



PROVIDENCE

An Independent Christian K-12 College Preparatory School

Remote Learning

Updated April 2, 2020 (see also footnotes for revision history)

Dear PCCA Parents,

We love our community of believers learning together, and we are confident that much good can come out even now from our current circumstances. We value how our model allows us to partner with parents in all phases of education, and we are excited to engage in remote learning together.

Thank you for being flexible, positive, and understanding as we model for our children that even challenges have aspects of blessing. Our God is sovereign over wind and waves!

Distance learning will be a very unique adventure for our students of all ages. Even as we all navigate the practical disruptions of our current world, we will exercise new learning, new skills, new tools, and a spirit of perseverance, overcoming, and exploration.

Here are some important details:

For All Grades

We are growing the learning toolkit with a few pieces of powerful gear. When we go online on Monday, March 30, the key new tools will be Zoom and Google Classroom.

Zoom is a global business and educational video conferencing and recording platform. Its ease-of-use has made it a leader in this space. A key feature is that Zoom works on smartphones, tablets, and computers. As an aside, the 3rd-6th grade robotics class has already started using Zoom!

Google Classroom is an online space that houses a variety of teaching content, including teacher-posted links to media content. Older students will be invited to join Google Classrooms that correspond to each of their core subjects, while parents of younger students will have a Google Classroom homeroom that corresponds to their real-world homeroom levels.

We will be sending out clear directions about how to download these free tools prior to March 30, and we know that hundreds of schools have picked these two products because they offer straightforward, but powerful, remote learning features. Alongside Zoom and Google Classroom, we will continue using existing tools, such as RenWeb and email correspondence with teachers.

We understand that remote classes will have a learning curve for everyone in our school; grace and flexibility are the keys for success! Teachers are taking on new skills outside of her or his comfort zone, and so are parents and students, but we can absolutely thrive together if we accept that some hiccups are bound to happen when any of us tries something new. We will learn, improve, and adapt! Maybe a stray cat or two will come across the screen behind the instructor, or a dog will bark at an inopportune moment, but we are a family and this will come together with continued growth for all.

One anxiety may be that not every student in a family has a computer. We understand! Fortunately, we are adopting a schedule plan that can be adapted in a few ways. First, our distance learning tools are compatible with smartphones, tablets, or computers. This will allow families great flexibility in accessing content across multiple devices. Second, younger students will have limited online times; that is, most of the grammar content may be reviewed at any point throughout the day rather than at one specific time. Third, the school has a limited number of MacBook Air laptops and Apple iPads available to lend out for an extended time at no charge. We will prioritize families with no devices first, then families with no computers or tablets (only smartphones), then families with multiple upper grade students, then other multi-sibling families. Be assured that we will find a solution together if your family needs help securing devices by contacting either Mr. Hopkins or Mrs. Abbott. Fourth, even live stream classes will be recorded for later viewing for instances when students are not able to log in at a scheduled time.

For 6th - 12th Grade

For upper students plus 6th graders, we will be using a “synchronous schedule.” This means teachers and students will maintain the same schedule online as in real life. Virtual learning will be at the same time of day as it is currently. Students will structure their days to closely match what is already happening in instruction and homework time nearly hour-for-hour. (Note: In the virtual PCCA grammar community, all 6th grade students will be considered part of the T/Th. track in order to allow for uploads on Mondays. As a help to parents, 6th grade schedules will be sent out on March 30 as a reminder of how the day is already structured.)

For example, if I study geometry during second period on M/T/Th., then I will remotely learn during that same time at home. My teacher will be leading class via Zoom video, and my classmates will be virtually present, too.

Synchronous schedule will apply to core subjects of math, English, science, history, plus foreign language, logic, health, and rhetoric. We will also schedule some virtual upper chapels at the usual time and day! In contrast, enrichment classes and extra-curricular classes will not meet real-time, but will have optional activities sent home.

We are still exploring whether it is practical to continue offering Wednesday and Friday upper tutoring labs in a virtual setting, and we will have more direction on these elements later.

We appreciate that everyone in our community will need some time to adjust. Teachers will seek to “major in the majors,” understanding that remote learning has unique opportunities and challenges.

For 3rd - 5th Grade

With greater parent oversight each day, there is NOT an expectation of hour-for-hour teaching. Students will typically have 2 to 4 hours of learning on a given day. Most activities and lessons will be completed at the student's pace and following their needed schedule.

Teachers will strive to model flexibility so that there is no added stress for children. The emphasis will be on core subjects and big ideas, and how learning is a joyful exploration!

Teachers will post specific core lessons in math, language arts, science, and history prior to each school day. Teachers will modify blue sheets to include experiential hands-on projects at home, not exclusively “book learning.” This is an adventure for young learners!

For 3rd through 5th graders, we will primarily use pre-taped online modules. These will typically be posted using a link to pre-recorded videos our teachers will develop in Zoom. Parents will have flexibility in working through the various modules throughout the day.

In the virtual PCCA grammar community, all students will be considered part of the T/Th. track in order to allow for uploads on Mondays.

