



Mountain Brook
S C H O O L S

Mountain Brook Schools eLearning Plan

April 3, 2020



Table of Contents

eLearning Background	3
eLearning Philosophy	4
eLearning Best Practices	6
eLearning Lesson Ideas	9
eLearning Plan: Pre-K to 6	13
eLearning Plan: Grades 7 to 12	21
Grading	22



eLearning Background

Mountain Brook Schools began scheduling pre-designed eDays in 2009 to prepare teachers and students for online learning. An eDay is one in which students work from home and receive their classroom instruction electronically. The instruction is linked to grade level standards and provides the same educational value as a day of in-class teaching.

eLearning differentiates itself from an eDay in that the planning and instruction are developed with a broader, long-term approach. Assignments are designed to be completed over an extended period of time, and group conferencing capabilities are critical for many subjects and classes. Students access online instruction through various platforms, including Canvas, Google Classroom, and Seesaw.

Our teachers are participating in a [Virtual Learning Conference](#) from March 30 to April 10. The goal of the conference is to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in eLearning. They are learning about eLearning best practices and digital instruction tools that will enable them to continue providing an effective, challenging, and engaging education for every one of our students.



eLearning Philosophy

Teachers: Prepare for a new reality

- Give yourself grace. This is going to be the first time many of you have taught an online course.
- eLearning is going to be hard and not go according to plan. You are going to mess up and have to change direction many times. And that's OK.
- If you are willing to be a flexible, vulnerable learner and show up for your students during this unprecedented time, then you are going to do a fantastic job.

Establish/Re-Establish Community and Norms

- Take the first day or so to build a classroom community in this new environment. This is vital since eLearning is a new experience for everyone and can be awkward.
- Work with your students to establish norms and ground rules for how you all will interact with each other online.
- Define what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Click [here](#) for a good resource on this. Doing so will lower the anxiety for everyone, including you, because the expectations are clear. Co-creating these norms with students gives them a voice and a sense of belonging.
- Before teaching content, you could also start by asking them how they are feeling, what their concerns are about eLearning, or something to



re-establish a connection while acknowledging and addressing how they are feeling during this strange time.

- Be sure to be consistent in keeping everyone accountable for upholding the norms.
- Make sure there is clarity about when, where, and how students are supposed to participate in live instruction or discussions.

Be Mindful Of...

- The amount of screen time we are asking students to engage in. Think about how people look/act after hours spent online.
- Not everyone has the same access to wifi, especially if there are multiple kids in one home. This also means they may not have the same access to private/quiet places in their homes. This might be an issue for you as well.
- Not all attention spans are equal. Chunk your lessons in about 30-minute increments.
- You can break students into groups, even online, for lengthier assignments, but if creating videos or instructing live, keep it to about 20 minutes. Think TED Talks.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate...clearly, often, and in a variety of formats.



eLearning Best Practices

Four expert strategies for designing an online course

- Involve the learner
- Make collaboration work
- Develop a clear and consistent structure
- Reflect and revise

Establish Essential Standards

- Because eLearning is going to look different than the time we have in the classroom, instruction on essential standards only is going to be paramount.
- Look at the standards for your curriculum and identify the ones that have:
 - Endurance: knowledge and skills of value beyond a single test date. Will the standard be employed exactly as it is in life beyond the school walls? Does it represent how things are really done?
 - Leverage: knowledge and skills of value in multiple disciplines. Is the standard transferable and even necessary for learners to access skills and content in other areas or fields?
 - Readiness: Knowledge and skills necessary for success in the next grade level, instruction level, or state test. Is the standard a building block that other standards are contingent upon?



- Use these criteria to identify the essential standards for the last nine weeks. If a standard does not fit the above criteria, it is not essential in this unique situation.
- Focus your instruction on these essential standards and your communication to students and parents on student progress toward these standards.

Rubrics are Essential

- For online learning, it is imperative to have clear and precise expectations for all learning outcomes.
- Rubrics foster open communication and clarity on expectations. They also allow you as the teacher to give precise feedback on student work.
- Students are more successful on assignments when they know exactly what will be expected and the criteria on which they will be graded.
- Keep the graded outcomes tied to the content standards and skills you are assessing.
 - Do not have graded requirements such as “seems to be committed to the work.” A student’s personal level of commitment is never something we can assess.
 - Did the work they produce demonstrate mastery of the standard or use of the skill? That is our focus.
- Have students help develop the rubrics. This also allows for student voice in the online learning experiences.



