Blount County Schools Virtual Learning

Student Handbook 2020-2021

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For the 2020-21 school year, Blount County School (BCS) Families will have the option to attend their designated home school or participate in virtual learning through their designated school. With either option, all students are expected to maintain sufficient academic progress. This handbook is provided to outline the procedures and expectations for families who choose to enroll their student in the Blount County Virtual Learning Program. For the purposes of this document, virtual learning is defined as a form of distance or remote learning that is done using the internet and electronic instruction.

Becoming a Student

Application

BCS does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability in provision of educational opportunities or employment opportunities and benefits pursuant to the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as codified in 42 USC 2000D, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Pub. L. 92-318, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Title II Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L.101-336, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act.

Admissions Process

Applications will be available at each individual school and will be entered into a database during enrollment. Once the application has been reviewed, an email from the school will be sent to the applicant containing information regarding registration, course selections for 6-12 and a required orientation.

New student orientation will be conducted in person or virtually. The student and at least one parent/guardian will be required to participate in the orientation. Failure to participate in orientation will result in an incomplete application and the student will not be enrolled for the upcoming school year.

Academics and Academic Integrity

Academics

Grades K-5 BCS Virtual Learning weekly instruction and assignments will be provided by teachers for students utilizing Google Classroom, Seesaw, or Class DoJo and email. In order to

fully cover the required curriculum, students should expect to spend up to 20 hours per week engaged in online learning.

Grades 6-12 BCS Virtual Learning will be utilizing Apex Learning and Google Classroom to provide virtual learning opportunities for all students. In order to fully cover the required curriculum, students should expect to spend five hours per day engaged in online learning for their full class load. To preview the Apex Learning Platform, click on this link and scroll down to the section entitled "Peek Inside Courses."

Please understand that *homeschooling* and *virtual learning* are not the same. To be clear, home schooling is a program offered by the state at any time and homeschool students must disenroll from Blount County Schools. The BCS Virtual Learning option is a continuation of the Blount County Schools curriculum of study for enrolled Blount County students. When virtual learners return to the classroom, BCS expects a seamless transition into the regular classroom.

Attendance Requirements and Verification

Blount County School Board Policy

A copy of the Blount County Schools attendance policy can be found and reviewed here. Board policies are subject to change at any time as the Blount County School Board meets monthly.

Attendance Verification

For attendance purposes for the 2020-2021 academic year, **students** will take ownership of their attendance by completing and submitting two Google Forms on Monday and Friday of each week to their assigned school.

Monday-Wednesday Attendance

Each Monday morning, students will receive an email with an attached Google Form unless otherwise explicitly notified by BCS staff. The Google Form and email will contain important information relevant to that week's tutoring sessions, coursework, and upcoming events and its purpose is to serve as a communication between students and staff. **This Google Form is required to be submitted by 11:59 p.m. each Monday evening**, and failure to submit the document on time will negatively impact the student's attendance based on the number of days late. Forms submitted prior to 11:59 p.m. will count as three days of attendance (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday) while each day that the Form is not submitted will count as an absence.

- Forms completed one day late (submitted prior to Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.)-1 absence for the week.
- Form completed two days late (submitted prior to Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.)-2 absences for the week.
- Form completed three days late or not at all-3 absences for the week.

Thursday-Friday Attendance

Each Friday morning, students will receive an email with an attached Google Form unless explicitly notified otherwise by BCS staff. This Google Form will contain questions reflecting on the student's work for the week, their successes, and their struggles, and its primary purpose is to help teachers and staff assess student learning and program success. **This Google Form is required to be submitted by 11:59 p.m. each Friday evening,** and failure to submit the document on time will negatively impact the student's attendance based on the number of days late. Forms submitted prior to 11:59 p.m. will count as two days of attendance (Thursday and Friday) while each day that the Form is not submitted will count as an absence.
- Forms completed one day late (submitted prior to Saturday at 11:59 p.m.)-1 absence for the week.
- Form completed two days late (submitted after Saturday at 11:59 p.m. or not at all)-2 absences for the week.

