

A Balanced Approach: *Park Tudor's Philosophy of eLearning.*

For the remainder of the school year, Park Tudor will prioritize asynchronous learning while also offering synchronous class meetings strategically positioned throughout the week. As a reminder, asynchronous activities are completed by students at different times and in different locations. We believe this approach provides the flexibility our families and teachers require under stressful and uncertain circumstances. A fully synchronous model would likely guarantee teacher and student burnout and is an inequitable approach to eLearning. We have developed divisional schedules that are sustainable for the duration and yet adaptable when incremental changes are needed.

The educational philosophy underpinning our eLearning has been based on the practices of highly experienced online educators, like Global Online Academy (GOA); prevailing research into digital learning; and the experiences of our peer institutions. In particular, we have paid a great deal of attention to our sister schools in Seattle, who moved to eLearning three to four weeks prior to our closing. In Seattle, schools gained important insight into the sustainability of various eLearning approaches, and have shared their experiences through our national organization, NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools). The message has been clear - they recommend rationing synchronous teaching. In a recent survey, GOA surveyed 89 member schools, both independent and international, about their eLearning strategies during COVID-19 and found that 20% were using mainly synchronous instruction, 30% were using a mix of both and 50% were using mainly asynchronous teaching.

Though we continue to lead and participate in this robust conversation among schools regarding the appropriate balance of synchronous and asynchronous instruction and its value in effective eLearning, we believe in the collective wisdom of our peer institutions; accrediting bodies; and Mind, Brain, and Education-informed instruction. Research-informed schools like ours account for how stress affects performance, for how effective screen time requires limitations, and for how designing with cognitive load theory in mind necessarily limits the amount of information we require students to ingest in a day. We are also constantly learning from student, parent, and teacher feedback and why we are ensuring that our teachers are getting quality professional development and clear guidance from the administration.

While there is no one resource for the “right” answer, we believe the structure we have in place is consistent with the research behind the science of learning, is responsive to our families’ needs during this uncertain time, and is in line with leading independent schools. We continue to research in this area and collect feedback from our community.

If you have specific feedback that you would like to share, please contact our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Brent Kanefelt (bkaneft@parktudor.org).

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