At these grade levels, part of the Zoom-based video content will be geared to parents covering key ideas and suggestions, while part of the content will be for limited student viewings. Occasional live video chats will be available so students can “see” the teacher and share what is going on in their lives with friends!

Enrichment classes and foreign language will have optional activities sent home.

For K - 2nd Grade

In many ways, remote learning for our youngest Patriots will be like other grammar students.

With greater parent oversight each day, there is NOT an expectation of hour-for-hour teaching. Students will typically have 2 to 4 hours of learning on a given day. Most activities and lessons will be completed at the student's pace and following their needed schedule.

Teachers will strive to model flexibility so that there is no added stress for children. The emphasis will be on core subjects and big ideas, and how learning is a joyful exploration!

For kindergarten through 2nd graders, we will primarily use pre-taped online modules for parents. These will typically be posted using a link to pre-recorded videos our teachers will develop in Zoom. Parents will have flexibility in working through the various modules throughout the day.

In the virtual PCCA grammar community, all students will be considered part of the T/Th. track in order to allow for uploads on Mondays.

At these grade levels, most of the Zoom-based video content will be geared to parents covering key ideas and suggestions, while part of the content will be for limited student viewings. Occasional live video chats will be available so students can engage peers.

Enrichment classes and foreign language will have optional activities sent home.

Key Dates

- Wednesday, March 18 - Spring Break begins
- Friday, March 20 - Instructions for downloading Zoom will go out to families. (Funny side note: Coach Jeff Daniels took about six minutes to download Zoom to his phone, and he said, "If I can do it, anyone can do it.") Google Classroom invitations begin to go out to families.
- Monday, March 30 - Back from break. Families may explore navigating the Google Classroom and Zoom functions. Core teachers will be available by email, as well.
- Tuesday, March 31 - Remote instruction begins in earnest. Stock up on ice cream at home.

In some ways, March 30 is like another "first day of school." Just like in August, we may get lost on the way to class, we may be tardy to some subjects, and we may feel a little confused by all that is new. We can do this well with grace for each other!

If you have need of a device or have other initial questions, please email your principal.

We are so lucky to work in this amazing mission field, and we count it a blessing to work together with our incredible families.

In Christ,

David Smith, Mark Hopkins, and Chelsea Abbott
PCCA

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I expect for our first day of remote learning on Monday, March 30?

On March 30 we should probably expect some small victories that rightly feel big, some fears, some fun, and some unknowns. We are embarking together on a remote learning adventure just like most students across our country are doing this month! This will probably feel a bit like the first day of school. There may be some butterflies, some may get lost on the way to virtual class, and some may feel disoriented at first.

The actual teaching load for older students will be light on this day by design in order to become familiar with remote learning tools. For sixth grade and younger, we are simplifying remote learning by considering all to be on the T/Th. track, so Monday, March 30, will be a day when grammar teachers have the chance to upload teaching modules for later in the week.

In our loving school community, this will be a time for learning new skills in a safe place to struggle and for teachers, parents, and students each to have grace for each other. If we model perseverance and patience, our children will notice! Let's remember the power of humor, too!

Does every student need her or his own computer?

No. Sixth through twelfth grade students will each need their own device during teaching days, but that device may be a smartphone, a tablet, a laptop, or a desktop computer. Almost all upper students already have access to one or more of these devices in their homes, and the remote learning video conference platform is compatible with many different products.

Kindergarten through 5th grade parents will need a device for watching pre-taped remote learning modules sent out from teachers throughout the week. However, those lessons will be uploaded for viewing when convenient for families rather than at a specific time of day.

If you have not already done so, you may also wish to consult your internet provider and device maker on how to make sure that your home content filter is set to an appropriate filter level for your child. If for some reason your family has no internet access at all, please contact your principal to discuss possible alternative options.

For families who do not have internet devices, PCCA also has a number of MacBook Air laptops and iPhone tablets that are available. We will prioritize families with no devices first, then families with no computers or tablets (only smartphones), then families with multiple upper grade students, then other multi-sibling families. If you need a device, please send an email to your principal. We will be glad to work with you to help!

What does remote learning “school” look like?

For older students 6th grade through 12th grade, remote learning will closely resemble the structure of learning already in place. Following a “synchronous schedule,” students will engage in remote learning via a virtual classroom led by the teacher in a live video format. For these students, classes will run on a synchronous schedule in math, English, science, history, foreign language, plus graduation specific classes of logic, worldview, health, and rhetoric. Other classes that are more elective and enrichment in nature will have suggested ideas that can be done at home at a day and time of your choice; for example, photography students may be sent direction for a “picture of the week” to compose.

For younger students K through 5th grade, there is NOT an expectation of hour-for-hour learning. Teachers will upload lesson modules that may be viewed mostly on-demand when convenient. Much of that content will be directed to help parents focus on big ideas and key skills. Of course, children are social, and we hope to schedule periodic live video chats with teachers and classmates from time to time to catch up and share with each other, but screen time will be far more limited. Grace and flexibility both directions will be key!

