

## Virtual Instructional Program (VIP) FAQ

***\*This is a fluid document based on current information. The below information is subject to change if new guidance is issued by education, government and/or health officials. This information can also be found on the DeSoto County Schools website.***

### General

#### **How do I find information about the Virtual Instructional Program (VIP)?**

Anyone can access the website here for information about the VIP...

<http://www.desotocountyschools.org/distancelearning>

This FAQ document, that is constantly being updated, is located at this site...

<https://www.desotocountyschools.org/DLFAQS>

Parents and/or guardians are encouraged to frequently check the FAQ document as questions and answers will be added.

Parents and/or guardians must complete the DeSoto County Schools (DCS) registration process and the VIP Intent application. Students and parents will not be contacted about the virtual instructional program if the DCS Registration is not completed.

#### **Now that students' first day is August 17<sup>th</sup> and November 3<sup>rd</sup> is not a district-wide distance learning day, does that alter anything with VIP students?**

The only thing that changes for students enrolled in the VIP will be that their first day to start distance learning is August 17<sup>th</sup> instead of August 10<sup>th</sup>, just like traditional students. November 3<sup>rd</sup> will now be a student holiday for VIP students as well as traditional students.

### Typical school day/time of activities for students

#### **What will the typical Virtual Instructional Program school day be like? Will my child's schedule be similar to that as if they were in the building?**

Students must participate in 240 minutes of instruction/activities daily, as required by the Mississippi Department of Education.

The direct instruction/communication with DeSoto County staff will only occur during traditional school hours on school days.

#### Sample Distance Learning (VIP) School Day for Elementary Students (Kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade)

- A. **Time** – An equivalent of 240 minutes of instruction will be offered. This could include recorded or live teaching from the classroom teacher, instructional videos, tasks, assignments, and/or activities. The mode of instruction will vary by school, grade level and/or course.
- B. **Procedures and learning expectations** – Academic procedures and expectations will mirror the traditional classroom as much as possible.
- C. **English/Language Arts** – The Schoology platform will house lessons including new instruction and review of standards and learning targets, independent practice (offline), and some virtual small group and/or one on one instruction to meet the needs of students.
- D. **Math** - The Schoology platform will house lessons including new instruction and review of standards and learning targets, independent practice (offline), and some virtual small group and/or one on one instruction to meet the needs of students.

- E. **Science and Social Studies** – The Schoology platform will house lessons linked through various sites and/or online texts. Science and social studies topics will be incorporated in English/language arts as much as possible.
- F. **Assessment** – An assessment will be entered in Schoology for use to determine students' needs at the beginning of the year. Additionally, formative checks and summative assessments used in the traditional school model will be adapted to allow for online access. Students may also be required to take district and state assessments periodically throughout the year. See assessment section on this FAQ for more details.
- G. **Teacher Check-ins** – All students will be provided feedback and guidance through Schoology. Parents and/or students may reach out to teachers with questions and requests for help at any time. Teachers will respond to requests by the end of the next school day.

Sample Distance Learning (VIP) School Day for Secondary Students (6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Grade):

- A. **Time** – An equivalent of 240 minutes of instruction will be offered. This could include recorded or live teaching from the classroom teacher, instructional videos, tasks, assignments, and/or activities. The mode of instruction will vary by school, grade level and/or course.
- B. **Procedures and Learning Expectations** – Academic procedures and expectations will mirror the traditional classroom as much as possible.
- C. **All Secondary Courses** – The Schoology platform will house instructional lessons including a review of previous material and learning targets, direct instruction, and independent practice (offline). Direct instruction could consist of pre-recorded instructional videos, narrated PowerPoints, guided practice, or independent reading of content or textbooks.
- D. **Assessment** – Students will be provided multiple opportunities to showcase their learning through formal and informal assessments in Schoology. Students may also be required to take district and state assessments periodically throughout the year. See assessment section on this FAQ for more details.
- H. **Teacher Check-ins** – All students will be provided feedback and guidance through Schoology. Parents and/or students may reach out to teachers with questions and requests for help at any time. Teachers will respond to requests by the end of the next school day.
- E. **Parent Communication** - Parents will be notified of student progress through Schoology and will be able to access student grades through the parent portal in PowerSchool.

**Why has the 240-minute requirement been put in place by the Mississippi Department of Education?**

Mississippi law makes education for any child between the age of 6 and 17 compulsory and requires schools to report daily attendance for truancy purposes.

