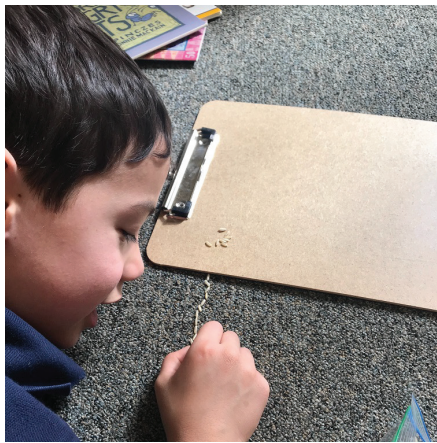




SENECA ACADEMY

Preserving the Wonder of Childhood



Distance Learning Plan
Revised March 2020

Distance Learning Plan

Seneca Academy

Overview

Seneca Academy is committed to delivering a dynamic educational experience for our students. There are times, however, when external circumstances, including a world-wide health and humanitarian crisis, impinge upon our ability to deliver our program on site. In these circumstances, as a school and as a community, we must find alternative strategies for teaching and learning. The following Distance Learning Plan lays out the foundation for ensuring the continuity of learning and intellectual engagement for our students.

Seneca Academy's Approach to Distance Learning

Seneca Academy's International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) is centered around the premise that children learn best when engaged in collaborative, transdisciplinary inquiry that inspires curiosity, connection, and action. Our approach to teaching is based on an understanding that students need to feel connected to the material, to each other, and, perhaps most importantly, to their teacher. Finally, as part of our philosophy, we also believe that in order for children to thrive and grow in our program, we must be a source of community and support for our parents and families.

In contemplating how best to shift our program to a distance learning model, we began by asking ourselves, "How can we offer children and families what they need from afar, in a way that, first and foremost, protects the sense of community and relatedness that is fundamental to all we do?" It is our hope that as you familiarize yourselves with our plan, you will see that we have put our hearts into ensuring that we are not merely delivering material and activities to you, but truly trying to maintain the essence of what makes being a part of a Seneca classroom and the Seneca "village" special.

Goals for Distance Learning

The goals for our Distance Learning Plan are to keep our children engaged so that they can learn and grow, while also providing them with meaningful opportunities for connection and community. Rather than ask children at both the elementary and early childhood levels to be tied to a screen, we will provide opportunities for them to read, write, draw, share ideas, explore, create, play, and move.

Teachers will use familiar and predictable structures to meet the needs of our children, which we also believe will help provide them with comfort in such uncertain times. Each day, our children will receive a warm greeting from their classroom teachers, much as they would see on a regular school day. For preschoolers, this will take the form of a live “morning meeting” via Zoom* on the days they regularly attend. For elementary students, this could take the form of a live meeting using Google Meet, a “morning message,” and/or lessons/learning missions from their teachers, including specials. In varying forms, depending on the age of the child, teachers will then communicate the daily goals to their students. Again, in varying ways depending on the age of the student, they will be given opportunities to share their work with teachers and receive age-appropriate feedback. Learning is an iterative process, and we will be looking to fine-tune the ways we incorporate that into our methods.

Teachers will also be communicating daily/weekly learning goals to parents. For younger students, these may involve activities to be done jointly with children, virtual meet-ups with teachers, or suggestions for activities where a child may be able to practice playing/learning more independently. For older children, there will be more activities that they will be able to do independently, with some support to create routines and spaces to work and to provide consultation along the way.

In all cases, both teachers and the administrative team will be here to support you so that together we can all figure out a way to implement these plans in a balanced way that gives children what they need while taking into account the idiosyncratic needs of each family, including parent work demands. To ensure that the “village” is there for you, including being able to incorporate and address your feedback and ideas, we will be hosting regular “What to Expect/How to Survive” sessions with Dr. Parker. In addition, we will look for opportunities to facilitate social interactions and virtual meet-ups for members of the village.

Preschool Family Guidelines to Prepare for Distance Learning

Set up a daily schedule and routine that works for your family.