Parental Contact Regarding Attendance and Excused Absences

Parents and students will be contacted by the BCS Administrative designee when they fail to complete the attendance requirements (Google Form submission). Following the student's failure to complete requirements and the established parental contact, the student's parent/guardian will need to turn in proper documentation to have the absence excused. Parent notes or medical excuses should be emailed to each school's attendance secretary or delivered to the office at each designated school.

Despite BCS's willingness to accept notes following the failure to submit a Google Form and being marked absent, students are still encouraged to complete the Google Forms form in situations where they are able. Each Google Form will have a place to document if students are sick, and form responses are shared with the student's teachers to facilitate communication. Consistent attendance completion allows BCS teachers prior notice that the student's work may be delayed or that the student may need extra time to complete a task. *Communication is key in a virtual learning environment.*

Consequences for Truancy

Considerable absences can directly influence student achievement and the student's ability to understand and comprehend content. Because of the interactive nature of courses within BCS's

Virtual Learning, instruction is often dependent upon collaboration with peers and instructors as coursework is completed. As attendance directly relates to success within programs, BCS will follow Blount County School Board Policy related to absences resulting in truancy.

Tier 1 goes into effect when a student reaches 3 unexcused absences.

1. Conference with student and his/her parent or guardian

2. Attendance contract, based on the conference, signed by the student, the parent or guardian, and an attendance officer. The contract shall include:

> a. A specific description of the school's attendance expectations for the student

> b. The period of time for which the contract is effective. The term of the contract must not exceed ninety (90) school days or continue beyond the last day of the semester, whichever comes first; and

> c. Penalties for additional absences and alleged school offenses, including additional disciplinary action and potential referral to juvenile court; and

3. Regularly scheduled follow-up meetings to discuss the student's progress.

If the student accumulates additional unexcused absences in violation of the attendance contract, he/she shall be subject to additional intervention

Tier 2

Requires an individualized assessment by a school employee, such as a school counselor or graduation coach, of the reasons a student has been absent from school. This assessment may result in referral to counseling, community-based services, or other services to address the student's attendance problems.

Tier 3

Attendance interventions for students who reach Tier 3 will be determined by a team from each grade band (PK-5, 6-8, 9-12) in order to address student needs in an age-appropriate manner.

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Make-Up Work Following Student Absences

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Students are entitled to make up any work missed for an absence. The teacher will allow a reasonable amount of time for the student to make up his/her work. A reasonable amount of time

should be at least a day for each day missed plus one extra day. BCS teachers and staff are, likewise, entitled to provide an additional amount of time for students on a case-by-case basis.

Grades

Grade Classification

Students shall be classified by grade according to the year they enter BCS Virtual Learning. While coursework in grades 6-12 is differentiated for each student, the student's social standing with his or her class will be used for classification purposes.

End of Course Exams (High School Only)

Exams will be given in all subjects. State exams will be administered in person at a designated testing location. Students must present a valid photo ID before being permitted to take an exam. The weight of an EOC exam will be 15% of the final average.

Grading Scale

As numerical grades issued by BCS Virtual Learning for grades 3-12 are converted into letter grades, final grades recorded in the student's cumulative academic record will be translated according to the following scale.

Letter	Numerical Grade
A	93-100
B	85-92
C	75-84
D	70-74
F	69 and below

Kindergarten and first grade students' grades are not on a traditional A-F scale but instead reflect a level of mastery for each skill. Grading for Kindergarten and first grade will be assessed and monitored using a standards-based skills checklist. During the school year, Kindergarten and first students may be required to attend school on scheduled days for assessment purposes. Final grades for each marking period will indicate progress towards mastery of the skill and/or standard.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is one of the foundations of BCS Virtual Learning. Because of its importance in each area of our instruction, there are a variety of tools that will be utilized in ensuring the integrity of student work. It is the *student's responsibility* to understand and acknowledge the policy statements and cheating definitions of each of his or her instructors.

*Plagiarism -*The Harbrace Handbook, 18th edition defines plagiarism as "the presentation of someone else's ideas as your own" (510). Students should strive to avoid this by ensuring that any material which is not common knowledge is adequately cited.

- Some examples of plagiarism are, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Copying and pasting any selection from an online or print source and representing it as your own work.
  - Utilizing selections of online or print sources and failing to properly cite authorship.
  - Presenting the work of another individual as one's own.

