

TCGIS

# **School Year Planning Summary 2020-21**

Distance Learning with  
Connection

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TCGIS Administration, August 12, 2020

## Introduction

In March, the governor of Minnesota made the difficult decision to close our school buildings in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. Between March and June, our educators completely transformed how they provide instruction; our students gave up field trips, spring sports, graduation and the beloved Capstone experience; and families supported their children in more ways than ever before. Today, the TCGIS Administration shares with you a preliminary reopening framework that is aligned with the strongest guidance that our public health experts in Minnesota and will help us prepare to reopen our school if it is safe to do so on September 8.

Our preliminary framework is rooted in science, developed in accordance with guidance released by the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We've heard from many families that they are eager to resume their child's education but in a manner that minimizes the health risks posed by COVID-19. We've also heard from many teachers & staff who know that school is the best place for kids to be under normal circumstances but are worried about their own safety and well-being. Listening to all of these voices, we kept foremost in our minds the first 2 goals provided to us by the Minnesota Department of Education:

1. Prioritize the safety of students and staff
2. Prioritize in-person learning, especially for younger learners

We have prepared and recommend to the TCGIS School Board a model of **Distance Learning with Hybrid Connection Weeks** for our students & teachers. This model would allow students to follow prescribed social distancing guidelines by effectively cutting the number of students in a classroom and ensuring students can access high-quality in-person instruction from caring teachers in regular and age appropriate intervals. Furthermore, because our public health situation continues to evolve, our framework is designed to adapt to changing conditions and easily transition to full at-home learning should COVID-19 cases continue to rise.

While we intend to bring smaller groups of students back for *Connection Weeks* if it is safe to do so, we also understand that many families will choose to keep their children home. In recognition of the unprecedented nature of this pandemic and the need for flexibility, the state has mandated that every parent have the option to opt out of in-person instruction and learn from home full time.

We are differentiating the amount of in-person instruction students will receive based on their age and developmental learning needs.

Staff and students that learn in the building will be asked to complete a daily symptom screen before coming to school and wear face coverings at all times. Students would come to school for only a few days a week and we will prioritize our younger grade levels as well as students that need some extra support.

Supporting these measures requires a considerable investment, which we are fully committed to making. To ensure the safest possible learning environments, we have purchased reusable cloth face masks to support every student and staff member, face shields, hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, infrared thermometers, hospital-grade disinfectant sprayers as well as upgraded air filter systems. We have also hired a new cleaning company that can carry out stringent cleaning and disinfection protocols every day at our school building.

Based on guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education, students learning at home will have a scheduled workday with periods of synchronous instruction or assigned work and attendance will be tracked daily. Teachers will design activities and assignments that may include any of the following: online live teaching, pre-recorded lessons, independent work to build skills, and digital curriculum resources. Students will access assignments through Google Classroom and Seesaw in parts of the Elementary School. Additional details on new learning expectations and improvements will be provided in the Technology & Support section of this framework.

Like “normal” school, our reopening framework seeks to meet not only academic needs, but it also prioritizes the social-emotional needs of our students. This whole child approach is doubly important this year because many of our students have experienced trauma from the impact of COVID-19 on their communities and the demonstrations in our country following the murder of George Floyd. Easing our students’ anxiety and building supportive learning environments will be critical to their success this coming school year.

## Planning Guidance from the State of Minnesota

On July 30, 2020 the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Education announced Minnesota’s strategy to educate students and keep communities healthy during the 2020-21 school year.” School districts and charters were directed to plan for three possible scenarios for instruction in the upcoming school year:

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Scenario 3: Distance learning

COVID 19 Safety and Health must take priority per the Minnesota Department of Health and the Department of Education issued the following Safe Learning Goals:

1. Prioritize the safety of students and staff
2. Prioritize in-person learning, especially for younger learners
3. Consider infectiousness and transmission risk among different ages
4. Support planning, while permitting flexibility for districts
5. Take into account disease prevalence at a local level

After reflection and careful planning based on the Safe Learning Goals and the Planning Guidance, we have determined the following:

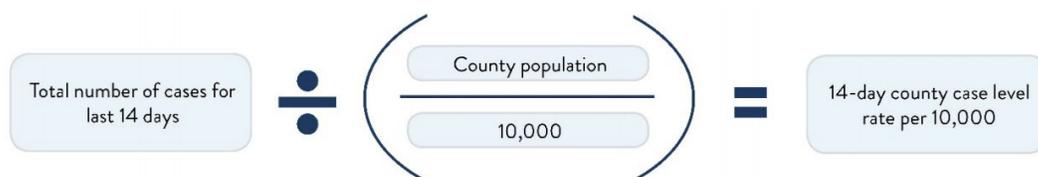
- TCGIS will follow MDH requirements in the 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools.
- TCGIS must offer a distance learning option for families who require it due to health or safety concerns.
- TCGIS must maintain IEP service minutes and seek to teach all Minnesota academic standards.
- TCGIS must offer in-building educational support to students of TIER 1 emergency workers. (We will offer Kinderclub for additional families, also)
- TCGIS must hold classes on at least 165 student contact days.

Being prepared for the start of the 2020-21 school year includes contingency planning for the possibility of future emergency, short-notice school in–person capacity reductions or school building closures. Plans for in-person learning, hybrid learning, and distance learning must include a focus on the continuity of teaching and learning and all key functions of our school. It is possible that all three contingency plans could be used during the 2020-21 school year.

## County Data on COVID-19 Cases

Per the guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education, TCGIS uses [county data](#) per 10,000 people to determine its instructional model for the 2020-2021 school year. Before looking at our fall plan, it is helpful to take a look at the numbers provided by the State of Minnesota and how those numbers compare with the Safe Learning Plan issued by the Department of Education on July 30. TCGIS is located in Ramsey county, but TCGIS students live in five Minnesota counties, with the vast majority in Ramsey and Hennepin. The State of Minnesota reports numbers from two weeks prior, which means we are sitting in the present planning for the future with numbers from the past.