Children need routines and predictability to feel safe. In these uncertain and stressful times, those routines will be especially important, not just for your child but also for you. Know that with the exception of scheduled morning meetings, the activities that your teachers will be providing can be done at a pace and time that works for you. The activities will include all the learning domains listed below, often in an integrated way - the same way we teach at school each day. As we move forward, teachers will begin to offer more opportunities for check-ins or live interactions with your child. Teachers will be available via email during class times. You will receive more information about this from your child's teacher.

Plan for your day to include opportunities for your child to help with chores, be outdoors, and have lightly supervised, unstructured play as well as downtime.

This is a great opportunity to help your children learn how to be bored and be part of something bigger than themselves. Try inviting your child to help you plan for the day. They may be feeling like nothing in their lives is within their control. Having some age-appropriate choices will help.

These are trying times. Use screens judiciously, but do not feel guilty if you need them to put your oxygen mask on.

Know that we will primarily use screen time to help your child stay engaged with their teachers and connected with each other. Social distancing will feel isolating to children and adults and the use of technology to maintain those much needed contacts outweighs the concerns we focus on in more typical times. Your child will also not be immune to the stresses associated with this crisis and they will need you to help them feel calm and ready to embrace this new "adventure." It is in their best interest for you to take care of yourself and, if some screen time helps you do that, then that is not only OK but helpful to them.

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Preschool Family Guidelines to Prepare for Distance Learning (cont.)

Remember that learning at this age should feel like play.

Our priority as a school is to support your child's social-emotional wellbeing in these unprecedented times as well to help maintain and grow your child's curiosity and sense of excitement about wondering, exploring and discovering. The activities that our teachers will be providing will start with that framework, but will also provide your children with opportunities to develop their literacy and math skills. We hope that as you engage with them, you can support that sense of fun and "flow." If your child is resistant or losing interest, it is perfectly ok and even advisable to switch to something different and try again later. Finally, please remember that productive struggle is essential to learning; allow your child to problem-solve on their own, stepping in only if necessary. If your child becomes discouraged or overwhelmed, encourage them to communicate with their teacher, or contact the teacher directly yourself, depending on your child's age. Teachers will be eager to help.

Preschool Distance Learning Guidelines for PDO, 3's, and 4's

Developmental Areas and Activity Examples	Approximate Time Per Day (less for younger children, more for older; will vary by child and family schedule)
Reading: literacy activities; games and challenges focused on language development, vocabulary, comprehension, and phonological awareness.	10-30 minutes
Math: numeracy activities; games and challenges focused on counting, sorting, patterns, shapes and problem-solving.	10-30 minutes
Play/Wonder/Discover/Connect: games and activities created to inspire curiosity and exploration as well as to support cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development.	10-30 minutes

Elementary Family Guidelines to Prepare for Distance Learning

Learning Routines

Help your child establish a regular routine for daily learning, including regular bedtime, wake-up time, meals, breaks, and play time. Seneca lessons will be available every morning to help you and your child plan for the day. You should also designate a quiet space in your home for study. The optimal space will depend on your child's age; no matter what their age, we recommend a space that is close to where adults can be available for supervision and/or consultation. Please note that the level of structure in terms of scheduled lesson times provided by teachers will vary by age and requirement of parental involvement. For younger students, "real time" interactions will be scheduled taking into account the potential for competing demands on parents.

Support and Communication with Teachers

Stay engaged in your child's learning by asking them questions and inviting them to share their progress while, at the same time, encouraging independence. Productive struggle is essential to learning; allow your child to problem-solve on their own, stepping in only if necessary. If your child becomes discouraged or overwhelmed, encourage them to communicate with their teacher, or contact the teacher directly yourself, depending on your child's age. Teachers will be eager to help.

Social, Emotional, and Physical Well-Being

Maintaining well-being is an important part of managing any sort of change to routine. Help your child stay in contact with their friends. Encourage phone conversations and other peer interactions through virtual means, including study groups where appropriate. Encourage games, free play, free reading, and other favorite activities outside of study time. Include physical movement and exercise every day; physical activity can help reduce stress and improve concentration. Parents should monitor student stress levels and reach out to Dr. Parker at mparker@senecaacademy.org for advice as needed.

