



Cardigan Mountain School
Distance Learning Plan
March 2020

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced schools around the world to make radical changes in how they function. Cardigan is no exception, as we have been forced to close our physical campus in line with recommendations from local, state, and national authorities. Given this situation, Cardigan has chosen to embrace a distance learning paradigm that we feel is powerful and unique, combining instruction in core academic classes with activities and opportunities designed to promote a more holistic approach to learning and a sense of community. Our approach is based on the following:

- The Cardigan Way is a whole-boy philosophy that encompasses all aspects of a boys' development: mind, body, and spirit. While we are not together physically, we will work in partnership with our families to promote the best possible experience for our boys in line with that philosophy.
- We will utilize technology tools familiar to the boys in order to support our goals for distance learning. These tools include student laptops, PowerSchool (our online learning management system), and Microsoft Office. We will additionally rely on Zoom, a video conferencing platform that allows face-to-face communication, screen sharing, and classroom management capabilities.
- We will establish a normal weekly schedule focused around the following subjects (English, Math, History, Science, and World Languages). We will combine "live" Zoom meetings with regular office hours per class for a total of four meetings/class/week. Expectations will be clearly established, and students will be asked to engage in and out of class with the content and activities published by teachers. Their work and understanding will be supported by a range of adults (teachers, PEAKS coaches, and advisors).

- We will do all we can to promote your son's overall development, while working to support and encourage a sense of community. We will meet regularly in virtual advisee groups, and are working to develop and schedule school wide activities that promote the arts, athletics, and our sense of community.
- We will work to support students emotionally during this challenging crisis. Advisors and other trusted adults will be available, and times will be established to meet with our school counselor as needed.
- We look forward to partnering with parents to help support student learning. We ask parents to create a study space for your son, help them hold to the defined schedule, communicate with adults here on campus as needed, help them stay physically active, and monitor outside screen time.

Below, please find a more in-depth discussion of these core goals.

Statement of Academic Principles

Cardigan Mountain School is designed to provide a transformative residential educational experience for boys during their middle school years. This experience is hinged upon educating boys in mind, body, and spirit. At times external circumstances and world events may affect our ability to deliver instruction on campus. In such times we are committed to providing continued support and instruction for our boys to further their learning in an online environment.

In the event of such a circumstance that would warrant the school to engage in distance learning for an extended period of time, the following document will outline our plans to support student learning and utilize digital and online resources to continue the educational growth of our boys. This document will focus directly on the platforms, approaches, and materials that faculty members will use to ensure the continuity of education should circumstances lead us to close our campus.

Communication regarding the plans of the school will be carried out from the Head of School and the Communications Office.

Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

A shift to distance learning will emphasize the need now more than ever for a productive partnership between families, teachers, and boys. This shift will force us to adjust and understand many new realities. Families will play a vital role in the success of this plan. Teachers and advisors are available to support and guide students through the challenges ahead. Below, please find a series of recommendations below to promote success.

Create a Regular Schedule and Study Space for Your Son:

Once Cardigan has implemented our distance learning schedule, it will be important for parents and guardians to help students establish and maintain a routine and structure for their day. We encourage to the best of our collective abilities the establishment of a regular school-day routine to ensure a degree of normalcy. We maintain that Cardigan is about the whole boy and as such encourage activity, engagement with the arts, and breaks throughout the day. Please check-in with your son at the start and end of the day with a simple question of what they have worked on. Teachers and advisors will work to support this and do the same to encourage continuity for your son. Finally, we encourage you to set clear expectations for your sons during the school day and when they have academic commitments. We ask that boys study in an environment that is conducive to learning and with minimal distraction. Please, to the best extent possible, find a space for your son that is away from distractions such as the family room, television, cell phone, or their bedrooms. It will be important, again, to the best extent possible, to monitor your son's activity and screen while he is engaged in learning activities. All Zoom meetings with Cardigan faculty will be recorded.

If you have trouble with strong internet connectivity please reach out to Director of Technology Michel Gray at mgray@cardigan.org.

