



## Concord Academy Distance-Learning Plan March - April 2020

In challenging moments, as in all moments, our mission guides our work at Concord Academy.

### Concord Academy Mission Statement

We are a community animated by love of learning,  
diverse and striving for equity,  
with common trust as our foundation.

Honoring each individual, we challenge and expand  
our understanding of ourselves and the world  
through purposeful collaboration and creative engagement.

We cultivate empathy, integrity, and responsibility  
to build a more just and sustainable future.

As we lean into the unfamiliar work of distance learning as a community, we are all called upon to keep central our guiding spirit of love of learning, our pursuit of equity, and our foundational value of common trust. Each of us must center these values in our community engagement to maintain the culture we love across physical distance. These plans for distance learning are guided by the mission. They also center the physical, social, and emotional well-being of each member of our community; create structure for an invigorating and rigorous academic experience for all students; and maintain relationships to support students at an uncertain moment. This distance learning plan is not just about covering the curriculum while we are apart: it is just as much about providing connection and structure in uncertain times.

While this may not be our ideal learning environment, we continue to strive to deliver on our mission and to create a challenging and supportive environment for our students. We acknowledge that the distance-learning experience won't replicate the CA classroom experience, yet we seek to maintain as many of the features that students and teachers value as we can: personal connections, the development of higher-order thinking skills, creative and



thought-provoking assignments, individual choice and student-driven inquiry, and collaborative and cooperative work. In this model, teachers and students will continue to be in close communication and productive engagement. Indeed, there is opportunity in an unfamiliar setting to imagine and reimagine in partnership. Students and teachers will be learning together, a powerful, and empowering, model of education.

## Goals of the distance-learning plan

The main objectives of this distance-learning plan are twofold:

- 1) Continue the academic learning experience such that students are able to complete their coursework for the spring semester, and;
- 2) Provide opportunities for social connection and community touchpoints to support the well-being of community members.

## Distance-learning schedule

*This schedule creates time for both synchronous and asynchronous learning across time zones. It makes space for the important work of continuing classes and supporting the well-being of our students through regular synchronous opportunities to check in.*

1. Students meet synchronously (in real time) with each class once a week. Each block has two slots on its given day to account for the waking hours of students in different time zones. Students and teachers work together to determine which slot students will attend; the decision is based on time zone, not student flexibility, where necessary so that students are not in class before 8:00 a.m. or after 11:45 p.m. local time. Where there are exceptions to this timeframe, teachers ensure that students can meet class expectations asynchronously and access recordings of synchronous meetings.
2. Teachers use “free” spaces for office hours and have office hours one morning and one afternoon free slot per week. During office hours, teachers are online and answering emails. They can also choose to use Zoom or Google Meet to connect with students over video.
3. Students and advisors meet one-on-one once a week for up to 30 minutes at a time that is mutually convenient to them.



4. Coaches and PE instructors host a synchronous meeting for their teams/classes once a week at 3:45 p.m. to check in and offer guidance for exercise. Students must attend these weekly meetings to get credit for the spring season. If a student is unable to attend a given session they should reach out by email to their coach to be excused. Coaches will connect asynchronously (an email, for example) with students in time zones that make the synchronous meetings impractical.
5. Community meetings are an opportunity for students to hear updates and reflections from administrators and other CA adults. These are recorded for those who can't make it. Students who have at least one synchronous class on Mondays are expected to attend virtually at 10:50 a.m. Students who do not have class on Mondays should attend if they are able but can otherwise watch the recording in a timely manner.
6. Chapels are held as virtual meetings and recorded (with permission of the chapel giver) for those who can't attend. Some chapel givers may prefer to record in advance, in which case the recording will be played at the time of their chapel, and will be available for those who can't see it at that time. Students who have class on days with chapel are expected to attend virtually at 10:50 a.m. Students who do not have class on a day with chapel should attend if they are able but can otherwise watch the recording in a timely manner.

Many students imagine their own chapel experience years in advance; indeed the chapel is core to the senior experience. We ask all members of the community to show up for seniors whose chapel experience has been altered by this campus closure and to be a robust and respectful online audience.

