



DCS Family,

We hope this email finds you well. Today, we met with our faculty and staff virtually. We have developed a Distance Learning Plan that we believe will allow your student(s) to continue to advance academically. We are very pleased with the work our teachers are doing to ensure your student is still receiving an education during this time. We have attached three documents that we ask you to read thoroughly.

Attachment 1: Letter from our Board President

Attachment 2: Distance Learning Plan Guidelines for Parents and Students

Attachment 3: Video Conferencing Etiquette for Students

Our teachers are ready to embrace and implement additional innovative ways to keep your student(s) engaged. They are available to you each school day to assist you with anything you need regarding this Distance Learning Plan.

As you will notice when you read the letter from the board president, tuition payments will continue as usual. For those who need to drop off payments, there will be options for you to do so beginning Monday, March 30th (should we not return to school on that date as anticipated). Again, we are taking this on a week by week basis and will update you with any changes by Friday, March 27th.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers as we navigate this situation,

Wendi Teten and Michele Thames

March 23, 2020

Dear Parents, Students, Faculty and Staff,

The Discovery Christian Board commends you for your outstanding cooperation and support during these unusual times. The amount of change you have endured and the quick adaptation to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is nothing short of impressive. We know that each of you in the Discovery Christian family understands what it means to place your trust in God and to do everything you can to take care of your families and help others at the same time. We see each of you making a difference, making sacrifices, and showing the love of Christ to those all around our community.

We want to express our sincerest thanks to our Co-Heads of School, Wendi Teten and Michele Thames, for their tremendous leadership of the faculty and staff during these past days. I do not know of any other independent school that has moved as quickly and efficiently as Discovery Christian has. Because of the quick response, Discovery Christian students have had to officially miss only one day of school thus far. Distance learning was implemented last Tuesday and the teachers are doing an amazing job at developing and improving this program every day.

Parents, we as a board are working hard behind the scenes to support and work with our Co-Heads of School as this is a tremendous taxing endeavor. We have been and will continue to participate in conference calls with MAIS leaders and are having regular meetings to address needs and situations the school is and will be facing. We have more meetings ahead where we will listen carefully and speak with officials that work for MAIS, our accrediting agency, bank officials, state officials, and medical officials that have the most relevant and current information as this pandemic continues.

As a board, we want to impress upon you the importance of understanding that Discovery Christian School is not a public school, and we will be making some decisions that public schools may not. Under no circumstances will we make decisions without having done our due diligence to ensure the measures taken are safe for your children.

Discovery Christian School has continued to provide an education to students. We have adapted to the circumstances just as each of your families have. Our teachers are continuing to teach from home and school, and our school administrators are still working long hours to keep things moving so your students will have a physical campus to return to when this pandemic is over. *Therefore, tuition payments will need to be made as usual. Services not rendered during this closing will not be charged to student accounts (ex. R.I.S.E., early arrival and afterschool).* Unlike public schools, independent schools such as ours are more like small businesses. It is our continued mission to provide DCS students with outstanding educational instruction, built on Christian principles and functioning in the safest way possible.

The Discovery Christian Board, administrators, teachers and staff are working around the clock for each of you. We will continue to update you with as much information as we can as these events unfold.

Blessings,

Joe Germany  
Board Chairman



## **10 Tips for Parents During Distance Learning**

The transition to distance learning will be challenging for families. Parents will need to think differently about how to support their children; how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful; and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students will thrive with distance learning, while others may struggle. The ten guidelines provided below are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children find success in a distance learning environment.

### **1—Establish routines and expectations**

From the first day DCS implements its Distance Learning Plan, parents need to establish routines and expectations. We encourage parents to set regular hours for their children's school work. Keep normal bedtime routines for younger children and expect the same from your MS and HS-aged students, too. Children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents set these expectations for how their children will spend their days starting as soon as distance learning is implemented, not several days later after it becomes apparent a child is struggling with the absence of routine.

### **2—Define the physical space for your child's study**

Your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. This should be a public/family space, not in a child's bedroom. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and have a strong wireless internet signal, if possible. Above all, it should be a space where parents are present and monitoring their children's learning.

### **3—Monitor communications from your children's teachers**

Teachers will communicate with parents through email. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. DCS wants parents to contact their children's teachers. However, we ask parents to remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families, and that communications should be essential, succinct, and self-aware.

#### **4—Begin and end each day with a check-in**

Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask your child what are you learning today? What are their learning targets or goals? How will they spend their time? What resources do they require? What support do they need? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that's normal!), but they should nevertheless. Parents should establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

#### **5—Take an active role in helping your children process and own their learning**

In the course of a regular school day at DCS, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults dozens if not hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they're learning. However, it's important that you child own their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.

#### **6—Establish times for quiet and reflection**

A huge challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones (no music necessary!) to block out distractions.

#### **7—Encourage physical activity and/or exercise**

Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and to their learning. Think also about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook – expect them to pitch in!

#### **8—Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry**

Help your child/children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult as it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

### **9—Monitor how much time your child is spending online**

DCS does not want its students staring at computer screens for 7- 8 hours a day. We ask that parents remember most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error before we find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences. Administrators or teachers will periodically check in with you to assess what you're seeing at home and what we need to adjust. We thank you in advance for your patience and partnership!

### **10—Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions**

There's always excitement when school closes for weather days. This excitement will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends through phone conversations, Facetime, or even writing letters and sending through "snail mail"! Please also monitor your children's social media use, especially during an extended school closure. Older students will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, and Instagram are not school sanctioned channels of communication. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can offend or cause harm to others

## **Guidelines for Students During Distance Learning**

1. Establish daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences.
2. Regularly monitor online platforms (FACTS, email, etc.) to check for announcements and feedback from your teachers.
3. Identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where you can work effectively and successfully .
4. Complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty, doing your best.
5. Do your best to meet timelines, commitments, and due dates.
6. Communicate proactively with your teachers if you cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.
7. Collaborate and support your peers in their learning.
8. Comply with Discovery Christian School's Acceptable Use Policy, including expectations for online etiquette.



**Student Video Conferencing Guidelines:**

- Wear appropriate clothing. Clothing should be full coverage. Be mindful of what is written on your clothes, etc.
- Have a classroom mindset. This is a professional and academic setting. Be aware of your background scenery and noise. Set up an office/work space. Find a different location other than your bed. This will help you have a “classroom mindset.” Look at what is displayed on the walls/furniture behind you. This will all be seen by your peers and teachers.
- Mute your volume until it is your turn to talk. Example- If your dog starts barking while your teacher is delivering a lesson, the whole class does not need to be distracted by that.
- Pick a location that will provide as little interference/distractions as possible. Inform your family that you are about to participate in a video conference
- Think before you speak. Be kind and respectful at all times. Contribute to the learning- do not serve as a distraction for yourself or your peers.
- Do not forget to turn your camera off/quit the video conferencing application at the conclusion of the class meeting/conferencing.