

Newtown Public Schools

Alternative Learning Plan



2019-2020

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Student Responsibilities	4
Teacher Expectations	5
Parent Expectations	7
Sample Elementary Alternative Learning Day Schedule	8

Introduction

The purpose of the Newtown Alternative Learning Plan is to provide ongoing instructional opportunities for students in the event of a prolonged school closure. Newtown educators and school leaders are committed to preparing students for academic, social, and civic responsibilities while encouraging independence and self-direction.

The goal of the Alternative Learning Plan is to promote flexible learning opportunities in lieu of learning that would typically take place in the classroom. Under the Alternative Learning Plan, teachers across all grade levels and departments will provide students engaging instructional resources and tools through a combination of print and digital resources. In planning the instruction, careful consideration will be given to developmental appropriateness of expectations and differing access to online resources.

The Alternative Learning Plan is not a replacement for in-class learning experiences that bring students and teachers together in social environments designed to ignite and support learning. Rather, its purpose is to offer an alternative to traditional instructional delivery during situations in which access to the school learning environment may be prohibited for an extended period of time. In these instances, the Alternative Learning Plan is designed to offer, to the greatest degree possible, appropriate access to educational opportunities for each student.

The Alternative Learning Plan has several goals for students, these include:

- Ensuring continuity of learning during what may be an extended closing
- Promoting access to information needed for distance learning
- Encouraging student independence and ownership of learning

Given that this plan would be implemented during emergency situations, it is designed to be flexible to the given situation. The responsibilities and expectations of students, parents, and staff are outlined in the plan. The success of the Alternative Learning Plan is dependent upon the fulfillment of those responsibilities and expectations as well as an open flow of communication between parents, teachers, and students throughout its implementation.

Student Responsibilities

Elementary:

- Learning plans focused on reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies will be emailed weekly to parents of students in Pre-Kindergarten through grade 4; students in grade 4 will also be able to access assignments through Google Classroom
- The weekly email will include assignments from unified arts teachers and will include activities related to the subject areas of physical education, music, art, and Spanish
- The weekly email will include social and emotional learning activities from school counselors
- The general expectation will be that students will participate in approximately 4 hours of instructional activities each day; for a total of 20 hours over the course of a week
- The 4 hours should be divided into the following blocks: 30-40 minutes of reading, 30-40 minutes of writing, 30-40 minutes of mathematics, 20-30 minutes of science and/or social studies, 20 minutes of unified arts and breaks, as appropriate
- Due to developmental and individual differences, the amount of time students actually spend on instruction may vary
- Teachers will make recommendations for online resources that can be used to complement emailed assignments

Intermediate & Middle School:

- Students at the Intermediate and Middle level are experienced in managing digital assignments
- Students will engage in learning tasks that will be provided by teachers via Google Classroom
- Cluster teachers will provide learning activities in the subjects of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies; unified arts teachers will host their own Google Classrooms and deliver activities related to those subject areas
- Students may receive instruction through posted readings and PowerPoints, recorded video, and electronic messaging through the Google Classroom.
- Students can expect teachers to be available online to answer questions and to provide feedback on submitted work periodically
- Email correspondence with students and parents will occur in a reasonable manner
- Assignments will be developmentally appropriate and there will be realistic expectations for outcomes that can be achieved through distance learning for students at this age

High School:

- High school students already have extensive experience and involvement in using online platforms for their learning
- All high school work will be provided to students through Google Classroom
- Student assignments will be posted via Google Classrooms at designated points each week
- New learning will occur through a variety of tasks which may include research projects, performance tasks, and the continuation of ongoing assignments
- Students may receive instruction through posted readings and PowerPoints, recorded video, and electronic messaging all through the Google Classroom
- Students can expect teachers to be available online to answer questions and to provide feedback on submitted work periodically
- Email correspondence with students and parents will occur in a reasonable manner

Special Education & Related Services:

- Students receiving special education services will be provided appropriate learning activities under the direction of the case manager
- Delivery of special education modifications and assignments will take place through a combination of Google Classroom and email, as appropriate for each student
- When appropriate, related services activities will be provided

Project Challenge:

- Students who have qualified for gifted education will be provided appropriate learning activities through dedicated Project Challenge Google Classrooms.

Teacher Expectations

Teachers will play an active role in the teaching and learning that students experience under the Alternative Learning Plan. Teachers at the elementary level will primarily use email to communicate learning expectations to parents and students. Teachers of students in grade 4 will use a combination of email and Google Classroom to deliver assignments. Teachers at the intermediate, middle, and high school levels will use Google Classroom as the primary method for assigning learning tasks to students. During the period in which the Alternative Learning Plan is in effect, expectations for teachers and other certified staff members will also include:

Elementary:

- Supporting student learning through regular email communications (i.e. parent/student questions on assignments, feedback on completed work, etc.)
- Responding to parent emails in a timely manner
- Reviewing student assignment completion logs
- Grading of designated assignments, as appropriate

- Monitoring the work of students who are participating in complementary online resources
- Entering grades for completed assignments and assessments into the gradebook
- Participating in PPTs through phone or online conferencing
- Collaborating with special education teachers to provide modifications for students receiving special education services