7. We know not every student will be eating lunch at the same time, but it's on the schedule as a time to connect informally and "eat together." Community members can host club meetings, book groups, current events discussions, class meetings, etc. during this time. Plans for these should be shared with the dean of students one week ahead of time so they can be communicated to students and families before the start of the week.
8. We encourage students to use the time between online meetings to get away from their screens, however briefly: stretch, get some water, have a snack, do some jumping jacks...



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30-9:30	A <sub>(AM)</sub>	F <sub>(AM)</sub>	C <sub>(AM)</sub>	B <sub>(AM)</sub>	E <sub>(AM)</sub>
9:40-10:40	D <sub>(AM)</sub>	H/Music <sub>(AM)</sub>	Free	G <sub>(AM)</sub>	Free
10:50-11:05	Community meeting	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel
11:15-11:45			<i>Faculty Mtg.</i>	<i>Dept. Heads</i>	<i>Dept. Mtgs.</i>
11:55-12:55	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:05-2:05	A <sub>(PM)</sub>	F <sub>(PM)</sub>	C <sub>(PM)</sub>	B <sub>(PM)</sub>	E <sub>(PM)</sub>
2:15-3:15	D <sub>(PM)</sub>	H/Music <sub>(PM)</sub>	Free	G <sub>(PM)</sub>	Free
3:45-4:15	Teams/PE	Teams/PE	Teams/PE	Teams/PE	Teams/PE

### Distance-learning technology

We rely on three platforms for the various online meetings and gatherings in our community. Our priorities in selecting platforms were simplicity (fewer and more familiar) and accessibility (having options that will work for all students).



1. Schoology is the primary platform for classroom learning. Students continue to find homework and other resources from their teachers on Schoology. Advisors can also communicate with advisor groups through Schoology.
2. Google Meet is used for small, non-class meetings including advisor meetings, small group work, etc. Anyone can create a Google Meet meeting using Google Calendar (simply “add conferencing” to your invite!), and its accessibility makes it especially useful to us. We recognize that Google products are not accessible in China. CA faculty and staff are aware of this limitation and use alternative platforms when necessary.
3. Zoom is used for classes, large group meetings such as community meetings and chapel, and one-on-one meetings with students.

## Academic Support

Members of the academic support center are available to meet virtually with students. Students can find additional information about the ASC [here](#) including contact information for members of the academic support team.

The academic support center serves as a short-term support for students seeking skills and tools to bring to their academic work. Students requiring longer term support may be redirected to private tutoring, and we are happy to share recommendations with families.

## Community & Equity

Members of the C&E Team are holding 45-minute, “drop-in” Zoom times for students. Drop-in time is another touch-point for students who may be experiencing difficulty adjusting to the distance learning structure, challenging dynamics of being home while still “at” CA, or are looking for a moment to chat. Email is always an option for those that are not comfortable with a video call format, as well. Advisors of affinity groups are working with student leaders to arrange virtual gatherings of our affinity spaces.

## College Counseling

College counselors are meeting virtually with juniors and seniors and supporting their ongoing engagement in the college process. Junior seminar, led by members of the college counseling office, will continue via assignments posted to Schoology and/or Maia. As topics arise and additional group meetings are deemed necessary, juniors can expect invitations from the CCO.



While much about this semester will feel unsettling for students and families who have an eye on the college process, it is important to remember that college admissions offices are well aware of these unusual times. The context of this semester will very much be part of how applications are processed and interpreted next fall. CA students are strongly positioned for success in the college process.

### **Closing Thoughts**

We know that distance learning is not what we signed up for this year. Nor did any of us sign up for a pandemic and all of its ripple effects. Distance learning will take adjustment. Learning during a pandemic will take adjustment. Letting go of the expectations you had of this semester will take adjustment. Letting go of the expectations you had of yourself will take adjustment. Let us all be forgiving, compassionate, and flexible with each other. Most of all, though, let us all be forgiving, compassionate, and flexible with ourselves.

Our distance learning program is about having a routine and engaging your mind and body in productive and diverting work. It is about connecting in community and supporting each other. It is about creating moments of joy – immersing yourself in learning when you can or celebrating small moments of connection – and about tending to your well-being. We hope that academic learning plays a role in these more important priorities.