County	Student Population
Ramsey	402
Hennepin	145
Dakota	22
Anoka	21
Washington	12
#N/A	12
Total	614



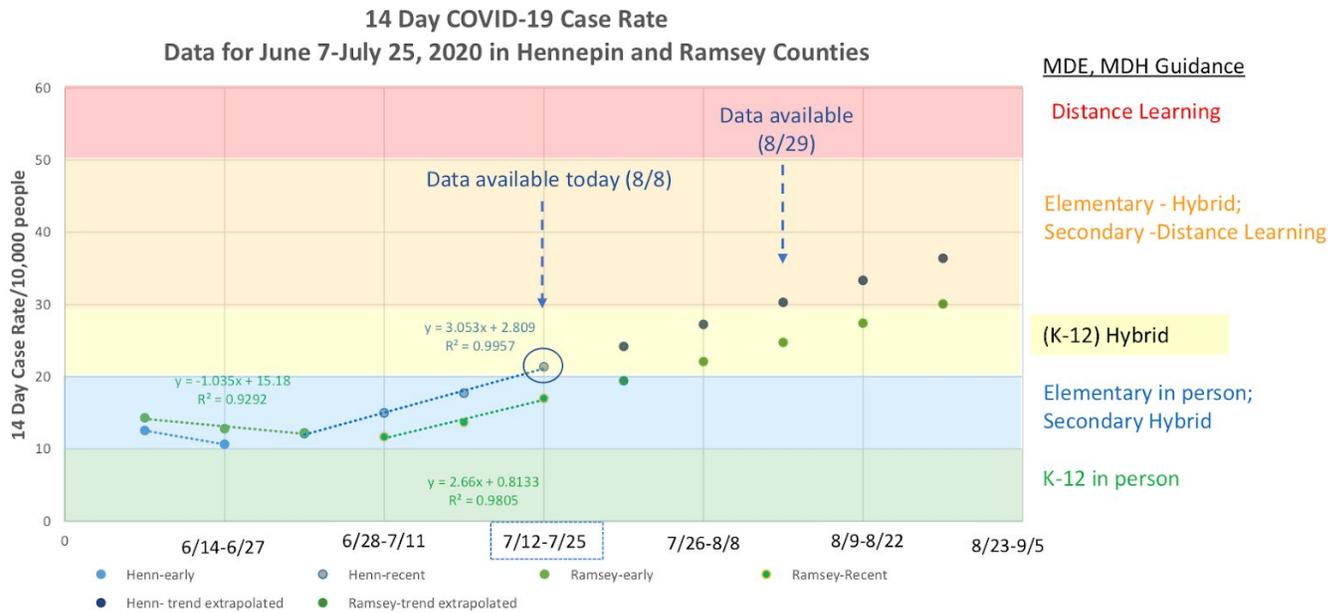
The graphic below is a TCGIS evaluation of local COVID case rates as one factor for the school delivery mode for fall (Guidance from MDE, MPH)

- Guidance for schools with students from multiple counties is to use the highest case rate number (Hennepin for now)
- Current COVID case rate allows TCGIS to use a Hybrid approach for all grades (K-8)

	6/21 - 7/4	6/28 - 7/11	7/5-7/18	7/11-7/25	7/19-8/1
Ramsey	11.65	13.63	16.5	19.65	22.25
Hennepin	14.97	17.69	20.93	<b>23.24</b>	<b>23.76</b>
Anoka	11.11	12.38	15.54	17.33	17.67
Washington	10.74	12.71	14.84	15.63	16.66
Dakota	13.27	15.09	17.10	19.08	21.40

Number of cases per 10,000 over 14 days, by county of residence	Learning Model
0-9	In-person learning for all students
10-19	In-person learning for elementary students; hybrid learning for secondary students
20-29	Hybrid learning for all students
30-49	Hybrid learning for elementary students; distance learning for secondary students
50+	Distance learning for all students

Trends indicate we will reach COVID-19 rates by the start of our school year that would change our instructional model to **secondary students (7-8) in distance learning and elementary students in hybrid learning (K-6).**



## Planning and Improvement Process

Our first priority is to ensure the health, safety, connectedness and well-being of every single stakeholder:

- teachers and staff need to know they are supported through successes and failures - both structurally and morally;
- students need to be seen, heard, and must have the chance to learn;
- parents need to know they are seen, heard, and supported.

The TCGIS Administration continues to plan and train for all three scenarios for the 2020-2021 school year because we believe that they are all likely to happen at different times for different age groups. We base our planning on the following priorities in order of importance:

1. Health and Safety
2. Educational Equity
3. Establishing Classroom Communities Centered on Relationships and Well-Being
4. Academics.

When TCGIS was required to move to a distance learning model within only a few days to plan in the spring of 2020, we focused mainly on the mental wellbeing of our staff and students. Under this model of “crisis distance learning”, with only two work weeks to “pivot” from school as we know it to a learning model both new and flawed, our program did not deliver the level of quality education that we have all come to expect from our school. Parents, students, and staff learned a lot and the level to which our community supported one another was impressive.

We have spent much of our planning time this summer creating a distance learning experience with significant improvements for the 2020-2021 school year. After reviewing important feedback and suggestions for improvements from families, students and staff, we have made the following improvements:

- We purchased new Chromebooks with better cameras for MS students.
- Our distance learning schedule is restructured and has scheduled time for teachers to deliver live synchronous instruction. Live instruction will look different in different age groups.
- We purchased licensing for Seesaw for Schools software to better organize and deliver content to students in ES grades, especially during distance learning.

- Our Connection Weeks allow teachers to explain tools, expectations, and processes in a way that they could not last spring.
- Students get to practice new tools with teacher guidance.
- We are streamlining how Google Classroom is used in the MS, how new assignments are organized and shared and how students turn in their assignments.
- We are scheduling baseline student assessments in the fall in German, English Reading, and Math to help identify students who need support in these areas.