Technology Resources at Home

All students are expected to participate in distance learning during a campus closure. Our expectation is that every family will utilize a computer or tablet connected to the internet; families will need access to a printer. If your family needs help accessing these tools, please send an email to Bethany Beams at support@senecastudent.org.

Elementary Distance Learning Guidelines

Elementary students are expected to participate in all remote learning activities and complete all assignments. If a child is not able to participate for any reason, please let their teacher know and we will do our best to accommodate and make up work as appropriate, just as we would if they were absent for school. This will allow us to keep proper attendance records as required by the Maryland State Department of Education.

Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2

Subject Area	Approximate Time
Inquiry (combination of activities, exploration, experiments, or projects focused on concepts, skills, or content of unit; integrated across all academic and special areas)	15-30+ minutes
Writing (writing lesson, task, or prompt focused on a genre, technique, grammar, or strategy followed by independent writing; handwriting practice)	15-30 minutes
Guided Reading (reading lesson or task focused on building decoding strategies or comprehension skills)	15-20 minutes
Independent Reading (reading "just right" books)	15-20 minutes
Word Study (word work focused on phonics, spelling, and vocabulary)	15-20 minutes
Math (math lesson, activities, games, or worksheets focused on number sense, addition/subtraction, or problem-solving strategies)	15-30 minutes
Outdoor Time/Physical Activity (outdoor free play, nature walk/collection, sketching, yoga, etc.)	60+ minutes
Specials (activities in PE, Art, Spanish, or Music)	15-20 minutes
Chores (age-appropriate tasks around the home)	15-20 minutes
Creative/Project Time (exploring topic of interest, community service, crafts, building, STEAM, etc.)	Flexible

Grade 3 and Grade 4

Subject Area	Approximate Time Daily
Inquiry (combination of activities, exploration, experiments, or projects focused on concepts, skills, or content of unit; integrated across all academic and special areas)	100+ minutes total of shaded blocks below
Writing (writing lesson, task, or prompt focused on a genre, technique, strategy, or inquiry topic followed by independent writing; handwriting or keyboarding practice)	30 minutes
Reading (reading lesson or task focused on strengthening decoding or comprehension skills and/or exploring inquiry topic/research)	30 minutes
Independent Reading (reading "just right" books)	20 minutes
Word Study (phonics, spelling, vocabulary, or grammar)	20 minutes
Math (math lesson, activities, games, or worksheets focused on concepts, skills, or content of unit)	30-45 minutes
Outdoor Time/Physical Activity (outdoor free play, nature walk/collection, sketching, yoga, etc.)	60+ minutes
Specials (activities in PE, Art, Spanish, or Music)	30 minutes/class
Chores (age-appropriate tasks around the home)	15-20 minutes
Creative/Project Time (exploring topic of interest, community service, crafts, building, STEAM, etc.)	Flexible

Grade 5

Subject Area	Approximate Time Daily
Inquiry (combination of activities, exploration, experiments, or projects focused on concepts, skills, or content of unit; exhibition project; integrated across all academic and special areas)	120+ minutes total of shaded blocks below
Writing (writing lesson, task, or prompt focused on a genre, technique, strategy, or inquiry/exhibition topic followed by independent writing; keyboarding practice)	30+ minutes
Reading (reading lesson or task focused on strengthening comprehension skills and exploring/researching inquiry/exhibition topic)	30+ minutes
Independent Reading (reading "just right" books)	30 minutes
Word Study (phonics, spelling, vocabulary, or grammar)	30 minutes
Math (math lesson, activities, games, or worksheets focused on concepts, skills, or content of unit)	45+ minutes
Outdoor Time/Physical Activity (outdoor free play, nature walk/collection, sketching, yoga, etc.)	60+ minutes
Specials (activities in PE, Art, Spanish, or Music)	30+ minutes/class
Chores (age-appropriate tasks around the home)	20+ minutes
Creative/Project Time (exploring topic of interest, community service, crafts, building, STEAM, etc.)	Flexible

If You Have Questions...

For assignment-specific questions	Classroom or specials teacher
For technology support questions or questions regarding a particular digital platform	Bethany Beams at support@senecastudent.org
For all other questions regarding distance learning, emotional well-being, etc.	Dr. Michelle Parker at mparker@senecaacademy.org