

Middle School Newsblatt

Innovative education of the whole child through German immersion. .



September 18, 2020

TCGIS has finished its first week of full Distance Learning Improved for all Middle School students. We labeled this model during our planning for 20-21 with the name “Leveled Up” Distance Learning, calling on a video game term from my youth, meaning to get to the next level. I knew we needed to provide more teacher instruction and more student interaction. It needed to be better than crisis learning. I knew we were going to continue to be held accountable by the Department of Education for standards, student learning hours and student achievement. The result that our team came up with was synchronous learning blocks and streamlined Google Classroom delivery. This newsletter also explains some of the procedures that we developed as a Middle School team of administration and teachers in order to provide clear communication for all teachers, students and families, another example of **Gemeinsam sind wir stark**. I am proud of the work that has been done in the Middle School. Teachers have told me that it is fulfilling to once again be in front of students and this new delivery of instruction is a work in progress, but the key word is progress. Like any good educational setting, when you do something completely new, you need to monitor and adjust. We are monitoring now and will soon be asking for stakeholder feedback, so that we can move into calculated adjustments. But for now: Hoch die Hände, Wochenende!

~Elizabeth Zehnpfennig, Middle School Dean



Middle School Procedures

Middle School teachers have been busy working to streamline procedures across grades and across subjects. Here are some procedures that will be in place for this school year. We are taking the unusual circumstances of COVID-19 and seizing the opportunity to tighten some practices.

Grading and Powerschool

PowerSchool is our main system for grades and is updated (at least) every week, so families can use the newest data available to monitor grades.

Middle School will be reinforcing student self-advocacy by teaching how to ask about missing assignments and late work. The following late work policy was discussed and adopted by the entire middle school:

Missing/late assignments that can still be turned in are marked as a “0 / F” in PowerSchool plus flagged as “missing,” until the assignment is turned in or the end of unit deadline passes. Reminders about upcoming deadlines or late work are given in the lesson, in Advisory (especially on Tue and Thu), and in Lernzeit. Generally, students and parents are not emailed to remind them of late work. Specific IEP or 504 details per student, of course, always take precedence over these procedures.

Specifications for 5/6:

Students will NOT lose any points for late work handed in by the end of the unit/month or the last formative assessment. After this deadline, the assignment will be marked as a “0 / F.”

Specifications for 7/8:

Students will lose points for late work when handing in the assignment past the 5 days after the deadline or when not advocating for an extension for late work. Assignments not handed in by the end of unit deadline will be marked as a “0 /F.”

Google Classroom

Google Classroom is our Learning Management System (LMS) that teachers will use for delivery of content and feedback. It will be used to house student work and feedback.

Teachers spent the first week and will continue to spend time on the teaching of this LMS. These are all important skills for a successful middle school experience, but will also carry well into the high school one as well! Among the list of things, our teaching are going over with your children, are:

- Email Notifications set to only receive emails about returned work/grades
- One Google Classroom per class subject
- How to use Classwork and To Do list pages for assignments
- Getting into the habit of checking emails for teacher contact

Zoom Etiquette

Zoom is our chosen video conferencing tool. We chose it for its added level of security and safety for our kiddos. Our teachers have come up with some helpful tips and would appreciate any support that parents can provide. Teachers are working together to reinforce and teach these:

- Mute your microphone when entering
- Keep microphone mute unless teachers asks you to to speak
- Camera are basically on for important parts of the lesson, but:
 - If students feel uncomfortable, they are encouraged to let the teacher know.
 - Teachers will implement camera breaks in their lessons and breaks for independent work.
 - There will be NO recording or screenshots during Zoom sessions.
 - When the camera is turned off, we encourage students to have a picture of them in their window. (Students can find a tutorial in the tech resource section of their Google Classrooms).
 - Students should show up with their name when entering a Zoom session; teachers will rename students if necessary .
- Students are encouraged to raise your virtually (blue hand symbol) if you have a question, unmute & mute yourself.
- Lessons use chat for class-related questions and answers.
- Students should feel free to use reaction buttons .

Extra Note to Parents: As teachers are already trying to manage many distractions, we like to ask parents to not show up in your child's virtual classroom or lessons!

Attendance for the 2020-2021 School Year

Part of our extra work for this year has been to rethink the attendance system. We have to be able to account for student attendance and contact hours and the Minnesota Department of Education has given us guidance on how to do so. We have to take into consideration our two models of instruction: hybrid and distance learning.

Hybrid On- and Off-site During Connection Weeks(A and B cohorts):

During connection weeks, hybrid cohort attendance for students will be taken for each period whether on-site or off-site. In order for a student to be considered present, they are either in-person OR they must participate actively in Google Classroom with teacher interaction.

Synchronous Distance Learning Students and All Students During Distance Learning Weeks (A, B, and C):

Attendance for Distance Learners (section C during Connection Weeks, all sections during Distance Learning Weeks) is taken by teachers for each of their periods. In order for a Distance Learning student to be considered present, they must participate in Google Classroom assignments and/or learning activities, and teacher interaction. Teacher interaction may include: synchronous interaction, feedback, a Google Form survey question, participating in a group discussion or chat, responding to a Flipgrid or Bloglike post. This plan is consistent with our importance placed on German Immersion and educating the whole child. Part of that whole child is fostering relationships which synchronous can help with.

Asynchronous Wednesdays:

On fully asynchronous Wednesdays, attendance will be taken on the basis of student participation in Google Classroom with teacher interaction.

Glossary:

Synchronous: Online Lessons with live instruction from teachers

Asynchronous: Lessons are delivered through Google Classroom and there is no live instruction

Teacher interaction: This may include: synchronous interaction, feedback, a Google Form survey question, participating in a group discussion or chat, responding to a Flipgrid or Bloglike post.