The main objectives of our planning from May to August focused on:

- Following MDE, MDH, and CDC guidelines to ensure the health of our staff and students
- A revised and improved Distance Learning Model with increased consistency, structure, rigor, and manageability for students and families
- Differing Hybrid Model scenarios & schedules
- Continuous Evaluation: we will continually explore best practices from other schools in the US and abroad; evaluate structure of instruction to best support immersion and content standards; providing fluidity as local health situations change (moving between models when necessary)
- Increased German Immersion: Fall will not continue as “crisis-distance learning”; more interactive immersion opportunities are available in all models; increased communication and personal connection are essential to the well-being of students and staff

Outreach to Stakeholders:

- Building strong working relationships with our staff, parent, and student councils through regular meetings and collaborative input gathering.
- Several full day admin retreats
- Presentation of draft plan at the Board’s Executive Committee Meeting and Board Meeting in June, July, August
- Presentation of draft plan at a joint all council meeting (staff council, student council, parent council) the beginning of July
- Several volunteer staff working sessions in July & August
- Meetings with Union representatives.
- Numerous TCGIS staff and community surveys

## Stakeholder Input:

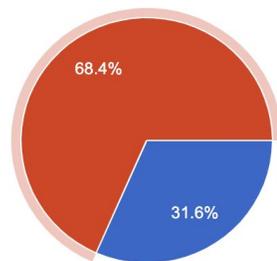
After receiving the guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education, the Governor's office and the Minnesota Department of Health, we turned to our stakeholders to gather more information to inform our decision.

**TCGIS Staff & Teachers:** Our first group surveyed was our staff. We collected data from whole staff, but also cohorts like Returning Teachers and New Teachers and Elementary versus Middle School.

### Data from Returning Teachers

Assuming all health and safety requirements are in place and knowing in-person learning, especially for younger learners is important, I would prefer the following model for the START of SY 20/21:

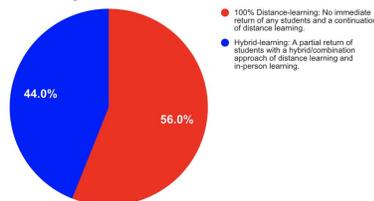
57 responses



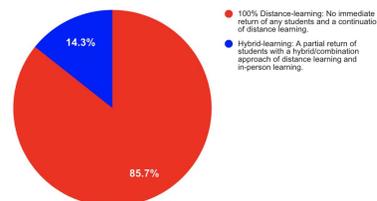
- Hybrid-learning: A partial return of students with a hybrid/combination approach of distance learning and in-person learning.
- 100% Distance-learning: No immediate return of any students and a continuation of distance learning.

Data Comparing Elementary School Teachers/Middle School Teachers : From this data, we immediately recognized the difference in these two important stakeholder groups. The question was what is the preference of hybrid versus distance learning.

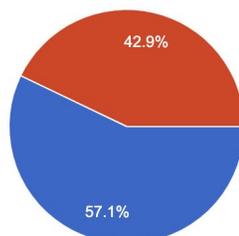
Elementary School Teachers



Middle School Teachers



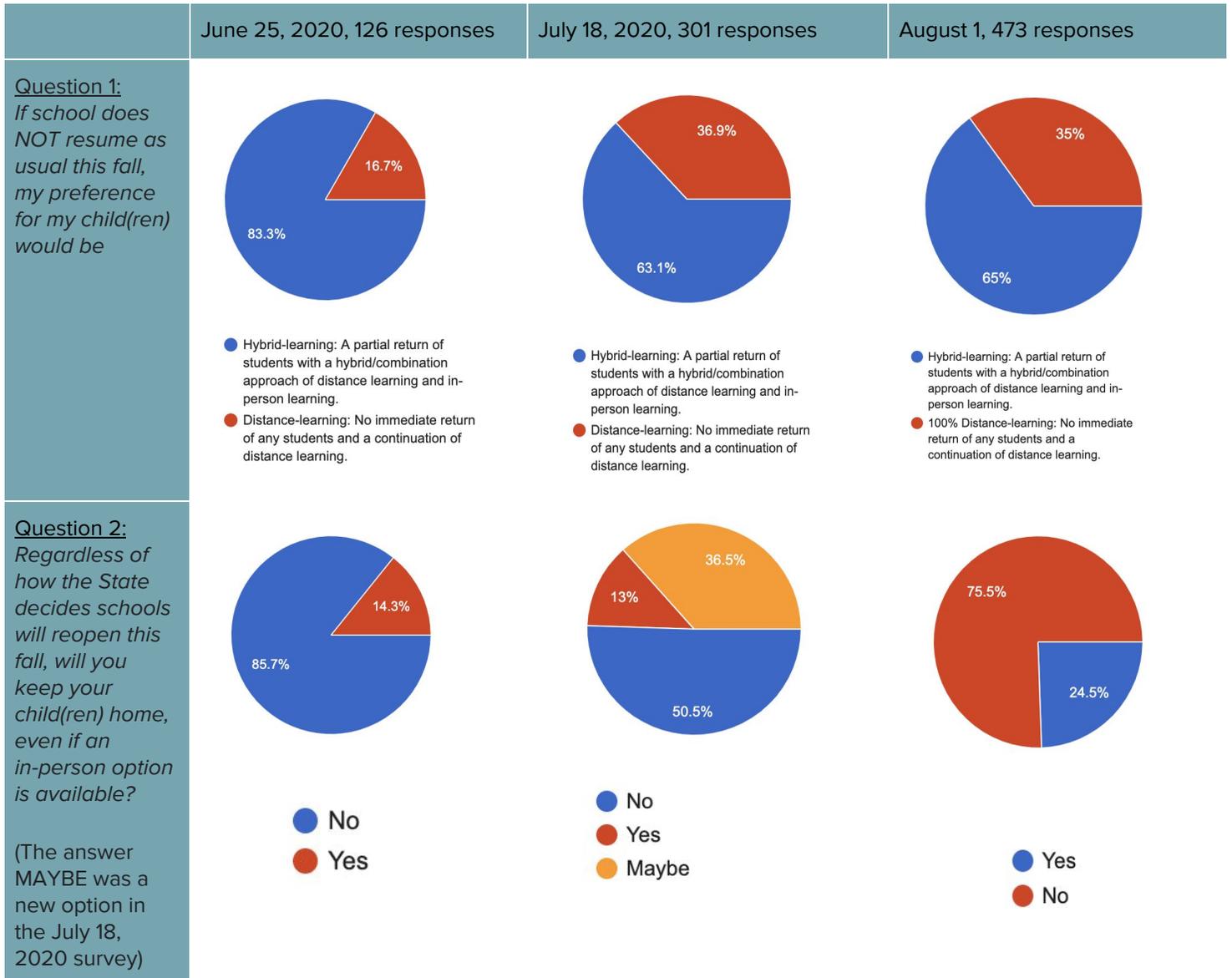
### Data gathered from New Teachers:



- Hybrid-learning: A partial return of students with a hybrid/combination approach of distance learning and in-person learning.
- 100% Distance-learning: No immediate return of any students and a continuation of distance learning.

## Data Gathered From Families

We asked two questions of our families: (1) What is your preference of learning model: hybrid or distance learning? (2) If there is an in-person model, will you still keep your kid home? The data we received was in striking contrast to that of our teaching staff.



## Creating a Healthy School Model: Distance Learning with Connection

Our school's *Distance Learning with Connection* combines the reliability of a strategic, long-term distance-learning model with essential relationship-building benefits AND flexibility of a hybrid-learning model. **The foundation of the 2020-21 school year is strong Distance Learning.** Current COVID projections suggest that at some point this fall, we will need to be in full distance learning for an indeterminate amount of time. We must do distance learning really well because *all* of our students will be in distance learning at some point this year. Connection Weeks will complement distance learning by investing in relationship-building in the beginning of the year, at times working explicitly on skills needed for distance learning success and strengthening the foundation for success for students and educators alike.

### **What are *Connection Weeks*?**

A *Connection Week* is a hybrid school week where students come into the building for on-site instruction in their learning group. We want to utilize every chance we can for connection, orientation and relationship building in the first weeks of the school year. This is intentional time with reduced contact. The goals are:

- to meet the teacher(s)
- build relationships with classmates
- understand the schedule and routines
- gain experience with the technology
- prepare for and practice distance learning work

### **How many days per week will students be in school during *Connection Weeks*?**

Homeroom classes will be split into two cohorts for in-person learning. Each cohort will attend school for two consecutive days each week and have 3 days of distance-learning each week, for as long as the COVID case numbers allow it. In a typical week, *all* students will work offsite on Wednesdays. On these days, educators will be planning, meeting in teams, working with small groups of students, and checking in with specific kids and families.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A			All students learn from home, scheduled live instruction in the morning   Deep cleaning  Student Services  Afternoon work time for staff (planning, collaboration, teams)		
Group B					
Group C (distance learning)					

## Variations of Connection Weeks

Most Connection Weeks will be full weeks with 5 days of learning. Partial Weeks occur because of public holidays, grading days or Parent-Teacher Conferences. We will accommodate learners in these partial weeks so every student has a Connection Day in a short week.

### Connection Week - Full Week

This model does not apply to students who have chosen the distance learning option

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A			All students learn from home, scheduled live instruction in the morning   Deep cleaning  Afternoon work time for staff (planning, collaboration, teams)		
Group B					

### Connection Week - Sep 8-11

This model does not apply to students who have chosen the distance learning option



K-8	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A	Labor Day				
Group B					

### Connection Week - Wed-Fr

This model does not apply to students who have chosen the distance learning option

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A	Holiday, Conferences, Professional Development, Grading Days		All students learn from home, scheduled live instruction in the morning   Deep cleaning  Afternoon work time for staff (planning, collaboration, teams)		
Group B					

### Connection Week - Mo-Wed

This model does not apply to students who have chosen the distance learning option

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A			All students learn from home, scheduled live instruction in the morning   Deep cleaning  Afternoon work time for staff (planning, collaboration, teams)	Holiday, Conferences, Professional Development, Grading Days	
Group B					

## How will the Number of Connection Weeks be determined?

Monthly schedule is determined as early as possible based on data provided by the Minnesota Departments of Education & Health.

Per the guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education, the *Schedule Committee* can use the Ramsey county cases per 10,000 people numbers to determine its instructional model for the following month. This committee could also take into consideration more local data from the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, as well as from relevant zip codes in order to predict and determine the level of safety for students and staff in the school building.

Guiding principles for decision making based on the **MN Safe Learning Goals**:

1. Prioritizing in-person learning for younger students (MN Goal: Safety of students and staff, Prioritize in-person learning, especially for younger learners, Consider infectiousness and transmission risk among different ages)
2. A minimum of 1 Connection Week for grades 7 & 8, a minimum of 2 Connection Weeks for grades 3-6, a minimum of 2 Connection Weeks for grades K-2, if the calendar allows it. (MN Goal: Safety of students and staff, Prioritize in-person learning, especially for younger learners, Consider infectiousness and transmission risk among different ages, Flexibility, Take into account disease prevalence at a local level)
3. No Connection Weeks for a minimum of 14 days following Thanksgiving or Fall Break, Winter Break and Spring Break as long as COVID 19 numbers are rising, in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19 after travel and large family gatherings. (MN Goal: Safety of students and staff, flexibility)
4. Sustainability (Teacher Workload, Cohort Sizes, Class Composition Changes)

A Connection Week/Distance Learning Week Schedule will be published in the *Elternbrief* at least 2 weeks prior to the start of the month.

Please take a look at **tentative** schedules below for September based on current COVID-19 numbers in our communities as well as the above listed parameters. These schedules are subject to change.