Assessments: Be Balanced!

- Online assessments still need to be varied, purposeful, and appropriately challenging.
 - Do give a variety of assessments (not just multiple choice, not just projects, not just essays).
 - Do have a purpose in giving an assessment, not just to give a grade.
 - Do give an assessment that is challenging but not beyond the learner's capacity.
- Do not give multiple-choice tests with 150 questions because “they are online now and have plenty of time” or assign massive projects over weeks at a time simply to give them something to do.
- Be purposeful, challenging, and mindful that yours is not the only class to which they have to attend.
- Remember the purpose of an assessment is to measure learning outcomes. It is about students demonstrating what they know (content) and are able to do (skills).
- Think about how to incorporate formative assessments throughout the unit so that you and the student will have a clear picture about where they are in their progression toward mastery prior to the summative assessment.
- Choose the right assessment tool that matches the content/skill you are assessing. Every type of assessment has a particular function and, therefore, may be appropriate or inappropriate depending upon the learning outcomes you wish to have students demonstrate.



eLearning Lesson Ideas

Senior Seminar

For senior classes, transitioning to a seminar-style course is a great option and helps provide students with the opportunity to build skills they will need in college. A senior seminar is also a great way to keep seniors engaged in the learning. In a seminar class, the instructor operates as a facilitator and guide to students. The instructor can either provide the topics for students to research and discuss or can allow students to select topics related to the content on which they wish to research and present. The essence of this style is for teachers and students to confer and discuss with one another rather than focus on completion of academic tasks. Feedback and quality conversations are essential to the success of senior seminars.

Socratic Seminars

Socratic Seminars are a great option for engaging students and eliciting high-order thinking. It is also something easy for you to create for students. Post readings for students, have them write questions to ask one another, set norms and parameters for the seminar, and use Google Meet to hold the seminar (Google Meet can hold 100 people at a time). Preparing a rubric with clear guidelines and expectations to share with students prior to the seminar will help ensure high-quality responses.

Playlists/Learning Contracts/Choice Boards

Creating playlists, learning contracts, or choice boards are great ways to continue offering students choice while learning online, as this activity allows students to select certain learning activities in order to acquire essential content knowledge and skills. You can design activities that are required for students to complete and also include activities that are optional. Have a rubric that gives specifics on the characteristics and quality of work you are looking for students to produce for



each activity. This has to be clear so students understand your expectations. Creating your own example of one of the activities and setting deadlines can be beneficial. See examples below:

- [Playlist](#)
- [Choice Board](#)
- [Learning Contract](#)

Flipgrid

Flipgrid allows students to create video responses to your discussion questions or prompts. You start by creating a prompt or discussion to which you want students to respond. Just make sure your expectations for their responses are clear. Students then create a video response to the prompt that can be viewed by you and their classmates. Further, Flipgrid allows students to respond to one another, which increases connection and allows students to practice giving feedback. Flipgrid is free and easy to use. Here is a great [“how-to” tutorial](#).

Curation Projects

Curation Projects are challenging for students because they feel different from most other assignments out there. Curation is also relevant to the kinds of skills we need in the information age. A curation project would be ideal for distance learning situations. Learn more about these from The Cult of Pedagogy by clicking [here](#).

Student-Made E-books

Student-Made E-Books are a fantastic option for having students demonstrate learning. Whether they are creating an E-Book on the ethics of cloning or the

symbolism found in a set of poetry, this activity requires higher-order thinking while allowing space for creativity. It also helps them develop skills that will be



useful in the future. They are also surprisingly easy to make. Students create a PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation and then save it as a PDF to create an E-book. [This post](#) offers a ton of ideas for how these could be used.

Oral Histories

According to The Cult of Pedagogy, “these may not be relevant for many subject areas, but if you teach language arts or history, an oral history project is worth looking into.” [This article](#) explores the Voice of Witness series of books, along with their free curriculum for guiding students through their own oral history projects.

