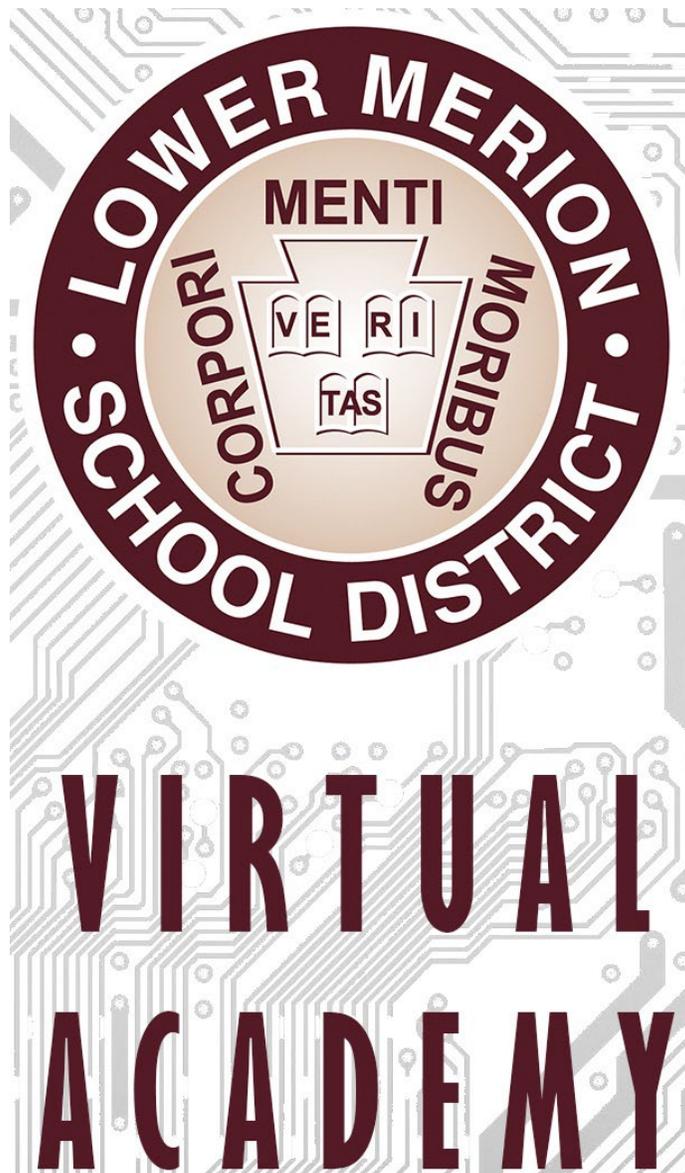


# Lower Merion Virtual Academy Handbook



## **Program Description**

The Lower Merion School District has been educating students effectively for many years and knows what it takes for students to be successful on their path to college and/or career goals. Whether learning is occurring in the conventional classroom or online, it involves rigorous coursework coupled with a combination of student engagement and instructional support.

Our cyber school program is offered in partnership with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit which includes access to many Lower Merion approved courses through various online providers including Imagine Learning, Edgenuity, PEAK, Virtual High School, and World of Learning under a larger umbrella called MVP. Approved courses are accepted for Lower Merion credit but do not necessarily follow the same curricular sequence of topics as our face-to-face courses. These courses are mainly asynchronous and are facilitated by certified teachers provided by the online organizations.

## **Enrollment**

Students must meet the following criteria to participate in the Lower Merion Virtual Academy through the Lower Merion School District:

- Reside within the Lower Merion School District (the entire time courses are accessed)
- Complete the online registration form
- Meet with school district officials to determine course of study, as needed
- View the orientation videos prior to beginning any cyber courses
- Commit to one full semester (half-year) at a time

## **Contact Information**

Contact information for the Lower Merion Virtual Academy can be found on our district webpage. The link is listed under “Schools” as the LMVA is considered one of our district schools. The email address for the Lower Merion Virtual Academy is [LMVA@LMSD.org](mailto:LMVA@LMSD.org).

## **School Calendar**

Since the Lower Merion Virtual Academy courses can be accessed at any time, there are no specific “days off” for holidays, conferences, etcetera. In other words, the LMVA calendar does not necessarily follow the LMSD calendar. If students plan to follow the LMSD posted calendar, then they will have to either work ahead or make-up the missed day of work in order to remain on schedule to finish the course. The online calendar of assignments will automatically adjust

every day in order for students to fully complete their work by the end of the semester. Any days that students do not complete assignments, even if the days were listed on the LMSD calendar as a non-school day, will affect this pacing. Students enrolled in AP courses will have assignments due each week that must be submitted at that time. Students and families are responsible for managing the completion of all assignments.

