

Academic Information FAQs

2020-2021 Academic Year

How will my child be supported in becoming part of the Concord Academy community?

Optional orientation programming throughout August, and required orientation events on August 28-31, and September 1 (during the school day) will help introduce new students to each other, school culture and values, and adult and peer leaders. Advisors will also play a key role in introducing students to the community, through knowledge of culture and processes as well as encouragement to engage in the school's offerings.

Student life offerings will create in-person and remote social opportunities. X blocks on Wednesdays will also be an opportunity to meet students across classes in structured, engaging environments. Club meetings will take place on Wednesdays and at other times convenient to club members. In mid-September, new students will have an opportunity to learn about the wide variety of clubs that CA offers. Seniors and other student leaders such as CA buddies, orientation leaders, and club heads have been developing, with the support of adult advisors, activities to build community and communicate to new students the special sauce that makes CA, CA! Senior chapels are a wonderful way for new students to learn about the CA community and its members--the creativity, authenticity, individuality and wisdom of our students comes through so clearly in chapel.

Each boarding student will be affiliated with a house this semester to foster house pride and cohesion. Students will connect consistently with their Head of House and House Faculty, as well as attend boarding events, house comps and house meetings.

Teachers are also thinking closely about building community in a virtual environment. Teachers of ninth graders have been especially active in probing this question in their classes and beyond; several opportunities have already been planned for Wednesdays in early September.

What is the role of the advisor?

Your child's advisor is their go-to person at CA. Advisors will meet once a week with your child about their academics, social experience, and extracurriculars including involvement in athletics, music, and the arts. Over time, your child will build a relationship with their advisor and should feel comfortable discussing concerns relating to their overall experience at Concord Academy.

For what reasons should I connect with my child's advisor?

For parents, your child's advisor is the first person you should connect with regarding any concerns about your child. You are encouraged to contact your child's advisor with questions or additional information that might be valuable to the advisor.

Will the advisor be emailing and/or calling me? How often? About what?

The advisor will communicate with you at the start of the year, and also within the first few weeks of the start of school to discuss your child's adjustment to CA and answer any additional questions you may have. If the advisor has any special concerns or recommendations to discuss with you, they will reach out as needed, and you should reach out as well with a particular concern should one arise.

What if my child's advisor doesn't seem to be a good match?

Students have the opportunity to change advisors at the end of each academic year. Please check in with Sally Zimmerli, Dean of Students at sally.zimmerli@concordacademy.org, with any questions about advisors and our approach to matching students with their advisor.

Should parents communicate directly with teachers?

As we help students transition to new academic expectations at CA, we work hard to help them learn to self-advocate. However, if there are specific issues with a teacher or within a course that your student has already tried to address with the teacher and advisor, you should reach out to their advisor. Depending on the circumstances, the advisor may recommend a meeting with that teacher and/or additional adults at CA.

Is study hall offered? How will it work?

Yes, in this virtual state, study hall is referred to as study hours. Study hours are set drop-in times each weeknight for both day and boarding students to quietly study or connect with their peers and adults.

- **Sunday:** 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. EDT
- **Monday:** 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. EDT
- **Tuesday:** 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. EDT (house meetings for boarders are at 9:30 pm)
- **Wednesday:** 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. EDT
- **Thursday:** 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. EDT

By attending these study hours using the Zoom link posted on schoology, students can access the faculty hosting study hours that evening, as well as peer tutors and opportunities for group work in break out rooms. Boarders have the opportunity to attend study hours by house and can then stay in that Zoom room to study, or move to another proctored Zoom link for group work or tutoring.

How does the Academic Support Center (ASC) work? If my child is struggling academically, what should they do? What's the process?

- All new students will complete a learning self-assessment questionnaire and discuss their answers with their advisors in the first few weeks of school. This will help advisors better understand their new advisee's learning styles, and create a good structure for moving forward should additional support be needed.
- Each tutor within the ASC will be assigned to a group of new students and their advisor to help facilitate any meetings that might be beneficial.
- If a student feels they need additional support as the STAC or school year progresses, they will first connect with their teacher and advisor, who will help them access the right help and/or tutor within the ASC.

Will there be a Drop/Add period?

Yes. The fall drop/add period will take place between Wednesday, September 2 and Friday, September 4. Similar to the fall semester, ninth, tenth and eleventh graders will have a three-day drop/add period in the spring. This drop/add period will take place at the end of STAC 3, running from Wednesday, January 13 to Friday, January 15.