Case Studies

Case studies can be used in any content area to build a student’s research and critical thinking skills. Provide students with a case study and have them investigate and share possible solutions or outcomes. Allowing students to partner with a classmate can increase the sense of connection and continue to build the skill of collaboration but in a new environment.

Problem-Based Scenarios

Similar to case studies, providing students with a problem-based scenario requires the use of both content knowledge and skill. It also requires students to apply their learning by creating new and creative solutions to a problem. This is a great opportunity for students to build this skill in an online environment. Allowing students to collaborate and/or respond using tools like Flipgrid can increase the level of engagement.



Inquiry-Based Learning

Providing opportunities for students to develop questions is a great way to help them navigate, explore, and connect to the content. Teaching students to ask great questions and seek their own answers is an invaluable skill. There are a number of strategies that can be used to foster inquiry-based learning:

- The **Question Formulation Technique** can easily be adapted to the eLearning environment. Using Screencastify or even Canvas to post the question focus is an easy way to get the QFT going. Students can then collaborate on a Google Doc or through some other format to generate their questions. Both students and the teacher can use the questions to guide instruction on the content. To learn more about how the QFT works, you can contact Holly Martin or click [here](#) to explore the Right Question Institute.
- **KWL Charts** (Know, Want to Know, Learned) are another way for students to initiate the exploration of information they are curious about and use their own questions to guide them through their learning of the content. The teacher can also use student KWL charts to engage students, pinpoint where they are in their learning, and determine what students have learned.



eLearning Plan: Pre-K to 6

Our elementary eLearning plan focuses on communicating, instructing, and providing feedback to our students about their work. Learning will be focused around growth of essential literacy and numeracy skills through online and off-line learning opportunities. Teachers will provide learning that will be recorded and posted for students to complete during the recommended learning window. The learning sessions will be determined and communicated by grade level teams. Assignments should be posted and completed over the span of one week. It is entirely possible that teachers will suggest a recommended pacing and structure for learning throughout the week, but we also want to be sensitive to the needs and schedules of our families.

The benefit of having recorded instruction and independent work is providing families needed flexibility within the parameters of the expectations communicated weekly by teachers. Though different for every family, the recommended work should typically total between two and three hours daily and include a variety of learning opportunities across content areas and disciplines.

Required academic work will include assignments in reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and physical education, but you may also see optional learning opportunities under the heading of “flex learning.” Although “flex learning” activities will be optional, they will provide opportunities for extension in music, art, Spanish, and much more.

Planning Recommendations

Team Cohesion	Plan together and present a consistent plan for instruction across the grade.
Balance	Balance online instruction, interactive feedback, and independent practice throughout a week.
Weekly Plans	Consider a connected and collective week of instruction rather than five individual days with a daily schedule being seen as more of a suggested pacing



	guide.
Skills and Standard	Collaborate on aspects of essential instruction based on standards and skills for the coming weeks.
Simple and Familiar	Remember the most effective tool for learning is often the simplest. We want to avoid the format becoming an interference to the content.
Differentiation	Coordinate with support services to offer a balanced and cohesive experience for students. All students with 504s and IEPs will still need to be provided accommodations and services.
Flex Learning	Flex learning suggestions include optional activities and learning extensions. These will be provided by specials and counselors, but classroom teachers may link additional flex learning opportunities as well.

Pre-K Expectations

Teachers will provide learning that will be recorded and posted for students to complete during the recommended learning window. The learning sessions will be at a regularly scheduled time determined and communicated by grade level teams. Assignments should be posted and completed over the span of one week.

Instruction: Minutes per day are a combination of direct instruction and independent practice.

20 minutes daily	Emergent literacy activities, games, and challenges focus on language development, vocabulary, comprehension, and phonological awareness.
20 minutes daily	Emergent numeracy activities, games, and challenges focus on counting, sorting, and patterning.



