



WESTMINSTER K-12 VIRTUAL ACADEMY

where online education is personal

Parent and Student Handbook

1. Establish routines and expectations.

At school, your child is used to having set routines for lessons, classes, and lunch. One way to help your child at home is to create a set routine, whenever possible. We suggest students begin their studies at 8:00 am, just as if they were on campus. Keep normal bedtime routines for younger children and expect the same from your MS- and HS-aged students, too. (Don't let them stay up late and sleep in!) We strongly encourage families to set these routines as soon as distance learning is implemented. Make the schedule work for your family, but be consistent. WVA will provide a suggested daily schedule for students.

2. Define the physical space for your child's study.

Giving students a dedicated workspace helps them stay organized, and reinforces that they are in school-mode. Making sure the workspace is in a quiet environment can help your child focus; music, television, pets, and other children can cause unnecessary distractions. We recommend this be a public/family space, not in a child's bedroom. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and have a strong wireless internet signal, if possible. Above all, it should be a space where parents are present and monitoring their children's learning.

3. Monitor communications from your children's teachers.

Teachers will communicate with parents through email, when and as necessary. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence.

4. Begin and end each day with a check-in.

Parents and students are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, discuss:

- What are you learning today?

- What are your learning targets or goals?
- How will you spend your time?
- What resources or support do you need?

Parents may even consider co-creating a visual checklist that includes checkboxes. This tool is an excellent way to stay organized and teaches students how to plan their work independently. Also, it can help you support your child as they complete their assignments. This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that's normal!), but they should nevertheless. As mentioned in tip #1, establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day.

5. Be active in the learning process.

In the course of a regular school day at WVA, students engage with other students or adults dozens if not hundreds of times. These social interactions are opportunities for processing, extending, and consolidating learning. Discussing their schoolwork is a great way to stay involved and during distance learning, it can be even more beneficial for your child's studies. Ask specific questions when you are asking your child about their assignments. Here are some examples of specific questions:

1. What is one interesting thing you learned today in [math]?
2. Can you show me how you solved your most challenging activity today?
3. What do you need help with today?
4. What is one thing that you know today that you didn't know yesterday?
5. What are two things that other classmates asked on Google Meet?

Studies show that students learn more when they talk about or explain what they are learning. So, don't worry if you don't understand all of the content in your child's lessons. Letting them explain it to you is an opportunity for your child to build confidence in what they've learned. They should feel free to do so in English or your home language.

6. Encourage physical activity and/or exercise.

In school, your child has natural breaks between classes, that's why reminding them to take breaks between assignments is a great idea. We recommend five to fifteen minutes of off-screen breaks per hour, as well as a few "recess" breaks for younger students. Break-time is a perfect time to be physically active; encourage your child to stand up and stretch, take a walk outside, or play catch for 15 minutes. It can do wonders in maintaining academic focus. You may even want to consider planning extra time outdoors in the evenings. Also, think also

about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook – expect them to pitch in!

7. Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry.

It is imperative for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult though it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide. Please contact the mental health department, your child's teacher, or administration if your child needs emotional support.

8. Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions.

Students will miss seeing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Social interaction is an important part of your child's well-being, and during distance learning, they may be experiencing less than normal. Please remind your child to reach out to his or her classmates and friends from school. Having your child have socially distant, safe interactions with friends at your comfort level is one way for them to have social interactions and a break from screen time. And even though you will be working to balance screen time with school and social interactions, reaching out by phone, video chat, or email are ways for them to stay socially connected with friends and classmates. If you have older students, keep in mind that they will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok, or Facebook are not official, school-sanctioned channels of communication. WVA asks parents to monitor their children's use of social media. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others. There will be a zero tolerance policy for cyberbullying.

9. Dress and act appropriately.

Students are expected to follow Westminster Public Schools dress code while on Zoom or any other video software. They are expected to treat each other and their teachers with respect.