**Will my student be assigned to a teacher?**

Yes, all students will be assigned to a teacher for each core class and the majority of elective classes. Certain high school elective classes could be completed through Edgenuity with a certified teacher if the class is not offered by the school with a DeSoto County teacher available.

*Scheduling***Will all courses offered in schools be available in the Virtual Instructional Program?**

Core courses will be offered. Because elective offerings for the Virtual Instructional Program will be built based on course selections and the availability of teachers, it is difficult to definitively identify exactly which specific courses will be available at this point. This magnifies the importance of the July 22 deadline.

**What should I do if I need to discuss my student's schedule?**

Please contact the school as you would if the student was in the traditional setting.

*Technology***How is technology going to be handled? Will students get devices if needed?**

Through the VIP application form, parents can indicate whether their students need devices. District officials will work with individual families in the upcoming weeks to address needs.

**Can students use a personal-owned device for distance learning?**

Yes, any internet capable device can be used to access Schoology. Windows Laptops/PCs, Macbooks/iMacs, Chromebooks, iPads, and Android tablets can be used to access Schoology courses. While phones can access Schoology, devices with a larger screen are preferred.

*Special Education***Will my student receive Special Education services if enrolled in the VIP?**

A student's IEP was written to provide services in a traditional school setting to provide personalized instruction to support that student. Some special education services and related services along with supplementary aids and services may not be appropriate or feasible in a virtual learning program. An IEP meeting will be held at the beginning of the school year to determine the services that can be provided while the student is using the virtual learning platform.

*Gifted/Spotlight Education***Will my student receive Gifted/Spotlight services if enrolled in the VIP?**

Yes. Gifted/Spotlight students will receive services/assignments through Schoology similar to other classes. The student's Gifted/Spotlight teacher will be in contact after school begins.

*English Learners***Will my student receive English Learner services if enrolled in the VIP?**

Yes. English Learner students will receive services as outlined in their language service plan. The student's English Learner teacher will be in contact after school begins.

**Will my student receive 504 services if enrolled in the VIP?**

A student's 504 plan was written to provide accommodations in a traditional school setting to provide equity due to that student's disability. Some accommodations may not be appropriate or feasible in a virtual learning program. A 504 meeting will be held at the beginning of the school year to determine the accommodations that can be provided while the student is using the virtual learning platform.

*Changes to VIP status*

**Will students be able to go back to the traditional setting at any point in the year?**

Students have until July 22<sup>nd</sup> to enroll or withdraw freely in VIP. After July 22<sup>nd</sup>, students will be able to enroll or withdraw at the end of every 9 weeks. VIP students will automatically be enrolled in the virtual instructional program each 9 weeks unless a request is made by the guardian to remove the student from the program. Requests to be removed from the program at the end of a 9 weeks period can be made by sending an email to [distancelearning@dcsms.org](mailto:distancelearning@dcsms.org). Grading, attendance, scheduling and other factors are reported to the Mississippi Department of Education. Therefore, these factors cannot be altered except at certain points in the year.

**Will students be able to get into the VIP at any point in the year?**

Students have until July 22<sup>nd</sup> to enroll or withdraw freely in VIP. After July 22<sup>nd</sup>, students will be able to enroll or withdraw at the end of every 9 weeks. Students are automatically enrolled in their current program unless a request is made by the guardian to remove the student from the program. Requests to enter the VIP at the end of each 9 weeks period can be made by sending an email to [distancelearning@dcsms.org](mailto:distancelearning@dcsms.org). Grading, attendance, scheduling and other factors are reported to the Mississippi Department of Education. Therefore, these factors cannot be altered except at certain points in the year.

**If my child changes to the traditional setting from the VIP or vice versa, will his/her teacher(s) and/or schedule change?**

It is possible that the schedule and/or classroom teacher(s) could change if a student is changed from the VIP setting to the traditional setting or vice versa. This will vary by school, grade level and/or course.

*Schoology (Learning Management System)*

**What is Schoology?**

Schoology is an online platform that will be used by all teachers and students for all classroom assignments.

**How do I learn about Schoology?**

Guardians and parents will receive more information prior to the beginning of school.

**How will assignments be posted and submitted?**

All assignments will be posted and submitted through the Schoology platform.