## September Schedule\*

\*As current COVID-19 numbers allow. This is subject to change

K-8	K-2	3-4	5	6	7-8
Sep 8-11	Connection Week	Connection Week	Connection Week	Connection Week	Connection Week
Sep 14-18	Connection Week	Connection Week	Distance Learning	Distance Learning	Distance Learning
Sep 21-25	Connection Week	Connection Week	Distance Learning	Distance Learning	Distance Learning
Sep 28-Oct 2	Connection Week	Connection Week	Distance Learning	Distance Learning	Distance Learning

## October Schedule\*

\*As current COVID-19 numbers allow. This is subject to change

K-8	K-2	3-4	5	6	7-8
Oct 5-9	Connection Week	Connection Week	Connection Week	Connection Week	Connection Week
Oct 12-16	Herbstferien - Fall Break (no school)				
Oct 19-23	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)
Oct 26-30	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)	Distance Learning Week (after break)

### Sections & Learning Cohorts (K-8)

Based on our 3 family surveys, we expect that approx. 25-30% of our families will opt for a Distance Learning model based on choice or health concerns. TCGIS will offer three Sections in each grade level: Hybrid Sections and 100% Distance Learning Sections are based on family choice. Based on survey numbers, we are planning to offer **two** hybrid

sections, and **one** 100% Distance Learning section per grade level. If more families choose to opt for the distance learning model, some grade levels could have **one** hybrid section, and **two** 100% Distance Learning sections.

For a small district like TCGIS it is not sustainable to offer 3 sections of hybrid or in-person learning and add a 4th section of Distance Learning. It is also unsustainable for teacher workload to teach a hybrid **and** distance learning cohort simultaneously with synchronous learning taking place in all groups.

Families will be asked to share their preferred model by Sunday, August 16 in order to create new class composition lists. Sections will be created based on last names and having siblings in the same rotation model to support our families. Families may choose to change from a Hybrid Section to a Distance Learning section at any time. The possibility to move from a Distance Learning section to a Hybrid Section is limited and will depend on factors like cohort size and need for extra support.

### Overview Sections (K-8)

#### Elementary School

<b>KA</b> Distance + Connection	<b>KB</b> Distance + Connection	<b>KC</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>1A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>1B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>1C</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>2A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>2B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>2C</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>3A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>3B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>3C</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>4A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>4B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>4C</b> 100% Distance Learning

#### Middle School

<b>5A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>5B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>5C</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>6A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>6B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>6C</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>7A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>7B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>7C</b> 100% Distance Learning
<b>8A</b> Distance + Connection	<b>8B</b> Distance + Connection	<b>8 online</b> 100% Distance Learning

## Will the school calendar change?

As part of a [modified 2020-2021 school calendar](#), TCGIS Administration proposes a change in the school year start date from Monday, August 31 to Tuesday, September 8. We have moved all professional development days into weeks that are planned distance learning days to decrease the number of days on which families need to arrange child care.

Starting on September 8 would add four additional staff work days to the time we have before school starts, something that our educators would desperately appreciate. In a normal year, the start of school feels rushed and the phrase “There’s never enough time.” is said by nearly everyone. Between setting up a classroom, coordinating with colleagues, attending mandatory annual trainings, and simply familiarizing oneself with class lists, the typical five days for returning teachers and ten days for new teachers are quickly filled.

This year, in addition to all that, our staff will need to:

1. Take part in trainings about hygiene practices and building safety in order to themselves and students safe
2. Adapt lessons to online and hybrid models
3. Take part in trainings for educators designed to improve online instruction
4. Adapt lessons to integrate new tech tools to increase student engagement
5. Collaborate on procedures & best practices for school-wide expectations to support distance learning and in-person learning
6. Redesignate teaching and working spaces based on social distancing guidelines and move into those spaces plus moving (new building)
7. For Special Education: Amend IEPs, coordinate with general education teachers on service delivery in a new setting
8. Continue / Finalize and share results from the (voluntary) teacher work groups around procedures (student engagement, classroom management, MS advisory structure, equity and belonging, etc)
9. Collaborate on procedures & best practices for school-wide expectations to support distance learning and in-person learning
10. Collaborate with each other and German immersion schools
11. Adapt Responsive Classroom to maintain a safe classroom and for Distance Learning
12. Adapt PBIS to our new school models
13. Rebuild our *Lernplan* document for current changes

14. Reimagine how we connect with families for special events like open house and conferences
15. Remake class lists and re-enroll students into their cohorts in PowerSchool
16. Refine schedules with teachers, rebuild schedules in PowerSchool

## What will Distance Learning look like?

All students will participate in distance learning this fall. Distance Learning Weeks consist of structured days with scheduled learning blocks that allow for synchronous interaction with teachers, other staff, and other students. Synchronous instruction includes live teaching, pre-recorded lessons, independent work to build skills, and digital curriculum resources. We expect this to be a substantial improvement on our crisis distance learning in the spring.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group A			All students learn from home, scheduled live instruction in the morning   Deep cleaning  Student Services  Afternoon work time for staff (planning, collaboration, teams)		
Group B					
Group C (distance learning)					

## Operations: Creating Healthy Environments

- **Protection:**
  - Require face coverings masks and/or face shields for all staff and students, as mandated by the Governor.
  - Signage regarding hand washing and when to stay home if you are sick will be posted throughout the school building.
- **Cleaning and Disinfection:**
  - Clean and disinfect (regulated schedule) frequently touched surfaces (door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains) within the school at least daily or between use.
  - Increase handwashing stations and/or access to hand sanitizer.
  - Continuous hygiene and safety education for staff and students.
  - Sanitation materials will be placed throughout the building and at entrances.
- **Avoid Shared Objects:**
  - Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.
  - Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials.
  - Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, other games and/or learning aids
- **Increase Ventilation:**
  - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly, use the highest grade filters available for our systems (Merv13 grade filters).
  - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by open windows and doors, whenever feasible.
  - Highly Frequented areas will get a Hepa Filter Portable System
- **Redesignate Spaces:**
  - The square footage of every room has been calculated to determine capacity with 6ft distance.
  - Middle School Teachers may get individual work spaces to limit time in classrooms and/or mingling.