Intermediate, Middle, and High School:

- Reasonable email correspondence with students and parents in a timely manner
- Communicating when students can expect new work will be posted online
- Instructing students through recorded video using online platforms such as Google Meet
- Posting student assignments, projects, and tasks through Google Classroom
- Providing feedback on submitted assignments
- Grading submitted assignments
- Entering grades for completed assignments and assessments into the gradebook
- Participating in PPTs through phone or online conferencing
- Collaborating with special education teachers to provide modifications for students receiving special education services

Special Education and Related Services:

- Reasonable email correspondence with students and parents in a timely manner
- Collaborating with general education teachers to ensure that lessons for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) are appropriately scaffolded
- Providing alternative assignments for students when appropriate
- Providing activities that reinforce skills being developed through related service plans
- Participating in PPTs through phone or online conferencing
- Entering grades for completed assignments and assessments into the gradebook
- Project Challenge teachers will establish and manage assignments for their students via Google Classroom

Additional Professional Learning Opportunities For Certified Staff

As part of a typical Alternative Learning school day, contact with students will be reduced as compared to a regular school day. To complement the work done with students and fulfill reasonable work time expectations, teachers will also engage in individual learning activities, online collaborations with colleagues, and other teaching-related activities that promote professional growth and development. Sample activities include:

- Engaging in professional learning provided through online resources such as <https://sanfordinspire.org/>
- Using online tools such as Google Meet to engage in grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with colleagues
- Revising and developing curriculum
- Analyzing data to inform instructional practices
- Participating in webinars to support professional learning goals
- Reading professional articles and texts online or on the district's web page: <https://www.newtown.k12.ct.us/ProfessionalDevelopment>
- Reading and reflecting on a book related to a professional learning topic

Parent Expectations

It has been well-documented that parent involvement in children's education correlates with higher academic achievement. Similarly, successful implementation of the Alternate Learning Plan will depend greatly upon parent support and engagement, regardless of the age of the students. While parents will not be expected to take the place of the teacher, it is critical that parents consistently remind students that the learning which takes place via a digital or print experience is as important as the learning that takes place in the classroom. In order to effectively partner with Newtown Public Schools during a prolonged absence, parent involvement will ideally include:

- Developing a realistic, yet flexible, schedule for completion of school work (this is especially important since you may likely be balancing atypical demands and challenges in your own schedule related to the same situation which has forced an extended school closure)
- Creating a dedicated school work space
- Assisting with technical issues to ensure online activities can be accessed
- Supporting at home learning as much as possible
- Regularly checking email, school websites or Google Classroom in order to receive important updates
- For students in the elementary grades, maintaining work logs as evidence of work completion and uploading work samples as requested by teachers
- For students in the intermediate, middle and high school levels, monitoring completion of work assigned through Google Classroom
- Understanding and communicating to students that work assigned by teachers is not optional; the expectation is that assigned work will be completed
- Proactively communicating with classroom teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, mental health workers, and administrators when you or your child is in need of assistance or if a need is not being met

Sample Elementary Alternative Learning Day Schedule

In an effort to keep routine and structure for your child(ren) at home throughout the closure of schools, below is a suggested schedule for an alternative learning day that fulfills approximately 4 hours of instructional time. It is understood that each family's situation will be unique, and this may not be a feasible schedule for all. However, it is strongly recommended that uninterrupted learning time be provided for each subject even if it occurs at different times throughout the day. *This schedule can be adapted for older children, if parents feel that setting a schedule is necessary.*

9:00AM-10:00AM - Early Morning Routine

This time-period may include the following:
Wake-Up, Free Play*, Daily Hygiene, Dress, and Breakfast

10:00AM-10:40AM - Uninterrupted Reading Time

This time-period may include the following, pending grade-level:
Silent independent reading, use of district recommended online reading programs and apps, shared reading experiences (reading to a partner), teacher recommendations via print resources, email, and/or Google communications

10:45AM-11:25AM - Uninterrupted Writing Time

This time period may include the following, pending grade-level:
Pre-writing, foundational skills resources and online programs/apps, continued practice of written pieces i.e. narrative, opinion, informative, teacher recommendations via print resources, email, and/or Google communications

11:30AM-12:30PM - Break

This time-period may include the following:
Lunch and Free Play*

12:30PM-1:10PM - Uninterrupted Math Time

This time period may include the following, pending grade-level:
Math foundational skills resources and online programs/apps, continued practice, teacher recommendations via print resources, email, and/or Google communications

1:15PM-1:55PM - Uninterrupted Science/Social Studies

This time period may include the following, pending grade-level:
Teacher recommendations via print resources, email, and/or Google communications

2:00PM-2:30PM - Snack Break

2:30PM-3:00PM - Unified Arts

This time period may include the following, pending grade-level:
Practice for Art, Music, and other related subjects

3:00PM-3:30PM - Enrichment and Extension

This time period may include the following, pending grade-level:
Optional time for continued work on projects and tasks assigned or more practice and work on print material and online programs, as recommended by teachers.