

## Virtual Learning Policy 2021-2022

After a year of moving from fully virtual, to hybrid, to fully in-person a great deal has been learned about the benefits and pitfalls of online learning. Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School values in-person learning above all else. The value of face-to-face instruction combined with involvement in the daily hustle and bustle of the school day, offer the complete Gwynedd experience. At the same time, GMAHS values the flexibility provided by embracing the new technologies that allowed virtual learning to occur.

The next school year, while possibly still having some mitigation efforts in place, will look more like “normal” in many ways, including the emphasis on in-person learning. Virtual Learning will not completely go away but will not be as widely available as it was for the 2020-2021 school year. Below are the GMAHS parameters around Virtual Learning:

- Virtual learning is meant for COVID-related circumstances. If a student is asked to quarantine due to exposure and/or awaiting test results, she may access her classes via TEAMS.
  - o The first day a student is out due to a COVID-related circumstance will be an excused absence. The school nurse and the Dean of Student Affairs will follow up with the parent of the student to make sure all information has been relayed. Teachers will be contacted so they know when virtual learning will begin and how long it is expected to last.
  - o If approved, the second day a student is out due to a COVID-related circumstance she will be able to access her classes via Teams.
  
- For non-COVID related medical circumstances, situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis and must be approved *in advance*.
  - o Parents/Guardians must contact Mrs. Eileen Carty at (215) 646-8815 x308 or [ecarty@gmahs.org](mailto:ecarty@gmahs.org)
  - o This is meant for longer-term medical issues such as surgery that requires at home recovery.
  - o Any non-COVID related medical circumstance must be accompanied by a doctor's note.

- If a student is generally feeling under the weather and cannot attend school in-person, that day would be a regular absence where a parent calls her in sick and follows up with a signed note from home.
- If a student is virtual for a school day she cannot participate in on-campus sports, activities, or events until she returns to school in-person.
- If a student is given approval to be virtual for any period of time (regardless of reason), she must attend classes in an environment that is conducive to academic learning.
  - Students must be seated at a table or desk, must have their camera on, and must be dressed in their uniform top. Camera must stay on for the entire class.
    - If there is a computer issue the student must reach out to the technology department at [techsupport@gmahs.org](mailto:techsupport@gmahs.org)
  - Students are not permitted to access class from the car, a doctor's office, or any other public setting.
  - If a student is not given advanced permission and/or is not in an appropriate learning environment, the teacher is not required to allow virtual access to class.
    - Teachers will only open a TEAMS meeting for class if they have been notified in advance that a student in their class been given permission to attend virtually.
  - Students learning virtually will be held to the same academic expectations as those attending class in-person, including due dates.
  - Classes are not recorded.
  - Virtual students are reminded that instruction is framed around in-person learning and there may be some activities that the virtual learner cannot fully participate in.
- Virtual Learning is NOT to be used for family vacations, travel to non-Gwynedd sporting events, appointments etc. The wording from the GMAHS Student Handbook is as follows:

Absences are classified as EXCUSED or UNEXCUSED according to the reason for the absence. An EXCUSED absence is an absence due to illness, family emergency, death of a family member or legal concerns. An UNEXCUSED absence is any absence that is not considered EXCUSED as described above. Examples of UNEXCUSED absences include vacations or any trip not expressly sponsored by Gwynedd Mercy Academy High School.



It is highly discouraged to arrange routine visits to the doctor, dentist, taking a driver's test, etc. during school time as a sufficient number of holidays are already present in the school calendar. Parents are strongly advised not to plan vacations during the academic year when school is in session. School days missed to extend an existing holiday or create a new one are detrimental to a student's academic success. When non-medical absences are unavoidable, adherence to certain procedures minimizes, as much as possible, the negative effects on a student's academic standing. The procedure for reporting an anticipated, non-medical absence (including a vacation, non-GMA athletic events, etc.) is as follows:

- A written request (electronic or handwritten) must be submitted to the Dean of Student Affairs stating the timing and reason for the absence. This must be submitted at least one week prior to the absence. Submission of this written request guarantees only that the request will be considered, not that it will be automatically granted.
- The request will be shared with the Dean of Academics. The student's teachers will be contacted to evaluate how an absence will impact progress in the course.
- Once approval for the non-medical absence has been granted, the student will be expected to contact all of her teachers for assignments and she is responsible for any work that has been missed. Students should expect to take a make-up test on the day they return unless arrangements have been made in advance with the teacher.