- **Modified Layouts, Increased Physical Barriers, and Physical Guides:**
  - Space seating facing same direction (1 student to 1 table).
  - Install physical barriers especially front office and areas hard to maintain social distancing (one to one space).
  - Provide physical guides (such as tape on floors) to ensure staff and children remain at least 6 feet apart in lines and at other times
  - Removal of non-essential furniture.
- **Close Communal Spaces:**
  - TCGIS will likely close the cafeteria and serve individually plated meals or student provided meals in classrooms.
  - It will also be necessary to limit the number of staff in common areas - copiers, mailroom, staff lounge.
- **COVID-19 Coordinator:**
  - TCGIS Health Service Associate will function as the school's COVID-19 Coordinator in collaboration with the Director of Operations to trace, track and report any COVID-10 cases to the MDH.
  - Health Service Associate will also oversee the schools quarantine room.

## Operations: Creating Healthy Procedures

- **Protections for Staff and Children at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19:**
  - Those unable to work or learn in building will be provided accommodations and/or work from home opportunities
- **Regulatory Awareness:**
  - Following CDC and MDH Guidelines (continuously updating expectations and procedures)
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting):**
  - Limiting building wide movement, mingling, and groups in order to limit exposure risk.



- Limiting movement within the classroom, especially for older students
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact and Clarify Communication System:**
  - School Health Associate and Director of Operations track self-reporting of staff and families through designated email;
  - Notifying staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure
- **Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread:**
  - Staying Home when sick and posting around the school
  - Increase hygiene education
  - Face coverings will be worn by staff and students at all times, and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.
- **Recognition of Symptoms:**
  - Daily symptom check of staff and students
- **Preparing for Illness at School:**
  - Stay Home when Sick
  - Isolation Room; transport or remove those who are or become sick
  - Notify health officials and close contacts
  - Continue to follow Families First Coronavirus Response Act

## Operations: Healthy Transportation

- **Student Capacity:**
  - MDE/MDH determines the number of students per bus (50% Maximum Capacity).
  - Students from the same household may sit together.
  - Students will load the bus using seats in the back first and unload the bus from front to back.
- **Face Coverings:**
  - The state requires face coverings for bus riders including students in kindergarten through grade 12. TCGIS will provide face coverings for students if necessary.
  - The bus company will provide face coverings for their employees.
- **Health and safety:**
  - Buses will be disinfected following each route with special attention to high touch areas.

- Additional ventilation may be provided from partially opening windows and/or roof hatches as conditions permit.
- Safety signage may be added to promote physical distancing based on MDE/MDH bus capacity limits
- **Pick Up and Drop Off Zones:**
  - School pick up and drop off zones will be modified to support distancing of students.

## Operations: Healthy Nutrition Services

- **During In Person Learning:**
  - Lunch will be available to students on-site daily.
  - Meals will be pre-packaged. Meal times will likely be relocated to small-group settings outside of the cafeteria, including classroom spaces. Nutrition Service Staff will safely deliver meals to classrooms in food designated bins.
- **Health and Safety:**
  - Nutrition Services staff will wear face coverings.
  - Students will wash hands before meal service and after meal service.
- **During Connection Weeks**, students who need them will have the opportunity to take meals home for days they are not at school. **In a distance learning scenario**, families who need them will be invited to pick up pre-packaged meals at TCGIS.
- TCGIS will follow the [Food Service Worker Safety Information: Guidance for School Food Programs](#)

## Operations: Healthy Kinderclub Services

- Kinderclub will be available for families with students 12 years and under. Priority will be given to [TIER 1 families](#), according to Executive Order 20-82:
  - Healthcare and Public Health
  - Law enforcement, public safety and first responders
  - Food and agriculture
  - Judicial Branch (essential services)
  - National Guard (activated under a Governor Executive Order)
  - Educators and school staff providing in-person instruction or caring for children of critical workers
  - Child care and school-age care providers.

- Kinderclub will open to additional Tier 2 and 3 Essential Workers for a fee and Families in financial hardship, on a fee based scale.
- During K-8 Connection weeks Kinderclub will use large spaces like the gym or cafeteria (working to minimize cohort mixing as much is feasible). During K-4 Connection weeks, students will be split into Middle School/Open classrooms to minimize mingling as much as feasible.
- Fees will be charged as following, other than Tier 1 during school hours:
  - Full Day (8am-6pm): \$50.00
  - School Day Only (8:00am-3:15pm): \$35.00
  - After-School Addition (3:15pm-6:00pm): \$15.00

# Leveled Up Distance Learning

## Lessons Learned from Spring 2020

The impact of the school closures on student achievement and well-being<sup>1</sup> as well as the impact on educators<sup>2</sup> has been shown through various studies. We have also surveyed our own families and staff and took their feedback into account when we created a model that is taking **student, family, and staff needs** into consideration. Documenting what worked and what didn't in the spring 2020 distance learning implementation has informed decisions and planning for our distance learning model in the fall 2020.

### Instructional Model

- Consistent implementation of a more **uniform instructional schedule**
- More **synchronous student learning** (live, interactive learning) is preferred. Increased access to live teaching experiences is needed to reduce the family burden to support student learning.
- **Increased social emotional learning** (SEL) opportunities are needed in a virtual environment.
- **Students and parents need standardized, organized and consistent structure** and technology platforms for distance learning.