**Attendance**

Attendance is determined by the amount of coursework completed and submitted to the course instructor and periodic check-ins with school staff. Students are expected to work on their cyber courses just as they would at the school building. The amount of time working on these courses should average 5 - 6 hours per day for full-time students. Students are expected to complete about 5% of each course per 5-day week as outlined in the chart below. The platform is designed for students to have a goal of 100% completion of the first half of the course by the midyear, and then 100% completion of the second half of the course by the end of the year. If students follow the schedule below, they will complete 100% of the expected assignments for each semester.

Expectations for progress during each semester of the school year are as follows.

**Semester Virtual Learning Progress Expectations for Regular Attendance:**

Week number each semester:	Progress expected for this week	Total progress expected
Week 1	5%	5%
Week 2	5%	10%
Week 3	5%	15%
Week 4	5%	20%
Week 5	5%	25%
Week 6	5%	30%
Week 7	5%	35%
Week 8	5%	40%

Week 9	5%	45%
Week 10	5%	50%
Week 11	5%	55%
Week 12	5%	60%
Week 13	5%	65%
Week 14	5%	70%
Week 15	5%	75%
Week 16	5%	80%
Week 17	5%	85%
Week 18	5%	90%
Week 19	5%	95%
Week 20	5%	100%

**Students will be held accountable for their attendance online.** Students are required to submit written excuses for not completing the necessary amount of work. These excuses are to be brought or mailed to the student's home school within three (3) days. Students who fail to complete a basic amount of work each week and who do not submit excuses may be cited for truancy.

The following guidelines and actions will be taken when a student fails to complete the appropriate amount of work or does not meet the minimum requirement of time attempting to complete assignments:

- Notice/ truancy letter sent home to parents
- Mandatory meeting with school officials/ administration
- Implementation of Truancy Elimination Plan
- Citations filed against the parent/guardian/student
- Removal from LMVA

Any interruptions to the timely completion of assignments such as sickness, vacations, death in

the family etc. should be communicated immediately. Progress is monitored by the submission of coursework to the online course teacher. No submission of work means no progress, and will be viewed the same as a student absence or cutting class.

Any student demonstrating continued academic failure in their online courses will be put on academic warning and may be removed from LMVA and asked to return to their home building in order to receive additional support and monitoring.

Student progress will be monitored by the online teacher and the District but should also be monitored at home by the parent or guardian. Ultimately, it is the student's responsibility to complete all requirements of any course.

### **PSSA and Keystone Testing**

All students are required to report to their home school for PSSA and/or Keystone testing as required by the state. Testing dates and times will be provided to you by your home building. PSSA testing occurs in the spring. Keystone testing occurs mid-year and at the end of the school year.

### **Grading**

Grades for LMVA students are always available in the digital gradebook through the online providers and are not viewable in Powerschool. A grade will be provided to the district at the end of each semester by the online providers for each course. Those grades will then be entered into Powerschool for each course. Lower Merion will average semester one and semester two grades together at the end of the school year to determine the final grade for each course. A course that is only a semester long will simply use the grade reported to us by the provider as the final grade for that semester long course. Grades for students who return to their home school for any reason will follow them from LMVA and be included in their end of year calculations.

### **Field Trips/ Extracurricular Activities**

Any student enrolled in distance learning is eligible to go on any entire-grade field trips or residency experiences available to traditional students. Transportation, admission, or any other fees are dependent on trip parameters and are not the sole responsibility of the Lower Merion School District.

All students enrolled in LMVA are eligible to participate in school sponsored sports and special events such as dances, community service etc. Events may be viewed through the district website. All eligibility requirements and criteria are outlined in the handbook and will be followed as with any traditional student. It is up to the student to meet their academic responsibilities in order to

participate. Infractions of the discipline code as outlined in the handbook will result in loss of privileges.

## **Career and Technical Center**

All cyber-students in grades 10-12 are eligible to attend the Central Montco Technical High School. Please contact your guidance counselor for additional details.

## **Graduating Seniors**

Students seeking their LMSD diploma must complete all of the state and LMSD graduation requirements, including the Senior Project. As a reminder, the final semester for seniors is shortened due to graduation occurring prior to the end of the regular school year. Students should plan accordingly in order to fully complete their virtual courses in that last semester. Students attending school in the buildings typically finish their courses during the first week of May. In order for a senior in LMVA to do this same thing, the student would need to work ahead and at a faster pace than what would show on the LMVA pacing guide. This is not the expectation for LMVA students, and virtual courses will remain open during the Senior Project time. We encourage all seniors to meet with their school counselor no later than January to discuss graduation requirements.