Stay in Communication With your Son's Teachers and Advisor:

Communication will be essential in our success working together remotely. We ask that families be mindful of the volume of communication our teaching faculty will be producing and receiving (as some teachers teach up to 48 students) and as such be concise and focus on the essential.

Work with Your Sons to Encourage Cardigan's Habits of Learning:

Cardigan Mountain School prepares boys for responsible and meaningful lives in a global society. In the academic program, the students are introduced to, and provided opportunities, for the development of the following:

Cardigan Habits of Learning:

- **Growth Mindset** – students will focus on improvement and understand that intelligence can be developed.
 - problem solving
 - resilience
 - open-mindedness
- **Self-Awareness** – students will manage themselves and reflect on their decisions.
- **Coexistence** – students will peacefully and productively collaborate with others.
- **Critical Thinking** – students will question and analyze information to draw conclusions.
- **Communication** – students will articulate ideas with clarity and precision through a variety of media.
- **Ownership** – students will advocate for themselves and take responsibility for their life and learning.
- **Creativity** – students will explore and imagine.

Encourage Physical Activity and Movement and Monitor Student Stress:

Because we believe in the education of the whole boy at Cardigan, it is imperative that boys continue to exercise daily. The benefits of daily exercise are multiple including preserving mental health, reducing stress and anxiety, and improving concentration. If parents are concerned about their son's levels of stress and anxiety please reach out to your son's advisor or our school counselor, Trish Hutchinson, at thutchinson@cardigan.org.

Monitor your Son's Screen Time:

We encourage families to set up a schedule that involves physical activity, reading, and other activities that are not dependent upon the use of the computer. We will work together to encourage our faculty to share materials that encourage boys to draw, write, and respond without the use of a computer.

Cardigan Approach to Distance Learning

Statement of Philosophy:

Our community is built upon a residential framework where we learn and grow together. We believe that boys operate best in a structured environment where every boy has the opportunity to participate in athletics, arts, and active learning. The *Cardigan Way* extends throughout the boy's entire experience on campus. When circumstances arise that require us to re-evaluate the residential component of our program, we seek to continue to educate the boys while adhering to our beliefs regarding structure, character, and athletics.

Goals:

While we acknowledge that distance learning will not create the same environment that exists in a traditional classroom, we intend to maximize our resources to provide an online experience that fosters continued growth and development for our boys. These experiences are designed to be both meaningful and informative.

Cardigan Mountain School will adopt a distance learning model while the campus is closed. Distance learning models emphasize the face-to-face strategies we use in traditional classrooms in online environments. Work will be blended between synchronous (live) classes and asynchronous content (available on demand) for boys to follow along. We have chosen to emphasize synchronous class meetings to increase the face-to-face interaction that is at the core of our Cardigan experience.

Technology and Resources:

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak students were asked to take their laptops home with them during the March Break. The boys will be expected to adhere to the Cardigan acceptable use policy and technology policy while they are off campus and classes are in session. PowerSchool and GSuite are not device dependent, therefore it is possible for students to access work even without their personal laptop. We recognize that students in China will have difficulty accessing Google and we will expect teachers to work with Microsoft Office 365 to support these students.

Faculty members will increase their presence on PowerSchool and update their pages with weekly learning plans and links to recordings of all synchronous classes where direct instruction took place. PowerSchool will serve as the primary source of information for students and faculty during this period of time.

For direct instruction, the following video conference and video sharing service will be adopted:

<https://zoom.us/>

Hyperlink documents, using Google Sheets and docs or Microsoft Word and Excel are also ways to transmit information and assignments.

Tools like Slack and Padlet are online message boards that can create an environment where students and teachers can post content and assess it. There is also functionality in PowerSchool to run message boards and share content.

<https://padlet.com/dashboard>

<https://slack.com/>

Roles and Responsibilities:

We all will play an important role in shaping this experience to best benefit the boys. The following will be outlined below.