### Instructional Practices

- **Staff need dedicated time to plan** and work in collaborative teams.
- **Ongoing professional development** is needed to strengthen virtual teaching strategies.
- **Consistent inclusion of “specialist” classes** in elementary school and electives in middle schools is needed to support the whole child.
- Grading policies should be carefully crafted to appropriately encourage and support student engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Kuhfeld, Megan, James Soland, Beth Tarasawa, Angela Johnson, Erik Ruzek, and Jing Liu. (2020). Projecting the potential impacts of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. (EdWorkingPaper: 20-226). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/cdrv-yw05>, Santibanez, Lucrecia, and Cassandra Guarino. (2020). The Effects of Absenteeism on Cognitive and Social-Emotional Outcomes: Lessons for COVID-19. (EdWorkingPaper: 20-261). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/yj9m-x430> <https://www.cehd.umn.edu/research/distance-learning/>, Golberstein E, Wen H, Miller BF. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Mental Health for Children and Adolescents. JAMA Pediatr. Published online April 14, 2020. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2020.1456

<sup>2</sup> Katie Pekel, Kim Gibbons, Alyssa Parr, Nicole McKeveitt, Laura Potter, Alex Evenson (2020). Minnesota PK-12 Distance Learning Survey, Charter School Report: Retrieved from the university of Minnesota [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q\\_3TdqwCkW1dMQocelF0KhdRR9eeos4s/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1q_3TdqwCkW1dMQocelF0KhdRR9eeos4s/view)

- **Distance learning must be more than just screen time:** social emotional learning, connection with peers is essential, connection with educators.
- **Exclusive reliance on written instructions is too much for some,** there is more need for screen-to-screen connection and varying instruction format.

## 2020-2021 Teaching & Learning

### Student Engagement

- We aim to **build relationships** during our connection weeks to enhance the engagement and achievement of distance learning.
- We will provide **direct instruction** during connection time to ensure success during distance learning time.
- Teachers will receive **professional development** in a variety of ways to provide support to help in the distance learning phases and maximize the use of our tech tools.
- In hybrid and distance models, we will continue to provide **check-ins and support to students** for whom connecting from home proved exceptionally difficult.
- **Daily attendance** taking strategies and reporting requirements will be designed based on reports from the online learning platform and other instructional tasks
- Advisory groupings in MS offer opportunities for more robust **social emotional learning** and academic check-ins
- Strategies for **connecting with students and families** while not physically at school are a top priority for our educators.
- Strategies and planning on how to keep students whose families choose for them to remain as a full distance learning **engaged** and participating in **synchronous** daily lessons (streaming options, webcams may be needed, learning buddies)
- We will call on our Educational Assistants to assist in reaching out to students in distance learning.

### Scheduling

- **Schedule design:** Daily schedules for distance learning and connection weeks are done in collaboration with teachers and will be finalized and sent to families within the next few weeks. Special Education caseloads will be determined based on

educational need AND reduced number of contacts for teachers during the school day.

- Schedules were made with **consideration of transitional ease** between hybrid and distance learning.
- Cohorts of students will be **based on choice** between hybrid and distance, special ed and student management loads.
- **Teacher workload sustainability and avoiding teacher burnout are top priorities in scheduling** with special consideration for lower elementary and specialists.
- Per the Minnesota Department of Education guidance document, all school districts are directed to plan for and be able to **switch between hybrid, distance and in-person models within 5 days**. Therefore, ONE schedule has to be created to cover the needs of all 3 scenarios.
  - We are considering traditional schedules and block schedules
  - Specialists in K-6 will most likely rotate on a weekly or monthly basis to allow for meaningful relationship building
  - Advisories in MS will most likely be the class cohort (5A, 7B, etc.)
- Teachers will receive additional **preparation and collaboration time** on Wednesday afternoons to create online content, manage two cohorts during connection weeks, check in with families and to collaborate with other teachers.
- **Teachers will work both synchronously and asynchronously with children**, emphasizing synchronous instruction compared to last spring. It is mandated by MDE that students engage in their synchronous learning and submit artifacts for their asynchronous learning in order to be considered “present.”

## German Immersion

German Immersion is the centerpiece of our school’s education - this is why we started early to pay special attention to language delivery and language learning not only to teach our students as good as possible during these times but also to always improve the German immersion concept at our school.

For us the keys for a successful German immersion delivery are collaboration (not only among colleagues but also among the German Immersion schools in the country) and streamlining, complex and productive exercises & activities that are engaging for our students, and aligning our assessments & grading procedures.



## Build consistent German Immersion practices through collaboration

- Exploring and streamlining usage of software / materials for more consistency

- Working on toolkits to be used by all German teaching teachers in order to use best practices consistently
- Creating unit examples together with focus on language learning targets and what each one of us can do to support our students to reach them
- Also focus on complexity and productive exercises that are engaging for our students
- Find / create productive options for off screen work/ activities
- Align assessment & grading procedures to make it easier for students to follow through
- Exchange of ideas & best practices with other German immersion schools across the country
- Collaboration with the German Immersion Schools in Milwaukee and Anchoarge to exchange ideas and best practices

### What **German Immersion delivery will look like**

- In general:
  - We will continue to curate multiple options on our **German enrichment website** for work time in the afternoons and incorporate them into our expectations of students
- During Connection Weeks:
  - **At school**: Focus on the *interacting parts of language-learning* when students are in school
  - **At home**: Focus on *reading and writing* when students are at home
- During Distance Learning:
  - **Cover all the different parts of language and grammar with options to work off screen**

### How we support students and families outside of instruction / school

- Students & families can use the options offered by our **German enrichment website**
- **German language courses** for parents at the German-American Institute (GAI)

### Further considerations

- Help parents to organize **German support groups** (German tutoring for parents / students; translation help etc.)
- **Individual / small group tutorings offers**

## **Special Education**

**Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plans** TCGIS will (in person or virtually) deliver specialized instruction from licensed special education teachers and related service providers. Instructional videos, online and electronic assignments, live video and telephone instruction, paraprofessional support, and weekly parent phone calls will support the provision of special education services and modes of communication during distance learning weeks. General education teachers will support the provision of accommodations and modifications through assistive technology, modified work, and other means as appropriate per student's individualized accommodations.