## **Extensions**

The online courses through LMVA, in partnership with the MCIU, **cannot be extended beyond the designated end date** for each semester. The online courses provided through MVP have limits on the number of days that a student has to complete the course. Remember, a virtual teacher is assigned to each online course and is contracted to work the same as a teacher in a building. There is a set start and end to a school year for all teachers, even those who are virtual. Students are expected to complete the required assignments for the specified semester of each course by that end date. The flexibility of the program does allow students to work ahead if they choose. Students finishing a semester early will not be able to start the next semester, or next year's coursework in advance of the designated start date of that upcoming term. Students who complete all required work in advance of the semester end date are able to do individual research or exploration on topics of their interest. Students may not self-accelerate to the next course in a sequence simply by working at a faster pace than what is expected.

# LMVA Frequently Asked Questions

(As of July 25, 2022. Please check the LMVA website for the most recent version)

## 1. **What is the Lower Merion Virtual Academy (LMVA)?**

The Lower Merion Virtual Academy (LMVA) is a completely online learning program offered through the Lower Merion School District in partnership with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit through a program called MVP, the Montgomery Virtual Program. Students will take all of their courses online through MVP while still being enrolled as a student in the Lower Merion School District.

## 2. **Since LMVA is virtual, can my student be anywhere in the world and participating in LMVA?**

No. All students must be living and taking their classes within the Lower Merion School District boundaries. LMVA students must follow all attendance policies as students attending in person which include living within the District boundaries while attending our schools. Students found to be living outside the District will be disenrolled from LMVA and the District.

## 3. **Why choose LMVA?**

LMVA offers flexibility for students and families who choose to learn via an on-line platform.

- LMVA students remain enrolled in our District and are eligible to receive and LMSD diploma.
- LMVA's curriculum is based on the same standards as LMSD's curriculum
- LMVA students will remain eligible to participate in extracurricular activities at their home school.
- LMVA families will remain connected to their home school's HSA and be able to participate in HSA activities.
- LMVA students will have access to student supports provided by LMSD, including counseling services, specialists and special education and related services.
- LMSD will supply students with required computers/devices.
- LMSD families pay no tuition fee to attend LMVA.

## 4. **What do Synchronous and Asynchronous mean?**

"Synchronous" is any time where a live person is interacting with the student in an online format. This is typically done through Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, or Google. "Asynchronous" is a time where students are interacting with videos or pre-created learning tools. Examples of asynchronous time include Khan Academy, Dreambox, YouTube, Exact Path, etc.

**5. Is LMVA delivered in a Synchronous or Asynchronous format?**

Courses are delivered in an asynchronous format the majority of the time. This allows students the flexibility to work at their own pace and to sign on whenever is most beneficial for them during the day. Due to the asynchronous nature of the program, students are able to revisit the information as many times as needed. This could even be later at night when a typical school day would have already ended. There are opportunities to interact with a live person within MVP, especially when students have specific questions, or after assessments when the teacher may offer specific feedback. For our K-5 students, there is a daily synchronous component where the teacher will meet virtually with the online class of students. One content area is typically reviewed/discussed each day.

In some instances, students may occasionally be required to join a live synchronous session with their online instructor. An example would be a World Language course where speaking is one of the course standards.

**6. What is the time commitment when signing up?**

For curricular purposes, all students are to commit to at least one semester (one half school year) of time when registering. At the mid-year, students can continue as an LMVA student, or may choose to return to their home school. Students are encouraged to login to the online platform and participate every day the same way they would if attending a brick-and-mortar school. Students who attended in-person for the first semester may choose to enroll in LMVA for the second semester. Please be aware though that some of our in-person courses, especially at the high school level, are not available as an LMVA option.

**7. How do I register for the LMVA?**

Registration information is available on the Lower Merion School District website and can be accessed here <https://www.lmsd.org/academics/lmva>. The registration form is available in your Powerschool Parent Portal. Completion of that form will automatically enroll your child into LMVA.

**8. Are there any enrollment limits or caps to the number of students who may attend the LMVA?**

No. All students who register by the deadline of August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 will be enrolled.

**9. Is there a cost to attend the LMVA?**

There is no cost to students or families who choose to attend the Lower Merion Virtual Academy.

