

# KCS CONNECT

## Fall 2020

### **Academics & Virtual Learning Program / Frequently Asked Questions**

*Updated on 7.17.20*

#### **Which classes will be provided in the virtual learning program -- will Honors, AP, dual enrollment, music, art and CTE courses be available?**

Class offerings will largely be based on demand among virtual students at each school. In some cases, classes that are not available through the school may be offered district-wide through the QuEST program, but only if there is sufficient demand from students who cannot access those courses at their base school.

Most CTE elective courses include student standards that require students to be “hands-on” with tools, specific technology, and/or equipment. Many of these standards cannot be met sufficiently in the virtual environment. The KCS CTE department will work with high school administrators, counselors, and the QuEST program administrators to identify the CTE elective pathways that are most transferable to a virtual environment. These virtual options may include content areas like business, health sciences, criminal justice, etc.

Art and music offerings will look very different. Fine arts teachers will be providing online courses; however, the activities will not mirror in-class activities. We are not equipped to replicate performances.

#### **Will middle school students still be able to take high school classes if they enroll in the virtual learning program?**

In this case, high school classes will be subject to the amount of demand from middle-school students.

#### **Students who enroll in the virtual learning program must remain in that option through December. Are students who attend classes in-person also required to stay with that option through the end of the semester?**

Yes. Students who enroll in the virtual learning program by July 22 must commit to that program for the full semester.

Students who do not enroll in the virtual learning program will attend school in-person, and must commit to in-school instruction for the full semester, unless there is a medical reason they cannot attend school in person.

**Can I walk my Kindergartner to class on the first day of school?**

We understand that the first day of Kindergarten is an important milestone. Schools will be given flexibility to stagger the arrival time of Kindergarten students on their first staggered day in order to meet the guidelines for physical distancing and gathering restrictions. Parents will be allowed to walk students to the classroom on the student’s first assigned staggered day. This will be considered a visitor with an appointment. Temperature checks will need to occur prior to adults visiting the classroom. On the second staggered day, parents should not walk their children to class.

**When does staggered Kindergarten start?** Schools will be conducting staggered days for Kindergarten, beginning on August 18. Schools will be sending letters to parents of Kindergarten students with specific dates for each child who has been enrolled. The first full day for Kindergarten students will be August 31.

**Will my K-6 student be assigned to a specific teacher if they’re in the virtual learning program?**

Yes. K-6 students in the virtual learning program will be assigned to a specific teacher.

**Besides the start date of August 17, are any additional changes being made to the school calendar?**

At this time, no other changes to [the calendar](#) have been made.

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**What are my options for sending my child back to school?**

The reopening plan released on July 15 calls for schools to reopen on August 17, with new measures implemented to protect the health and safety of our students, employees, and school communities. (Please see our Health and Safety FAQ for more details about these changes.)

However, students who do not feel comfortable returning to school for the fall semester can enroll in our virtual option. The Virtual Learning Program will run primarily through the base school. Knox County has expanded the district’s QuEST Program\* (see below) to supplement classes that cannot be provided by the base school.

The virtual school will combine synchronous and asynchronous learning methods, so students will have a 6.5 hour school day with some digital, personal interaction through Microsoft Teams and some group and independent work through the Canvas platform. Depending on the grade level, students will also have homework to prepare for the next school day. Student attendance will be required daily.

- Class size will mirror that of the traditional classroom.
- Classes will meet remotely through Microsoft Teams and Canvas will be the digital backpack.

- Aspen will be the digital report card and communication tool for parents/guardians and teachers.
- Students may need to come to the school at designated times (with physical distancing and mask protocols) for state-required assessments (AimsWeb Plus, TNReady, etc.)
- Instruction will be a blend of direct instruction, practice, inquiry, group meetings, small group, and whole-group support as dictated by the academic standards and the students' learning needs.
- Students will earn grades that will become part of their permanent academic history. For high school credit-bearing courses, grades will contribute to the formation of the students' GPA.
- Students enrolled in either the school's virtual classes or the district's QuEST Program remain enrolled in their assigned school and will be allowed to participate in after school and extracurricular activities.

**Is this opportunity available for all students?**

Yes. Please see the Special Education / ELL FAQ for more information about services.

**When will I have to make a final decision about my child's learning path?**

Virtual Learning Program registration will be open from July 15 - 22, 2020. Parents may complete the application online. An in-person parent orientation at your child's school will be scheduled prior to the start of school.

**Will I be allowed to change my child's learning option before the first semester ends?**

The expectation will be that students who enroll in the Virtual Learning Program at the beginning of the school year will be expected to continue in the program until the semester break in December. There will be an option in December for students to either continue in the Virtual Learning Program or return to their assigned school in January.

There will be exceptions made for students who are required to quarantine or other special circumstances. For quarantine or short-term absences, whenever possible, teachers will work with the students as they do with students who are absent for any other reasons. In other cases, the virtual learning program might be beneficial. However, those students would be expected to return to face-to-face instruction once released from the quarantine.

**If a student enrolls in the Virtual Learning Program, will they be able to participate in extracurricular activities such as marching band or athletics?**

Yes, students who enroll in the Virtual Learning Program will be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities.

**If a student is quarantined or isolated, will they be able to receive online instruction while they are out of school?**

Students will have access to instruction via virtual learning opportunities.