Note for seniors: By the end of the fall drop/add period, seniors must establish firm academic programs for the entire year. Concord Academy and colleges expect that, with the exception of a possible senior project addition, the student's yearlong academic program sent with college applications will remain unchanged. Change requests made after fall drop/add will not be processed (absent extraordinary circumstances).

If my student needs accommodations for a learning difference, how and when do we go about setting that up?

It's a good idea to set this up as early as you can. Make sure to reach out to Director of Studies Alyse Ruiz-Selsky at alyse.ruiz-selsky@concordacademy.org with any questions and paperwork requirements. If a student is receiving financial aid and has questions about funding, they should reach out to Alyse.

How much homework can my child expect?

Majors and minors will have comparable homework but the amount will be ~2 hours per week for 9th and 10th graders and ~3 hours per week for 11th and 12th graders per course (30 or 40 min per night, adding up to 2 hrs or 2 hrs 40 min per night).

We expect students to share their school experience with their families. Ask your child to show you their "Schoology calendar" to see what work is coming up.

How will grading and assessments be managed this fall?

We are committed to maintaining the academic integrity and rigor that CA families have come to expect, while creating a framework that will support all of our students in this unprecedented academic year. We feel students will thrive in an environment of high expectations coupled with accessible and encouraging support. Student work will be graded and faculty will provide comments, as is typical.

We also appreciate that the STAC model of educational delivery is different from what returning students are used to experiencing. We will do everything possible to support every student individually, taking into account their unique gifts, challenges and circumstances. Students can expect regular feedback throughout the STAC, and the 4 times per week class meetings will ensure access to their teachers. Time is built into classes for students to check in with teachers, and the structure of the Zoom study hours will also provide students with access to teachers and tutors for support.

At the end of each STAC, there will be dedicated days for end-of-STAC assessments. These will be spread out over two days to create a manageable workload for students. Teachers will communicate their protocols and expectations for assessment.

How often should my child be checking their CA email? Can we access their email?

Students are expected to check their CA email daily; however, they quickly get in the habit of checking it more frequently, as class and schedule updates are often posted on Schoology. Parents can feel free to email their student at their CA address, but the email is the student's own to access.

When will my child get their schedule? What about books and other items needed?

A separate communication is being sent this week that contains details on how students can access their course schedule as well as information for ordering books. Teachers will work to support students who experience shipping delays to their location.

What events are mandatory*?

For day and boarding students:

- Classes
- Chapels
- Community Meetings
- Announcements
- Weekly advisory meetings
- PE/Athletics
- Class Meetings
- X block events as required by a course

For boarders only:

- House Meetings and Activities (Tuesday nights 9:30-10:30 p.m.)

*It is our hope that all students can attend all mandatory events

- If illness impacts a student's ability to attend, their parent/guardian should contact Jackie Decareau and share that information. When feeling better, the student should seek out the recording of the event they missed, and in the case of a class, reach out to their teacher via email.
- If timezones impact a student's ability to attend, they should be in touch with their advisor and either the Dean of Academic Program and Equity or the Dean of Students as appropriate.

What is the expectation for attendance? If my child is missing assignments, not attending remote classes etc, what is the procedure to let parents know?

Students are expected to attend classes, chapels, community meetings, announcements, weekly advisory meetings, PE/athletics, class meetings, house meetings (boarders) and X block events that are required by a course in a timely manner each day. Absences created by the application of self-quarantining policies or other excused absences, however, will not result in any disciplinary action by the school, provided that the individual is complying in good faith with these policies. A student who accrues too many unexcused absences in an academic class or in PE/athletics, will be at risk of not receiving credit for that particular course. A student who accrues too many unexcused absences for mandatory community events may receive a dean's warning for failing to meet community expectations.

If a student is missing assignments or if they are not attending classes or other required meetings, the student's advisor will be notified. If this becomes a pattern, the advisor will connect with the family and may bring in other adults into the conversation from the Academic Office and Student Life Office.

Is there a CA directory?

A community directory, including all contact information for parents and students, will be made available to all families. Our goal is to send a digital PDF of the directory to families as close to the first day of school as possible. A printed version of the directory will be made available shortly thereafter. Parents will receive an email to request a printed copy.

Why is school open on some federal/state holidays?

As a boarding and day school, we need to address the needs of both populations when we decide on our school schedule. For example, Veterans Day falls very close to the Thanksgiving recess, thus while we value and acknowledge the holiday in a morning celebration, we do not take the entire day off. CA has a special tradition of celebrating MLK day with service and discussions about Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy. If you have questions about any other holiday, feel free to get in touch with the dean of students, Sally Zimmerli.

What if my child celebrates a religious holiday while school is in session?

