Fall 2020 Planning for the Virtual Classroom

The virtual world provides some exciting possibilities for student engagement and instruction but requires a different approach to planning than in person instruction. Below are some best practices to consider as planning.

Planning to Help Students be Successful - Building a Foundation for Success
- Encourage students to form study groups and help teach students best practices for using study groups as a learning tool.
- Take time to develop a culture of learning, routines, and expectations for a new virtual learning experience. Plan for purposeful and meaningful time to get to know each other.
- Plan to “unteach” some of the procedures that we used in the spring. Grading, class attendance, and completion of all student activities will need to be discussed. Make sure students know that this fall’s teaching, learning, assessing, and grading are different from last spring.
- Plan to introduce technology tools and platforms using the gradual release of responsibility model.
- Help students understand Flex Time and how this time will allow for reteaching, extension opportunities, and guided practice.
- Be sure to publicize opportunities for evening/Sunday tutoring for students who might need additional support. Help students use a variety of tools to assist them with their learning.
- Most students are taking 6 - 8 periods, 3 - 4 periods each day. If each student receives 20-30 min of homework per class per day, that is an additional 1.5-2 hours of homework per night. Teachers will need to assist students to understand that students should engage in study groups, tutoring, and independent work nightly and on Wednesdays so that they do not get behind with their studies.

Planning with the Curriculum
- The Division of Academics compacted the curriculum. A compacted Scope and Sequence or other similar document is located at the beginning of each curriculum guide to highlight the big rocks for the Fall 2020 semester. It is important that you follow the compacted curriculum and use the suggested learning activities and assessments provided.
- Accept that we will not cover all the content this year that we typically do, and we might not get through the detailed content that would traditionally be found on state or national assessments. We ALL need to be OK with this in these uncertain times. Focus on the
quality of the student activities designed to build student content and skill mastery rather than trying to rush for quantity of coverage purposes. Use the compacted curriculum documents provided for support.

- Plan to use diagnostic tools to determine where students are at the beginning of the year. For K-8 Reading and Math, this will be i-Ready. For other courses, content offices will provide suggested activities used to determine what, if any, skills, concepts, or content elements should be reviewed before starting the compacted curriculum.
- Use the District Curriculum Guides/Compacted Scope and Sequence documents to identify opportunities for graded student learning activities during class times as well as for independent practice. Adhere to the independent work expectations by grade level below. Plan to help students use the feedback you provide on graded work to improve their work or expand their learning.
- Incorporate AVID Strategies and Artful Thinking Routines to promote engagement, critical thinking, and creativity. The curriculum guides include many of these strategies.
- Use i-Ready (K-5) at the beginning of the year to determine skill gaps for students for math and literacy. Use the compacted scope and sequence documents, DI suggestions in the curriculum, and personalized student path in i-Ready to address deficits.
- Engage in meaningful collaborative planning sessions with school/department teams, Central Office Resource Teachers, ESOL teacher, Literacy Coaches, Special Educators, etc.) as well as across schools when applicable (teachers of singletons) to plan 2-3 student-centered activities for each synchronous learning block.
- Work in collaborative planning teams and with the content office before school starts to revise the course syllabi to reflect the expected content as well as how the team/school will approach classroom and other assignments/assessments. Consistency is the key!

Planning for Instruction

- All lessons must be recorded and posted in Google Classroom for students who are on an Alternative Attendance Plan to watch later. Consider how you structure your live classes and how a student watching the video later could complete the same or similar activities outside of class.
- Leverage best practices for Flipped Classrooms. During independent work times, consider flipping the classroom and have students prepare for class by watching a video/tutorial with a processing guide (may use Nearpod where you can embed questions in the video) or a Google Form to monitor viewing.
- Plan for multiple ways for students to complete and submit their work. Consult this link for ideas for types of products students could complete instead of traditional assessments/activities.
- Plan student-centered activities for each synchronous lesson. These lessons should not be lectures. Students need to engage with materials. Ensure that there are multiple learning activities, such as a three-group rotation, within each learning block.
- Plan for student-to-student interaction. Build in time for students to collaborate using various approved technology tools. Use Google Meet to create additional “breakout rooms” for small groups of students to collaborate. Consult this link for ideas on how to do AACPS-approved breakout rooms.
Planning for Asynchronous/Independent Learning Time

- Teachers should not assign independent homework for Grades K-2, rather students should be encouraged to spend 10 - 15 minutes working through Reading i-Ready and Math i-Ready online games each day.
- Independent work for Grades 3-5 should not exceed a total of 15 minutes per school day or non i-Ready online games. Encourage and monitor student completion of 10-15 minutes of Reading i-Ready and 10-15 minutes of Math i-Ready online games each day. Per, AACPS Grading, elementary grade homework is reflected in the code given for expected student behaviors.
- Middle School students should spend 10-15 minutes of Reading i-Ready and 10-15 minutes of Math i-Ready games each day. Teachers should monitor time devoted to i-Ready.
- Additionally, Middle School students should not have more than 15-20 minutes of homework/independent work 2 times per week per course (completing classwork, reading independently, working on performance-based tasks, etc.).
- Homework/independent work at the High School level should be approximately 30 minutes per night 2 times per week for each course. For AP and IB courses, more time is allowed, but teachers should not try to make up for fewer contact hours by increasing homework time. Use the same homework guidelines you used in the physical classroom. Typically, this is up to 60 minutes 2 times per week.
- For AP and IB courses, teachers are to create and post one 45-minute asynchronous lesson per week. This is in addition to the two scheduled synchronous classes each week. These lessons should, when appropriate, incorporate CED resources that may be used to “flip” the classroom so that classroom time is devoted to the application of new content and skills, not the delivery of new content.