**10. What equipment do I need and does the district supply those items?**

A computer with internet access is needed. An iPad is not considered a compatible device for this program, but will work for most courses.

For elementary students, the class/course supply list varies by grade level. Most of the supplies can be found around the house, but families may need to buy other supplies, similar to those requested in a typical classroom.

If access to required supplies is a challenge, the District will work to find a reasonable solution for individual students enrolled in the LMVA.

**11. Are accommodations provided for students that have specialized plans (IEPs/504 Service Plan)?**

Online courses have built in flexibility and adaptations such as text-to-speech, unlimited time on tests, translation features, and vocabulary help. Lower Merion School District's Student Services staff will work collaboratively with MVP to meet the needs and accommodations outlined within a student's individualized plan within a virtual setting. Students will continue to be monitored by an LMSD assigned case manager to ensure the student's needs are being met. Annual IEP/504 meetings will be facilitated by the assigned case manager. Direct special education and related services will be provided through a virtual platform.

**12. Are accommodations provided for ELL students?**

Online courses have built in flexibility, adaptations such as text-to-speech, unlimited time on tests, translation features, and vocabulary help.

**13. What role does the parent/guardian play in an online learning environment?**

Parents/guardians must attend any mandatory orientation meetings for newly enrolled students. Parents/guardians must ensure each student has readily available internet access. Parents/guardians should be prepared to provide supervision and act as a direct contact. To assist with student accountability, we ask that parents/guardians regularly check their student's progress by reviewing the course pacing guide and grades available through the online providers. This online program is only successful if the student completes the work. It is important that students have a solid support system to help them stay on track with their course work.

**14. Is there additional academic support available for my child?**

Support is provided by a Pennsylvania certified teacher assigned to the class through MVP. Individual appointments and communications can be made through the student portal and students also have access to concept coaches for core subjects via a virtual "help desk" in the online platform.

**15. When can a student choose/enroll in courses?**

Students must register and will participate for a full semester at a time. By the deadline of August 19<sup>th</sup> 2022, students must be registered in order for their schedule to be transferred to MVP and processed for the upcoming semester. Prior to each semester, families will need to re-enroll in LMVA by the deadline in order to be scheduled for courses for the upcoming semester.

**16. Can I drop/add classes at LMVA after the semester starts?**

Once students are registered and begin courses through MVP, those courses cannot be changed.

**17. Does LMVA offer different levels of courses at the secondary level?**

LMVA offerings include College Preparatory, Honors, and Advanced Placement (AP) level courses. LMVA **does not** offer International Baccalaureate courses. It is important to note that not all courses that are available at the home schools will be available in LMVA. This is especially true at the high school level and for elective classes.

**18. Does LMVA offer AP courses?**

Yes, but the format is slightly different due to the high level of rigor in these courses.

- AP courses have weekly assignment due dates that cannot be extended.
- AP courses often have required summer work or a summer project that must be completed prior to beginning the online coursework.
- AP students may be required to attend live synchronous sessions with the instructor and/or other students registered for the course.

The following AP courses are available:

- **English**
  - AP<sup>®</sup> English Language & Composition
  - AP<sup>®</sup> English Literature & Composition
- **Math**
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Calculus AB
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Calculus BC
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Statistics
- **Science**
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Biology
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Chemistry
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Environmental Science
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Physics 1
  - AP<sup>®</sup> Physics C
- **Social Studies**
  - AP<sup>®</sup> US Government & Politics

- AP® Human Geography
- AP® Psychology
- AP® US History
- **Elective Areas**
- AP® Computer Science A
- AP® Computer Science Principles
- AP® Economics – prepares students for both Micro and Macro exams.
- AP® French Language & Culture
- AP® Spanish Language & Culture
- AP® Music Theory

*Arrangements to take the AP exam must be made through the student's home high school – HHS or LMHS.*

**19. How is attendance monitored?**

Each student is expected to log into his or her coursework five days a week. The program allows for flexibility and autonomy for each student/family to decide what schedule works best for them. LMVA will contact the Home and School Visitor with any attendance concerns and will follow-up with the family as needed. When students do not work regularly on their lessons and assignments, they may be considered truant. Students who are unable to login or submit their daily assignments should be prepared to submit an excuse note the same as if they were unable to attend a brick-and-mortar school. Per state law, student attendance must be reported to the state for every child attending Lower Merion School District. Please see the LMVA Handbook for additional details.

**20. Are students required to log in during certain times of the day?**

No. However, students who log in regularly and develop a daily routine tend to meet with greater success in an online environment. The MVP teacher may also have specific synchronous office hours for students to connect and ask questions. LMVA will contact the Home and School Visitor with any attendance concerns and will follow-up with the family as needed. When students do not work regularly on their lessons and assignments, they may be considered truant.