**If students choose the Virtual Learning Program, will they lose their school transfer spot for the next year?**

Because students will remain enrolled in their assigned school, their school transfer would continue to be in effect through the terminal grade of their assigned school.

**When will I know my child's schedule for the fall?**

All student schedules will be released on August 14, 2020.

**Will my child need to be in attendance during regular school hours or can they work on a flexible schedule?**

The expected school day schedule for elementary school students will be 8 a.m.-Noon for Kindergarten students and 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. for students in 1st through 5th grade. The expected school day schedule for students in 6th through 12th grade will be 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., depending on the class schedule. Some of the classwork will be scheduled for regular meeting times through Microsoft Teams. These times will be scheduled to prevent students from having conflicts. Students will not be on the computer for the entire day. Teachers are planning instruction that blends online and independent practice and inquiry.

**What online tools will be used for this program?**

The platforms that will be consistently used for virtual instruction are Microsoft Teams and Canvas. Aspen Family Portal is the primary tool for communication and grades. Teachers will have the flexibility to use additional tools depending on accessibility and subject matter. (Example: Edgenuity, Moby Max and IXL to name a few.)

**Will staff be trained in these new learning models?**

Staff had the opportunity to complete *Reimagine Canvas with Trauma-Informed Practices*, *KCS Connect 101*, and *KCS Connect 102* professional development opportunities over the summer. These courses covered the vision for blended and virtual learning practices, technology training for Canvas, Aspen, and Microsoft Teams, and the academic recovery plan. The Teaching and Learning Division and the school principals will continue to provide professional development opportunities as they determine the needs specific to buildings and teachers.

**What measures are you taking to ensure the social, emotional, and mental health of my child?**

School counselors will be available for any students who need social, emotional, and mental health support. Teachers should be made aware of parent concerns and those concerns can be addressed by the school principal or the district QuEST principal.

**Will virtual students be assigned to a particular teacher for the entire semester?**

At the elementary level, students will be assigned a teacher for the semester. Depending upon demand for virtual learning, students may be assigned a teacher at their assigned school or a teacher within the District QuEST learning program.

At the secondary level, students will be assigned a teacher for each course taken during the semester. The teacher will be certified in the subject area. Depending on the demand for virtual learning and subject availability, the teacher may be a teacher at the student's base school or a teacher within the District QuEST learning program.

**Will virtual students be able to interact with some classmates?**

Students in the virtual learning program will have opportunities to interact with other virtual students through the varied methods utilized during the virtual program. Teachers in the virtual program will plan for the social, pedagogical, organizational, and managerial aspects of online teaching and learning.

**How many students will be assigned to each virtual teacher?**

Knox County Schools is required to follow the state BEP ratios for each grade band for both virtual and face-to-face classrooms. K-3rd grade is 1:20 with a maximum of 25 , 4th-6th is 1:25 with a maximum of 30; and 7th-12th is 1:35.

**Will students in the Virtual Learning Program have live interactions with their teacher, or will the teacher provide pre-recorded videos that can be watched at any time? In other words, will students be able to ask questions in real-time, via video or chat?**

The teacher will provide answers to questions in both real-time during synchronous class sessions and through written and pre-recorded video electronic means of communication when students are working asynchronously. All virtual program teachers will hold office hours through Microsoft Teams to answer individual student questions.

**Will the Virtual Learning Program be available for all students, including students with disabilities?**

Yes, the virtual option is available to all students. Students who require additional support will work with their IEP team to develop a plan for delivering services virtually. Additional information will be provided by our Student Supports department. Additional guidance is also available on the Student Supports FAQ.

**Will the virtual option be entirely online, or will students be asked to print out material?**

Virtual program students will not be asked to print materials; however, they may need to write on notebook paper or use other commonly used school supplies. Students will be provided appropriate textbooks as needed.

**Is KCS developing the virtual material, or are we getting it from a third party?**

KCS has invested in high-quality instructional materials, and our virtual teachers will work with the same materials that their on-campus counterparts are using. Teachers use the state standards and the adopted materials as the starting point for planning, but they will modify, adjust, and add as they need to support the students in their classrooms.

At the high school level, KCS teachers have developed all courses that are on Canvas and that will be delivered through the QuEST program. Edgenuity, a third-party platform, may be used in some cases at the high school level, but course-specific certified KCS educators have vetted every course offered through that platform.

**My child does not speak English. Will they be able to utilize the virtual option?**

English Language Learner services will be provided in the virtual learning program as required by law.

**Will virtual option students be able to receive free and reduced meals?**

Students who are enrolled in virtual school may receive meals through their base school, and families should contact the School Nutrition Department to facilitate meal pickup details.

\*[QuEST](#) has been in operation for high schools since 2017. Its mission has been to give students access to classes that they otherwise might not be able to take if their school does not offer what they need. The main way of offering our QuEST courses are Asynchronously-meaning online learning through Canvas.

How does this teaching happen? Knox County supports the learning management system called Canvas. Canvas would be used for our Asynchronous or online provision.

Since its inception, QuEST has continued to grow each year. For the 2020-2021 school year, we planned to offer twenty-four Asynchronous or online courses. With the onset of Covid19 and the need for a district virtual program to support our schools, KCS has decided to expand QuEST offerings and to extend into elementary and middle schools for 2020-2021.