Roles	Responsibilities
Administration (Head of School, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Academics, Department Chairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish clear communication to all constituents. - Provide ongoing updates to families and faculty/staff. - Support all constituents in shifting to our distance learning plan. - Provide guidance, models, and/or examples of distance learning units, lessons, feedback, and projects.
Teaching Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with other members of their teaching team and departments to design distance learning instruction. - Develop connectivity between students. - Provide timely communication and feedback to students. - Develop assessments that track student learning.
PEAKS Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attend “live” classes with students to better support student needs in their teams. - Communicate with team teachers and support the learning needs of diverse learners on their respective teams. - Support the design of interdisciplinary project-based work for grade level teams. - Identify students that need additional support.
School Counselor and Health Center staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide faculty/staff and families with resources to help them guide students during this time. - Proactively send community-wide tips, strategies, and updates to support health and wellness.
Technology Staff and Academics Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop tutorials for faculty/staff about how to use the tools provided. - Develop tutorials for students to problem-solve common technology challenges. - Be available to provide support as needed to support distance learning.
Athletics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage boys to engage in continued activity and make healthy choices while not on campus.

Faculty Preparation:

Faculty work and Professional Development in-service sessions will take place on March 30, and March 31. These sessions will be followed by grade-level team and departmental curriculum planning sessions April 1 and April 2. Individual faculty preparations will continue on April 3.

The faculty will use this time to develop engaging ways to support the boys' continued learning in the distance learning environment.

Asynchronous and Synchronous Content:

Asynchronous or "offline work": Class interactions happen via learning management system (LMS) PowerSchool without real-time interaction. Students engage in class materials and complete work at their own pace, typically within a given timeframe, often using discussion boards.

Synchronous or "live classes": Class interactions happen in real time, at the same time. Students may "virtually" attend class together via a video conference, livestream, or chat. Synchronous classes will take place between 8:30 AM and 2:15 PM U.S. Eastern Time. We have invested in Zoom to support this work for synchronous meetings.

A combination of asynchronous and synchronous meetings will be important for us to maintain relationships with our students and encourage depth of learning.

A Note About PowerSchool:

The following items will be clearly found on teacher's PowerSchool pages:

- 1) A welcome introductory video to the boys.
- 2) A weekly plan that is clear and detailed with your expectations, due dates, and weekly learning goal.
- 3) The resources needed for the week.
- 4) A page on PowerSchool that has all recorded classes.
- 5) Your office hours and availability.

Student Check-ins:

It will be important for boys to participate in synchronous classes and actively participate in other forms of asynchronous work. We will develop a framework for attendance to be maintained. Check-ins include attending virtual class sessions, commenting on class discussion boards, emailing, and assignment submissions. Communication is essential for online learning to work and we want to make sure boys are not falling behind.

Attendance:

We acknowledge that boys in different time zones will be able to attend synchronous classes only within reason. Faculty will take attendance to start all synchronous classes and we will closely

monitor boys' participation and completion of assignments. The following will be used to assess student progress:

- Present and participating
- Inconsistent attendance and participation
- Not present/inactive

Office Hours:

Teachers will offer office hour meetings during class hours and in the afternoon for boys to establish 1:1 or small group Zoom meetings, or emails. PEAKS coaches will be available for office hours by appointment.

Work Load:

Students should have a maximum of 3 hours of class work per week: this time will include reading, watching videos, listening to podcasts, engaging in discussion boards and collaborative documents, attending class, and completing assessments and assignments.

Be mindful of the transition students will experience moving to an online learning environment. Students will be taking multiple courses. They will be trying to keep up with a significant volume of work and we want to be mindful of screen time and to promote opportunities for boys to play, get outside, and be active. The shift may and will be challenging for students with executive functioning challenges or other learning differences. We will do our best to make sure that we create thoughtful formative assessments that we can gauge understanding from.

Academic Honesty:

Online learning environments present new challenges and new scenarios for us to be aware of in regard to cheating, plagiarizing, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Faculty will consider the following question before assigning work: will students face a moral dilemma around academic honesty doing this assignment? If the answer is yes, we will revise the plan. We will continue to hold students accountable and any instances of academic dishonesty or plagiarism should be reported to the Dean of Academics and it will be handled as we would on campus.

Grades:

We are committed to developing a thoughtful and compassionate approach to evaluating your son's academic progress during this uncertain time. This approach will emphasize attendance, effort, and engagement. Later communications will detail our expectations and policies.