*Cheating-*The Oxford Dictionary defines the act of cheating as a student's decision to "act dishonestly or unfairly in order to gain an advantage." For the purposes of BCS Virtual Learning, three definitions are particularly relevant:
  - To influence or lead by deceit, trick, or artifice.
  - To practice fraud or trickery.
  - To violate rules dishonestly, ex. To cheat on a quiz or assignment
- Some examples are, but are not limited to the following:
  - Providing questions/answers/work to another student.
  - Receiving questions/answers/work from another student.
  - Utilizing online or print sources on an assignment, quiz, or test.

The tools used by BCS Virtual Learning to ensure sustained academic integrity include, but are not limited to:

- *Academic Integrity Database* - Each BCS school maintains its own database of student integrity incidents or violations. This database is used to monitor the number of student integrity issues.

- *Teacher Expertise* - BCS instructors have extensive classroom experience. Their expertise is often a guide in identifying the level of originality in student work.
- *Proctored Exams* - Any teacher can require a scheduled proctored exam at any time for a student to be given at the designated school.

Discipline for Academic Integrity Violations:

- 1st offense-Zero on the assignment. The student is notified. (assignment may be completed for feedback)
- 2nd Offense-Zero on the assignment. Parents and student(s) must have a conference with the BCS administration. (assignment may be completed for feedback)
- 3rd Offense-Zero on the assignment. The student may be removed from BCS Virtual Learning. (assignment may be completed for feedback)

*Students who need additional support in regards to academic progress, academic integrity, or other disciplinary infractions may be required to attend at the designated site in order to ensure academic success.

Campus Events and Attendance

Attendance on Campus

Students may attend optional tutoring or one-on-one conferences with their instructors and may at times be required to devote academic time on campus due to a lack of progress. All campus visits during school hours will be by appointment only. Students may participate in sports and any after-school extracurricular activities after school hours as long as all school guidelines are met. During all meetings or events that students attend on campus, all Blount County Policies will be in effect and students are expected to follow the policies. Students should report to the main office and sign-in upon arrival.

Course Progress and Academic Support

It is the sole responsibility of the student to complete the work for his or her courses. BCS instructors will make themselves available to help and/or tutor students as needed over the course of the academic term. It is the student's responsibility to reach out and request support or inform the course instructor that he or she will be attending office hours/tutoring.

BCS Course instructors will make several individual contacts with students and parents during the academic term, but ultimately the student must take the initiative to complete the course and stay on track for completion. Students who fall significantly behind or who struggle with completion may be required to attend tutoring or academic support sessions in order to develop the skills needed to ensure their completion of content.

In the event that a student is not making sufficient academic progress or is not on track to complete the course, or his or her attendance or behavior is not in line with the expectations of BCS Virtual Learning, he or she will be placed on academic probation at which point in time the student must fulfill the expectations of their academic probation contract or be dismissed from BCS Virtual Learning.

Grade Monitoring and Report Cards

Student progress is updated weekly in the Powerschool Portal and reflects student progress and achievement as grades are updated. This report contains academic progress and attendance information in each class, and parents are encouraged to closely monitor their student's work in each course. Additionally, students have daily access to grades and assignments through Google Classroom, and parents can sign up for notifications for Google Classroom by contacting a course instructor.

For Powerschool login information, please contact the main office at each designated school.

Technology Device, Electronic Media Consent and Internet Agreement

Technology Device

Blount County Schools will continue **1:World Digital Conversion Initiative**. Technology devices will be available for all students participating in BCS Virtual Learning and will be issued by each individual school. All students will be issued a technology device for virtual learning upon payment of a $25* usage fee paid in full. These devices can be used with or without internet access at home with some limitations. Our teachers have been trained in using

these devices and are looking forward to the opportunity to integrate technology into their curriculum through digital resources, collaboration and G-Suite including Google Classroom. A schedule for digital device pick up will be communicated by each individual school at a later date. For more information regarding technology or any other questions, please contact each school's technology support staff.