20 minutes daily	Holistically focused activities, games, and challenges to support cognitive, physical, and social emotional development.
30 minutes daily	Use recommendations from PE to support daily exercise opportunities.
Flex Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen to read-alouds and read independently ● Play board games, puzzles, or challenges requiring strategy and critical thinking ● Promote digital citizenship through Common Sense Media ● Design and build structures with blocks or other available materials ● Connect to the arts through art, Spanish, and music extensions ● Engage in social emotional learning opportunities from counselors

Communication: Provides an overview of expectations for the week

Who	When	How
Teacher to Teacher and Support Services (Specials/PE, SPED, Coaches, etc.)	A minimum of once a week	Determined by Team
Teacher to Students	A minimum of once a week (whole group, small group, and/or individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SeeSaw ● Screencastify
Teachers to Parents	A minimum of once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Newsletter ● Phone Call ● Email

Feedback

What	When	How
------	------	-----



Feedback: responsive interaction to independent student work submitted from instructional opportunities throughout the week.	A minimum of once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SeeSaw ● Phone Call ● Sign-up Genius ● Other Sign-Up Tools
Office Hours: protected time each day for teachers to respond to questions and concerns from students and families.	A minimum of an hour daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phone Call ● Email

K-3 Expectations

Teachers will provide learning that will be recorded and posted for students to complete during the recommended learning window. The learning sessions will be at a regularly scheduled time determined and communicated by grade level teams. Assignments should be posted and completed over the span of one week. See example schedule below for suggestions.

Instruction: Minutes per day are a combination of direct instruction and independent practice.

30 minutes daily	Reading (Science/Social Studies connections as appropriate)
30 minutes daily	Writing (Science/Social Studies connections as appropriate)
30 minutes daily	Mathematics
30 minutes daily	Use recommendations from PE to support daily exercise opportunities.



Flex Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen to read-alouds and read independently ● Play board games, puzzles, or challenges requiring strategy and critical thinking ● Promote digital citizenship through Common Sense Media ● Design and build structures with blocks or other available materials ● Connect to the arts through art, Spanish, and music extensions ● Engage in social emotional learning opportunities from counselors
---------------	--

Communication: Provides an overview of expectations for the week

Who	When	How
Teacher to Teacher and Support Services (Specials/PE, SPED, Coaches, etc.)	A minimum of once a week	Determined by Team
Teacher to Students	A minimum of once a week (whole group, small group, and/or individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Google Hangout ● Google Classroom ● SeeSaw ● Screencastify
Teachers to Parents	A minimum of once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Newsletter ● Phone Call ● Email

Feedback

What	When	How
Feedback: responsive interaction to independent student work submitted from instructional opportunities throughout	A minimum of once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Google Hangout ● Google Classroom ● SeeSaw ● Phone Call ● Sign-up Genius



the week.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Other Sign-Up Tools
Office Hours: protected time each day for teachers to respond to questions and concerns from students and families.	A minimum of an hour daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Google Hangout ● Phone Call ● Email

Grades 4-6 Expectations

Teachers will provide learning that will be recorded and posted for students to complete during the recommended learning window. The learning sessions will be at a regularly scheduled time determined and communicated by grade level teams. Assignments should be posted and completed over the span of one week. See example schedule below for suggestions.

Instruction: Minutes per day are a combination of direct instruction and independent practice. No more than two subjects per day.

Language Arts	Provide instruction for 2 sessions/blocks/workshops for a given week
Math	Provide instruction for 2 sessions/blocks/workshops for a given week
Science	Provide instruction for 2 sessions/blocks/workshops for a given week
Social Studies	Provide instruction for 2 sessions/blocks/workshops for a given week
PE	Use recommendations from PE to support daily exercise opportunities.
Flex Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Listen to read-alouds and read independently



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Play board games, puzzles, or challenges requiring strategy and critical thinking ● Promote digital citizenship through Common Sense Media ● Design and build structures with blocks or other available materials ● Connect to the arts through art, Spanish, and music extensions ● Engage in social emotional learning opportunities from counselors
--	--

Communication: Provides an overview of expectations for the week

Who	When	How
Teacher to Teacher and Support Services (Specials/PE, SPED, Coaches, etc.)	A minimum of once a week	Determined by Team
Teacher to Students	A minimum of once a week (whole group, small group, and/or individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Canvas (5th, 6th) ● Google Hangout ● Google Classroom (4th) ● SeeSaw ● Screencastify
Teachers to Parents	A minimum of once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Newsletter ● Phone Call ● Email

