by a student, parent or guardian, or others on a student’s behalf.

The paper version of the [Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form](#) can be downloaded from the BCPS’ website. Completed forms should be emailed to the principal of the school or the principal’s designee.

Dress Code

Participating in online instruction from the comfort of one’s home may lead some students to be less formal about their attire and manner of dress. Although students are not expected to dress as if they are leaving their homes to attend school, they still should dress in a way that is appropriate for the school environment.

Responsibility for Appearance - Dress Code

In the virtual classroom, students are expected to dress in a way that is conducive to learning. Meeting this expectation requires that students be appropriately clothed. Teachers should not address attire they cannot see. Students should avoid dressing in a way that:

1. Depicts messages that are lewd, vulgar, obscene, plainly offensive, violent, sexually explicit, or that reference items that are illegal in general or illegal specifically for underage students.
2. Promotes use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or other illegal or harmful products.
3. Contains sexually suggestive messages;
4. Depicts gang affiliation.
5. Causes or is likely to cause a substantial or material disruption to school activities or the orderly and safe operation of the school or at school-sponsored activities.
6. Contains rude, disrespectful, or discourteous expressions inconsistent with civil discourse and behavior.

Healthy Routines During Virtual Learning

During virtual learning, students should pay attention to habits that support their physical and emotional health. Students and their families are encouraged to:

- **Remain active.** Daily physical activity improves the health of the heart. It also helps students deal with stress. Taking a 30- minute walk each day improves physical and emotional wellbeing. When sitting at the computer, students should take frequent breaks – standing up, stretching. This will help avoid muscle fatigue and stiffness.

- **Talk with friends and family.** Students need to grow their relationship skills, too. This requires learning how to express themselves and how to listen. Students should have conversations (not only texts) each day, with family or friends.

- **Get outdoors daily, if possible.** Outside play for 20 minutes each day will protect vision. Too much close-up work can cause near-sightedness.

- **Protect the ears.** When using headphones, students should be sure that the volume is as low as possible. If sounds can be heard by people standing nearby, the volume is too loud. Students should limit the noise in the room where learning is taking place so that an increased volume is not necessary.

- **Get enough sleep.** Sleep is essential for students' physical health. Sleep benefits the immune system and mood. A lack of sleep can make an individual irritable, cause anxiety, and worsen feelings of depression. Students' emotional health. Where sleep is concerned, students should:
 - Pick a time each night to go to bed.
 - Turn off the lights.
 - Allow time to relax before bed.
 - Turn off electronic devices.
 - Stretch or meditate and allow the mind and body to begin to slow down.
 - Get up at the same time each morning.
 - Allow enough time for sleep.
 - Children between ages 6 and 12 need 9-12 hours of sleep.
 - Teenagers between 13 and 18 need 8-10 hours of sleep.



POLICE EMERGENCY

911

SAFE SCHOOLS TIP HOTLINE

1-833-MD-BSAFE

TEXT/E-MAIL

hotline@bcps.org

BALTIMORE COUNTY CRISIS HOTLINE

1-800-422-0009

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

1-800-273-TALK

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Title IX Coordinator

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