PEAKS:

PEAKS Coaches will continue to offer student support during the afternoon between 1:00 and 5:00 PM and in the evening between 8:00 and 9:30 PM (all times U.S. Eastern), by appointment. Students can contact PEAKS Coaches for 1:1 Zoom support or through email to answer questions and help with assignments.

Advisory:

Advisors will have mandatory advisory meetings Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of each week at a determined time. Advisors will use this time to help support online learning for their advisees and manage expectations of online learning. Advisors will continue to support the emotional well-being of their advisees and share any key announcements with their advisees as related to school.

Summary Charts

The following templates will provide an overview of technology resources as well as student and family expectations for online learning.

Technology Resources:

Channel	Users	Description
Email	Faculty, staff, families, students	Email will be used for all announcements, from the school and senior administrators. Email will also remain the primary tool to contact families and students. Students may use email to ask questions and/or submit work.
Google GSuite	Students, Faculty	Students and faculty will work in the GSuite or Microsoft Office to share and upload assignments and assessments.
Microsoft Office	Students, Faculty	Faculty will share assignments in formats that all students can access. Microsoft Office is loaded on all student computers.
Subject Specific Apps	Students, Faculty	Faculty will share apps on PowerSchool that benefit the learning experience as necessary.
PowerSchool	Students, Faculty, Families*	Learning management system (LMS) students interface with PowerSchool currently and the tool will be maximized to support boys during the distance learning period. PowerSchool will remain the primary tool for students to monitor daily assignments. Videos, assessments, and other material can all be regularly monitored.
Other		Zoom, Padlet, Loom, etc. Choices made by individual teachers.

Overview of Student Expectations:

Student Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a daily routine for your school work. - Find a comfortable, distraction-free place in your home where you can work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Check class pages on PowerSchool daily to stay up on your work and expectations for each class during the day. - Do assigned work on PowerSchool and ask questions via email or during a scheduled class block. - Follow the guidelines of each teacher for online class participation. - For classes that are meeting live (synchronous) a Zoom link will be available on the calendar in PowerSchool. All synchronous class meetings will be scheduled and that schedule will be shared. - Do your best and work hard to put your best effort forward. - Meet deadlines. - Communicate with your teachers if you need support or help. 	
For questions about...	Reach out to...
A lesson, concept, or assignment, etc.	Your teacher
A technology problem	Technology Office, support@cardigan.org
A social emotional problem	Your advisor or Mrs. Hutchinson thutchinson@cardigan.org
Any other Academic Questions	Mr. Welsh and Mr. Caprow

Overview of Family Roles and Expectations:

Family Expectations, Roles, and Responsibilities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish clear timelines, routines, and expectations with your son. - Continue to keep Ms. Willems and Mr. Nowak aware of illness or absences by emailing attendance@cardigan.org. - Check-in with your son at the start and end of the day with a simple question of what they have worked on. - Help to create a comfortable and distraction free learning environment. - Make sure that your child is checking email and PowerSchool daily and throughout the day. - Help your son manage his schedule and keep track of his commitments. - Encourage your son to take initiative to keep up with the expectations of distance learning. - Encourage your son to work through questions, form responses, and address problems as best they can. Encourage your son to reach out for support as needed. - Help to monitor screen time for your son. - Provide opportunities for your son to partake in physical activity every day as it is a core part of our philosophy at Cardigan - Support Cardigan's rules for technology use and interaction and create clear rules for your son. - Be supportive partners of the faculty at Cardigan - Partner with teachers to support your son's learning needs. 	
For questions about...	Reach out to...
A lesson or assignment	Your son's teacher, but please encourage your son to be making the contact

A technology problem	support@cardigan.org
A social emotional concern	Your son's advisor or Mrs. Hutchinson
Attendance	Mr. Nowak, Director of Student Life and Mr. Welsh, Dean of Academics
Any other questions	Mr. Welsh, Dean of Academics and Mr. LeRoy, Dean of Faculty & Assistant Head of School

Portions of this plan have been graciously adopted with permissions from our friends at Sidwell Friends School, Bethesda, MD.