Your child will be excused to celebrate a religious holiday. They will fill out a form (via Boardingware) to request an excused absence and inform their teachers. Concord Academy, the Community & Equity Office, and the faculty advisors of affinity groups also work to support students who may be observing religious holidays while attending classes and activities. If your child has any questions about this process or is in need of additional support, they are encouraged to see a member of the Student Life Office.

What will Zoom classes be like?

While Zoom will allow teachers and students to see each other's faces, classwork will be conducted through a variety of online tools that foster active engagement, collaboration, practice and communication. Teachers have been trained on a variety of tools from online collaborative whiteboard spaces, to interactive video lessons, to real-time quiz and polling features, to recording tools, and more. Additionally, teachers are thinking closely about the pacing of their lessons to allow for off-screen independent work, breaks, work in multiple modalities, individual support, collaborative work, and supervised practice. Long blocks will include work time that will mitigate nightly workloads and provide opportunities for one-on-one meetings and check-in time. Students will leave class with a clear sense of what and how they need to do that evening. Students should expect to complete between 20-40 minutes of homework, per class each evening.

How much time will my child(ren) spend on screens each day/week?

Students will take on average 3-4 classes each day. There will be breaks between classes (10 minutes) to allow for students to step away from their screens. On Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, students will have 70-minute blocks, and on Fridays, students will have 45-minute blocks. Classes will incorporate both on- and off-screen work, always with the teacher available and present for student support. There are also multiple breaks scheduled throughout the day for students to step away from their screens to check in with themselves and their families.

The weekly schedule is designed to encourage a balanced rhythm to on and off screen time. Wednesdays and Fridays require less screen time and offer more free time for rest and rejuvenation. Students can also use the extra free time on Fridays to get ahead on weekend work so they can stay off screens then.

Will my child(ren) be required to have their camera on at all times during class?

Students will be expected to attend all class meetings, to arrive on time, and to stay in the meetings until the end. Our expectation is that cameras will be on throughout the class, unless otherwise recommended by the teacher. Cameras being on contribute to a positive classroom environment and help teachers to “read the class” to support student learning and engagement to the greatest degree possible. We recognize that there may be personal or technological instances in which students are unable to keep their videos on. We will ask that students communicate with their advisor/teacher/the academic office if they are not planning to have the camera on. Teachers will also be encouraged to identify or create means beyond body language that allow them to gauge engagement, and to communicate these means clearly to students. They will also be encouraged to make space for one-on-one conversations with students to understand directly from students what and how they are learning.

What technology will my child(ren) need to have access to remote learning?

All students will need access to a computer or laptop and stable wifi. A set of headphones with a microphone, as well as a built-in or attachable video camera, will also be necessary for participating in synchronous classes. A survey sent to families in mid-August will ascertain families’ technology needs so we can ensure every student has the tools necessary for success. New students will receive introductions to Zoom and Schoology as part of orientation, which are two tools that every class will use.

How will students do laboratory science?

Science teachers are developing laboratory activities that can be done at home. They will send students specific materials required, if any. In the spring, we observed that in some cases the “makeshift” labs that students engaged in offered more opportunity for exploration and discovery than the more controlled lab setting. With that in mind, science teachers are making decisions about how best to teach laboratory skills, scientific thinking and methods, and habits of inquiry in equitable and engaging ways.

How will the school center academic integrity and honesty during remote learning?

Departments have been discussing best practices in remote assessment. While some departments will give tests, others will use modes of assessment such as papers, projects and portfolios, that have fewer opportunities for cheating. Those teachers and departments giving tests are developing procedures to reduce the risk of cheating, such as developing questions that can’t be Googled and asking students to work in front of their cameras.

Concord Academy takes academic honesty very seriously as a part of common trust and as a necessary ingredient for learning. Our expectations for academic honesty have not changed.

Do(es) my child(ren) need to have a private space for school?

Help your student identify spaces in your home that will work well for the virtual environment. Set them up for success with a space where they can be comfortable and focused during class sessions. Similarly, consider the background so as to minimize distractions and signal readiness to work. Use a neutral wall in the background or a CA-approved background.

We expect high school students to engage independently in their Zoom classes. Family members should make every effort not to appear in Zoom classes. While some families may support students in reminding them about their school commitments, we recommend supporting your children in developing processes that allow them to fulfill their school obligations independently of their parents or guardians.

What are the plans for parent-teacher meetings with the STAC system?

Parent-teacher and parent-advisor meetings typically happen once during the school year during the fall semester. Plans for family weekend, or an equivalent opportunity to meet with teachers and advisors, are currently being developed.