*Extracurricular*

**Will students enrolled in the VIP be able to participate in extracurricular activities?**

Extracurricular activities such as athletics and fine arts will not be available because VIP students will be working off campus.

**If a student goes back to the traditional setting during the year, could the student participate in extracurricular activities?**

This will be a school-based decision at the time of re-entry into the traditional setting.

*Career Tech*

**Will students enrolled in the VIP be able to participate in Career Tech?**

For Career Tech programs, much of the curriculum requires hands-on learning and use of tools, equipment, and lab space that is provided to our students on campus. Because Career Tech uses a hands-on learning model, students can only be served in a face-to-face environment. Therefore, if students choose to apply for distance learning, they will not be able to participate in their Career Tech program.

*Assessment*

**Which assessments do students in the VIP take?**

Not all students take a state assessment.

Students in 1st grade or 2nd grade do not take a state assessment unless they are in the English Learner program. All students in all grade levels (K-12) that are in the English Learner program take a state assessment.

Students in high school only take a state assessment if they are enrolled in Algebra I, English II, Biology I, U.S. History or are an 11th grader.

All students in kindergarten and grades 3-8 take a state assessment regardless of subjects or programs.

Students in grades 1-8 will take a benchmark assessment. Students enrolled in Algebra I, English II, Biology I or U.S. History will take a benchmark assessment.

Students in grades K-3 will take a universal screener required by state law.

Details for the different assessments that are required are being worked out and will be communicated as the time for each assessment approaches.

*Child Nutrition*

**Can my student receive lunch if enrolled in the VIP?**

Yes. Meals will be available each day at a designated pick up time at each school location. Parents will be asked to sign up for meals weekly.

# VIRTUAL INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

## DeSoto County Schools Full-Time Distance Learning Program: Description and Considerations

In order to give flexibility to families during the 2020-2021 school year, school officials are offering students the option of participating in the DeSoto County Schools Virtual Instructional Program.

Students in the Virtual Instructional Program will still be enrolled at their regular school, but they will participate in virtual learning and complete their assignments at home. Teachers will assist students in working through weekly assignments with a mix of interactive and independent activities. The content and the pace will match traditional school curriculum expectations.

Please note the following when determining if applying for distance learning is the best option for your child:

- Online/digital learning will be the primary method of working towards competency in a grade level and/or content area. Because distance learning will not be delivered through paper packets, students must have access to adequate Internet services. Students will use the district-approved online learning management system, Schoology.
- Distance learning students will follow the academic calendar approved by the school board. Classes will start on the first student day in August 2020 and end on the last student day in the spring of 2021.
- Best practices for distance learning will be employed to include rigorous instruction, high expectations of student performance, and meeting all grade-level standards.
- Distance learning students must be committed to online learning. While distance learning is an option for students in unique situations, distance learning does not serve as an equitable alternative to the traditional classroom setting.
- Attendance will be taken in accordance with the Mississippi Department of Education's attendance guidelines regarding distance learning.
- Some elective courses and opportunities may not be offered to full-time distance learning students. For example, extracurricular activities such as athletics and fine arts will not be available because full-time distance learning students will be working off-campus.
- All Desoto County grading policies and procedures will apply during distance learning.
- A unique partnership must be established between all educators, students, parents and caregivers. It is imperative that all parties communicate to pay close attention to the development of each child and ensure that appropriate grade level growth takes place at a distance.
- Grab-and-Go meals will be available for distance learning students. The Child Nutrition Department will follow a schedule similar to the Spring 2020 Grab-and-Go meal distribution plan.
- Approved applications will be in effect on a semester-by-semester basis. There will be an opportunity to transfer from full-time virtual learning to the school/traditional classroom setting at the end of each nine weeks.
- Expressing intent to participate constitutes a commitment to virtual learning and acknowledgement to all the statements in this document, the DeSoto County Schools Distance Learning Description and Considerations.
- Universal screener and state assessments are required by the Mississippi Department of Education and/or state law. Benchmark assessments, Advanced Placement assessments, and other assessments due to the student's classes or grade may also be necessary. At this point in time, students in a distance learning environment may be required to participate in any or all of these assessments. These assessments will be completed at home if possible. Details regarding these assessments will be discussed with guardians when they become available. Safety for the students will be the top priority.

For any questions please contact us at [distancelearning@dcsms.org](mailto:distancelearning@dcsms.org).