To facilitate Monday video uploading for teachers, all K through 6th students will be considered to be on the T/Th. track, although K-5th is again mostly on-demand module content with greater flexibility for viewing.

For some families, parents may be interested in pursuing all extra content, modules, and projects. For other families, especially those with multiple siblings, focusing only on the key tasks will be important. Effort will be made to be clear about what is “must do” to stay on track versus what is “may do” extras.

For all ages, having a sense of routine, whether established by parents or through a synchronous schedule, and a space in the home that is largely free of major distractions will help. As you already do for other family appointments, once you have the routine in place after a few days, hold your child accountable for being on time to scheduled online meetings as much as possible.

What if I miss a class?

We understand that device sharing or technical glitches may prevent an older student from joining a class at the designated time. While 6th-12th graders should strive to attend class as scheduled, if that should happen, simply email the instructor, who may invite an older student to another section of that class later in the day or who can provide a taped version of the lesson. If remote learning persists due to environmental conditions, we will begin more formally assessing class participation over time, but we understand that not everything will go right in the virtual world, just like a flat tire might delay arrival to physical classrooms!

Is there a dress code?

When attending a live video class, upper students plus 6th graders should wear PCCA spiritwear. More formal Lands' End school apparel is allowed but not expected nor required. If remote learning lasts several weeks, then we will also be scheduling themed spirit days to break up the routine!

School is still in session, even though we are shifting to remote learning. For this reason, the Student Handbook appearance guidelines are still in effect (sorry, no turquoise hair dye until summer break!).

How long will remote learning last?

While we are closely monitoring federal and state health guidelines, no one can say for certain when remote learning will be halted and in-person classes, practices, rehearsals, and competitions may resume. Because of these rapidly changing conditions, we will be assessing future weeks as health and safety information becomes updated and available. We are aware that Governor Hutchinson recently extended public school closures through April 17, and we will follow that guidance at this time. We should all be prepared for remote learning until such time as emerging health information makes clear these precautions are no longer vital.

How will I take quizzes and tests?

Teachers may assess knowledge in a wide variety of ways. Teachers will sometimes use the honor system for parents to administer tests or quizzes, sometimes ask for work to be emailed back or answer keys photographed and sent in, ask for a project or paper instead of a chapter test, or even use online quizzes at times. We are asking teachers to drill down on key content in core subjects.

How will I connect with my teacher?

For older students on synchronous schedules, teachers will be leading classes live on teaching days and able to take questions just like in a regular classroom.

For all students, teachers are available by email or may be able to schedule a one-on-one video chat, too, as needed for a virtual parent-teacher conference.

Are Wednesday and Friday tutoring labs available via remote learning?

We are still evaluating whether upper labs will be offered on those days.

What remote learning tools will I need?

As described in the overview letter, we are adding two powerful tools to the school in order to facilitate remote learning: Zoom, a video conferencing platform, and Google Classroom, a cloud-based space for organizing educational content, resources, and links.

Step-by-step instructions for downloading Zoom and accessing Google Classroom will be sent out in the coming days (targeting Friday, March 20). With these instructions will be some resources for further help if stuck, as well as some contact information to set up a call or even an in-person appointment if still no luck downloading!

Google Classroom invitations will begin going out via email on March 20; however, some invitations will take a few more days, so if you do not see all of your classes on March 20, do not be alarmed.

These products are free of charge for parents to use.

What if the internet shuts down?

With nearly three-quarter of the nation's schools moving to remote learning (National Public Radio 3/18/20) and many office workers now working from home, the communication infrastructure may be strained at times. Most importantly, do not panic! We all understand these days present unusual challenges for everyone. If the internet grid or Zoom or Google Classroom should experience more than intermittent outages, then we will shift more classes to

pre-taped content for viewing on demand and away from live video feeds to provide greater flexibility in spreading out download demand across more of the week. In this time of uncertainty, having familiar teachers even if pre-taped will hopefully help a bit.

Will I still receive blue sheets?

Yes! During the first week of remote learning, we are asking teachers to post blue sheets both to RenWeb and also to Google Classroom. If remote learning should continue for an extended time, we will likely migrate the blue sheets to Google Classrooms only as the remote learning hub. Blue sheets may look a little different perhaps as teachers modify for remote learning, but they will continue to be a vital tool for mapping out a week!

Do I need to print at home?

As we transition to remote learning, some amount of printing will almost certainly need to occur. However, we are asking teachers to consider how to trim back on at-home printing as possible and shift some work to online only or to using already printed resources at home when practical.

Will PCCA hold commencement?

In light of fast-changing health guidance, PCCA has not yet made any final decision about hosting an in-person ceremony. We are monitoring health and safety guidelines week by week to determine if and when it is wise to resume onsite activities including group events like graduation. Alternative plans are being reviewed if necessary.

Revision History

March 16, 2020 - Posted

March 19 - Added FAQs page

April 2 - Updated FAQs

- Confirmed remote learning through 4/17
- Commencement planning