**Parent communication regarding services, direct specialized instruction, related services, and accommodations** TCGIS will schedule virtual meetings, when appropriate, to amend IEPs and facilitate annual IEP meetings. All requirements and practices surrounding IEP meetings will remain the same as they were before the implementation of distance learning, with the exception of virtual participation. Parents will continue to receive regular email communication from the Assistant Director of Special Education, other administrators, and case managers throughout the period of distance learning to provide updates. Parents will have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the IEP process as IEP meetings continue to be scheduled and held.

### **Special Education Protocols:**

The child find process at TCGIS will remain the same. The School Wide Support Team - teachers meeting regularly to identify struggling students and take steps to assist - will continue to meet and students will continue to receive intervention support. Evaluation activities with face-to-face components may be delayed during distance learning. This includes any direct assessment and student observations. Evaluation activities aside from direct assessment and observation, including interviews, indirect assessment (protocol completion), and report writing will continue. General Education and Special Education teachers will interact - both in person and virtually - through individual contact and regularly scheduled grade level meetings.

## Mental Health Support

The outbreak of COVID-19 as well as isolation from friends and family is stressful for many members of our community. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in both adults and children.

TCGIS is also a unique working place where people from across the world are working together. Knowing that disconnection not only from the home country / state but from families during these times can be very difficult it is important to look after our staff.

### **MDH Guidelines** “Support mental health and wellness”

- **Requirement** in-person & hybrid: Provide staff, families, and students (age-appropriate) with information on how to access resources for mental health and wellness.
- **Recommendation** in-person & hybrid: Increase capacity to offer social support services by increasing the number of professionals on-site. Encourage staff, students, and families to talk with people they trust about their feelings and concerns regarding COVID-19” during the in-person and the hybrid model.

### **TCGIS Support Systems**

Besides the state’s requirements TCGIS worked with the school psychologist, the school-wide support team and has asked staff about their needs to not only meet the state's requirements but to ensure resources and helpful procedures to our staff, students and our families to support mental health & well-being during all phases in this school year.

Mental health support for our students	Mental health support for our teachers	Mental health support for our families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Social Emotional Learning (SEL) including direct instruction from teacher on how to manage their health</li> <li>● Weekly SWST / Team Meetings to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide resources on how to support / maintain mental health on our website (including a list with therapists that are accepting new patients)</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Regular personal admin check ins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide resources on how to support your child's mental</li> </ul>

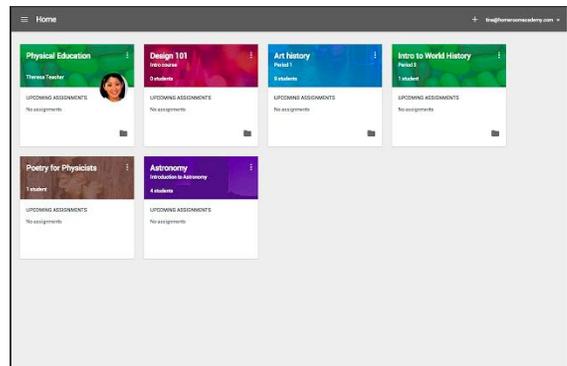
<p>find students that need support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Check ins from staff with special attention paid to those that have been identified as struggling</li> </ul>	<p>with individual staff members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Guide from our team of school psychologists (lead teachers into the right direction to maintain / support their mental health)</li> <li>● Mental health coaching / training</li> <li>● Admin flexibility around personal schedules</li> <li>● Support teachers in communicating with families</li> </ul>	<p>health on our website</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaborate with our parent council in order support our families to navigate through these difficult times</li> <li>● Encourage parents to build groups / teams to create</li> <li>● Exchange and synergize best practices during hybrid &amp; distance learning</li> </ul>
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The [Stress Management Resource Page](#) will also continuously be updated throughout the year. Our page does gives guidance how to react to this global pandemic and its consequences but also offers specific information on Mental Health Resources in German and English.

# Technology and Support

## Technology to Support Hybrid and Distance Learning

- All scenarios will require the use of an **online classroom platform** in order to quickly shift from one scenario to another scenario without a transition period.
- In the **Elementary School**, we will work with the Learning Management System Seesaw which offers the functionality needed by our ES educators and can embed other tools to foster immersion opportunities and creative interaction: EdPuzzle, Flipgrid, Kahoot, Quizlet
- In the **Middle School**, we will continue to work with Google Apps for Education as a Learning Management Systems platform in the Middle School: Google Classroom is easy to use and our staff and students are familiar with google applications such as Docs, Sheets and Slides. Google Classroom is also the most cost-effective and has the functionality we need to go between the different scenarios. It has the ability to embed other tools to foster immersion opportunities and creative interaction: EdPuzzle, Flipgrid, Kahoot, Quizlet Seesaw
- **Synchronous instruction:** Google Meet, Zoom
- **Increasing Tech devices** and replacing 130 Chromebooks
- Outreach to families with a **“Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Survey”** sent out to help alleviate budget constraints
- K-2 parents will still need to provide tech at home (iPad cart remains at school)



## Technology Support for Teachers and Students

### Supporting Teachers:

- **Teachers are trained to work with students face to face** and in-person, NOT as digital-only instructors
- Targeted Professional Development opportunities will be provided to teacher and other instructional staff regarding Learning Management Systems, Online Tools, German Immersion in a hybrid/distant model and Health Practices, and Mental Health for Staff & Students, and other relevant topics.

### Supporting Students:

- Students' organizational abilities and independence vary greatly
- Students succeed when structures are consistent and predictable
- Update and upgrade German Immersion Enrichment Website
- Update and upgrade Distance Learning Website

### Supporting Parents:

- Parent capacity to support students in various platforms is limited
- TCGIS will continue to provide Technical Assistance to parents
- Update and upgrade German Immersion Enrichment Website
- Update and upgrade Distance Learning Website