**21. Is attendance for LMVA required during snow days, closures, early dismissals, etc.?**

MVP courses are designed with a set start and end date. Students are required to complete the courses during that time period. There are no extensions. Therefore, snow days, school closures, holidays, and early dismissals that occur in the home building will not impact the online program or the end date. While students and families may observe personal holidays or other days on our LMMSD calendar, the end date for course completion remains the same for all online courses. Full completion of all MVP courses is vital to student success and access to future courses whether continuing online or returning to the home school next year.

**22. How is a student progress monitored throughout the course?**

Each course is assigned an MVP teacher who can be contacted by the student or parent. The system will generate a pacing guide for each course that will automatically adjust as students work ahead or fall behind. As long as students check the pacing guide, and adjust accordingly, they will complete the course on time. Again, regular signing in and working on lessons and assignments are necessary for attendance. Students who do not sign in and work regularly may be truant. MVP Teachers have office hours when they are available for student questions or concerns.

**23. Are there weekly/daily due dates for assignments?**

In order to successfully complete a course, pacing and completion of assignments are important. The system will generate a pacing guide for each course that will automatically adjust as students work ahead or fall behind. As long as students and parents check the pacing guide, and adjust accordingly, students will complete the course on time. As a reminder, some courses do have weekly due dates and include some live synchronous sessions.

**24. Can I withdraw from the MVP program?**

Once the online course begins, the student is required to complete the semester. If a student is having problems with the coursework, technology, or any other aspect to online learning, it is the responsibility of the student/family to contact the district or MVP immediately. We will work to rectify any concerns and help make this a successful school year. Students may switch to their home school after the completion of the semester. Families will have the opportunity to either re-enroll in LMVA or their home school roughly 6-8 weeks before the start of next semester.

**25. How will grades be calculated and reported?**

Grades are determined by the MVP assigned teacher. This is typically based on completion of the assigned tasks and through the online assessments. LMVA grades will be included on the student's LMVA academic record; however, the report card issued for LMVA students may look slightly different than the one provided to students attending their home school. A grade will be issued for each semester. The average of those two semesters will become the final grade for each online course. Please see the LMVA Handbook for additional details.

**26. Will LMVA grades be used in calculating GPA and class rank? (HS Only)**

Yes. Courses offered through the Lower Merion Virtual Academy via MVP are recognized the same way as courses offered face-to-face.

**27. Are students required to take state standardized tests?**

Yes, all LMVA students are required to take the same state-mandated exams as students attending their home school. Students in LMVA will be required to come to the school building they would have attended for all standardized testing. This includes PSSAs and Keystone Exams.

**28. Is the program accredited?**

Yes. All courses offered through MVP are aligned to the PA Core Standards and are delivered by teachers with a Pennsylvania certification.

**29. Are MVP courses NCAA compliant?**

Yes. Course offerings are NCAA certified and taught by a PA certified teacher.

Note: Because MVP courses are semester-based, in order to acquire a full credit in any core subject area, the student would need to complete both semesters of the course. *(Example: if attending LMVA for 2 semesters - English– Part A and English– Part B or if returning to the school building, the other half year of the course must be completed to be awarded one full year credit).*

**30. Will my child be able to enter the buildings?**

Yes, students may enter their buildings in the District provided the child is there to participate in a school-sponsored event, activity, club or sport. Students should not be entering the building during the regular school day for any other reason.

**31. Can my student join a club, activity, or sport?**

Yes, provided that club, activity, or sport is offered in the regularly assigned home building.

**32. Will I still receive all of the messages from the district or my home school?**

Yes. When attending LMVA families will continue to receive calls and emails via School Messenger as they have previously.

**33. Who do I contact for help?**

For course content, books, materials needed, assessments, or assignments, the student should contact the MVP teacher for the course.

For platform access issues or general platform troubleshooting, the student should contact the vendor help-desk directly.

If the student has questions about computer specific issues or basic computer questions, the student should contact LMSD Helpdesk at [techsupport@lmsd.org](mailto:techsupport@lmsd.org).

If the question relates to the program, policies, or any other aspect of Montgomery Virtual Program, please contact the MVP office at (484-687-4101) or [mvp@mciu.org](mailto:mvp@mciu.org).

If you still have questions after reading these FAQs, please contact the LMSD Virtual Academy coordinators at [lmva@lmsd.org](mailto:lmva@lmsd.org).