Feedback

What	When	How
Feedback: responsive interaction to independent student work submitted from	A minimum of once a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Google Hangout ● Google Classroom ● SeeSaw ● Phone Call



instructional opportunities throughout the week.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Sign-up Genius● Other Sign-Up Tools
Office Hours: protected time each day for teachers to respond to questions and concerns from students and families.	A minimum of an hour daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Google Hangout● Phone Call● Email



eLearning Plan: Grades 7 to 12

Secondary teachers will focus on two words to inform their approach to eLearning: flexible and essential. Teachers will work hard but give themselves and their students lots of grace. They also will refrain from overloading their students and prioritize their command of essential learning items. Instruction will follow a set schedule that allows teachers to touch base with their students without infringing upon other coursework. The sample schedule is below:

Monday/Wednesday

- 8 -8:50 a.m. - 2nd period
- 9-9:50 a.m. - 4th period
- 10-10:50 a.m. - 6th period
- 11-11:50 a.m. - 8th period (HS only)
- 1-3 p.m. - Office Hours

Tuesday/Thursday

- 8-8:50 a.m. - 1st period
- 9-9:50 a.m. - 3rd period
- 10-10:50 a.m. - 5th period
- 11-11:50 a.m. - 7th period
- 1-3 p.m. - Office Hours

Friday: Check in with students/office hours

The designated class times may be used by teachers for live instruction or group interaction, or they may be left open for students to complete activities. All assignments need to be posted by Monday at 8 a.m. and due Friday by the end of the day.

However, not every student and teacher will be logged online in live virtual classes Monday to Thursday, nor are teachers just assigning work for the week.



Grading

Pre-K to 6

The upcoming transition to an eLearning platform highlights the importance of differentiating between a system for grading and a system for feedback. While grading is an important part of a system for feedback, our transition makes it difficult for a comprehensive grade to adequately reflect student growth over the fourth nine-weeks. For this reason we plan to adopt a pass/fail model as the summative “grade” that is recorded on the final report card for the fourth nine-weeks.

K-3 already uses a standards-based grading model that utilizes a “plus” to indicate mastery of a standard and a “minus” to indicate that a student has not met the standard yet. The format is largely adaptable to a pass/fail mindset. The continued use of such a similar structure won’t dramatically alter the feedback or grading system, so teachers will enter a plus or minus for each standard as usual.

Grades 4-6 will adapt their more traditional grades-based system to a pass/fail system for content covered in the fourth nine-weeks. While a more simplified system will help us navigate the number of variables in our current situation, it is not overly descriptive of a student’s specific progress or growth over this period. That’s why it will be so critical for teachers to provide more direct, consistent feedback on assignments that is more representative of our traditional expectations. Put simply, even though a “pass” will be recorded as the final grade for the fourth nine-weeks, teachers will continue to grade assignments and offer descriptive feedback that reflects a more specific grade (like an A, B, or C) on submitted work and assessments.

Grades K-6 will use a consistent, ongoing system of feedback throughout the grading period, and teachers will protect a week in May to conference with parents and offer an opportunity to discuss student growth and continuing needs moving forward. The combination of efforts lessens the anxiety typically



associated with grades during this complicated time while meeting the expectations of our students and community by providing direct feedback for continued growth.

Example 4th-6th Grade Report Card:

	1st 9 weeks	2nd 9 weeks	SEM 1	3rd 9 weeks	4th weeks	SEM 2	Year AVG
Reading	92	94	93	90	P	P	P

Grades 7 to 12

Much thought has been given to how we should approach grading when we transition to eLearning. We have settled on knowing that people are more important than numbers and how we approach our students will be more important than any process we implement. We know that a student’s grades should not suffer or decrease due to any challenges of virtual learning.

The impact of the global pandemic is creating transitions for students, as well as teachers. With those key factors in mind, we need to do everything we can to make sure we extend learning, best assess how our students master the essential standards, and love and support our students through this process.

Teachers are instructed to grade according to their current and familiar practices focusing only on essential standards. Semester grades will be determined based on an average of the third and fourth 9-week grading periods. Semester averages will not fall below the student’s 3rd 9-weeks average, nor will semester exams be administered.

If a student failed a third 9-weeks class, teachers will use discretion in creating opportunities for credit recovery. Our teachers are exceptional professionals who are well-equipped to support our students who did not successfully complete third



9-weeks work. This current grading period is an opportunity for teachers to help students extend and improve their learning.