Electronic Media Agreement

School administrators shall be authorized to grant permission and set parameters for media access to students in their respective schools. Media representatives shall be required to report to the administration for prior approval before accessing students involved in instructional programs and activities not attended by the general public. The media may interview and photograph students involved in instructional programs and school activities including athletic events. Such media access shall not be unduly disruptive and shall comply with Board policies. Each year parents/guardians will be given the option to withhold permission for public news media interviews or photographs of their child at school. Specific parental or guardian permission must be obtained if the story or photograph covers topics of a sensitive nature. If any student is to be filmed or videotaped and will be identified or a primary subject of the filming or videotaping, prior written consent/release/waiver will be obtained from the student's parent/guardian. District employees may release student information to the media only in accordance with applicable provisions of the education records law and Board policies governing directory information and personally identifiable information. Parents will be advised of this policy at the time of the student's registration and each fall in the student/parent handbook.

Responsible Internet Use

The use of the Internet must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational objectives of the school system. Use of other organizations' networks or computing resources must comply with the rules appropriate for that network.

Transmission of any material in violation of any US or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material that is protected by a trade secret. Use for commercial activities is not acceptable. Use for product advertisement or political lobbying is also prohibited.

- **Privileges:** The use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges. The school system administrators will deem what is inappropriate use, and their decision is final. Also, the system administrators may suspend privileges at any time.
- **Net Etiquette:** Students are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Avoid offensive or inflammatory speech.
- Be courteous and polite.
- Use appropriate language.
- Profanity or obscenities are not permitted at any time.
- Do not use the network in such a way that would disrupt the work of others.
- All communications and information accessible via the network should be assumed to be private property.
- Users may not quote personal communications without the author's consent.

- **Vandalism:** Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, the Internet, or other networks that are connected to the Internet backbone. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses.
- **Exception to terms and conditions:** These terms and conditions reflect the entire agreement of the parties and supersedes all prior oral and written agreements and understandings of the parties.

With expanded access to electronic information, availability of inappropriate material is not uncommon. Some sites contain illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or offensive information. Although it is impossible to control such misuses, we believe that with responsible use, the benefits of the internet as an educational tool outweigh the negatives. We especially appreciate partnering with parents to teach responsible Internet use. Students who are in violation of responsible Internet use may be put on academic probation or dismissed from BCS Virtual Learning.

Testing

ACT (High School Only)

It is a requirement that all juniors (11th grade) take the ACT at their designated school or provide proof that they have already taken the ACT. The ACT is a state test and administration protocols are set forth by the producers of the test. In recent years, the state of Tennessee has provided a senior make-up day the year following the junior ACT; however, that opportunity is not guaranteed to be provided to students and is dependent upon the state Department of Education.

Accommodations

Students who have an active IEP or 504 will receive accommodations as stated in their most recent IEP/504 plan.

TNReady Testing (Grades 3-12 Only)

State testing is required for all subjects in grades 3-8 and the following high school subjects: Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, English I, English II, U.S. History, and Biology. For the purposes of state testing, the testing schedule will be set and delivered to parents two weeks prior to the first day of testing. All state testing will be completed at each student's designated school. Students are not allowed to miss scheduled tests or to re-schedule tests unless a significant documented emergency occurs.

Removal or Dismissal from Program

Removal from BCS Virtual Learning

If a student is removed from BCS Virtual Learning for any number of reasons (plagiarism, attendance, behavior, failing two semesters in a row, etc.), parents will be notified in writing of the removal. Also, the local education agency in the district in which the student resides will also be notified. If the student does not enroll with the local education agency or register as a homeschooled student within 15 days of being notified, then the student could be considered truant and taken to court.

Withdrawal or Transfer from BCS Virtual Learning to BCS Traditional Learning

All requests for moving from BCS Virtual Learning to a BCS Traditional classroom will need to be made in writing to the principal before August 10, 2020. Each request made after August 10, 2020 may be given consideration at the end of the nine week marking period on a case by case basis.

Withdrawal from BCS Virtual Learning

Any student participating in Virtual Learning who plans to withdraw from Blount County Schools for any reason should contact their designated school's main office with a parent/guardian. The correct procedure will be explained to the student at that time. All obligations such as turning in books, technology devices, paying fees and/or fines, etc., must be taken care of before withdrawing to another school. Transcripts will not be forwarded until all obligations are cleared.

Please submit any questions related to the BCS reopening plan or the virtual learning choice option to bcsreopens@blountk12.org