

DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY

This Policy sets forth the expectations of students and parents/guardians while students are engaging in distance learning in the Union Township School District during the COVID-19 pandemic. This Policy shall supersede any conflicting language in existing Board policies or handbooks until the Board determines that the need for this Policy no longer exists. The Board acknowledges that, due to the evolving nature of the pandemic, federal, state, and local orders, laws, regulations and guidance impacting District operations are subject to change without notice. In the event that any federal, state, or local order, law, regulation or guidance may conflict with this Policy, the applicable order, law, regulation or guidance shall be controlling.

I. DEFINITION OF DISTANCE LEARNING

“*Distance learning*” means instruction in which the student and instructor are in different locations and students are under the supervision of a District employee. Distance learning may include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

1. Interaction, instruction, and check-ins between teachers and students through the use of a computer or communications technology.
2. Video or audio instruction in which the primary mode of communication between the student and District employee is online interaction, instructional television, video, telecourses, or other instruction that relies on computer or communications technology.
3. The use of print materials incorporating assignments that are the subject of written or oral feedback.

II. COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

New Jersey’s compulsory education laws continue to apply for all persons between the ages of 6 and 16. **A student who does not participate daily in either in-person instruction or distance learning shall be deemed absent by the District** in violation of compulsory education laws. Board Policy 5113, “Attendance, Absences and Excuses,” continues to apply. Daily participation in distance learning may include, but is not limited to, evidence of participation in online activities, completion of regular assignments, completion of assessments, and contacts between District employees and students or parents or guardians.

The District has developed the following tiered re-engagement strategies for students who are absent from distance learning for more than three (3) of the instructional days in a school week:

1. Verification of current contact information for each enrolled student.

2. Daily notification to parents or guardians of absences;
3. Outreach from the District to determine student needs including connection with health and social services as necessary and, when feasible, transitioning the student to full-time in-person instruction.

The District shall document daily participation for each student on each school day, in whole or in part, for which distance learning is provided.

III. STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN EXPECTATIONS

1. **STUDENT SUPERVISION:** Students are under the immediate supervision and control of their parent/guardian or a responsible adult caregiver while the student is participating in distance learning. The District is not responsible for the immediate supervision or control of any student while the student is participating in distance learning.
2. **STUDENT WORK AREAS:** To the greatest extent possible, student work areas should be conducive to learning, reasonably quiet, free of distractions and any material that violates the law or Board policy, and capable of immediate supervision at all times by a parent/guardian or responsible adult caregiver.
 - a. Students must have all materials and equipment (e.g., tablet/laptop, pencil, paper, etc.) ready for their use before the start of any scheduled distance learning.
 - b. Please keep all pets, siblings not engaging in learning, cell phones or personal electronic devices and food away from the student work area.
 - c. Students must promptly comply with any teacher request to mute or unmute their device microphone or remove an item, individual, or pet from their work area.
 - d. It is recommended that device cameras point away from a door, hallway, bathroom or other areas where other household members may be dressing and that all household members be made aware of when distance learning is occurring.
3. **DRESS CODE:** Students, the parent/guardian, and/or responsible adult caregiver must be dressed in clothes that comply with the District's Dress Code in the Code of Conduct and Board Policy 5132 at all times during distance learning and other virtual school-related activities that occur over video.
5. **STUDENT LOG IN/ PARENT TECHNICAL SUPPORT:** Students will be provided with personal login credentials for distance learning for their own use. Students are not to share their login information with any other person except their parents/guardians or responsible adult caregivers as necessary for the parent/guardian or responsible adult caregiver to assist the student in troubleshooting login issues or other technical difficulties. A parent/guardian or responsible adult caregiver must be available to assist the student with any login processes and troubleshooting of technical challenges. If a parent/guardian, responsible adult caregiver or the student experiences technical difficulties while participating in school-related activities, please contact your child's teacher as soon as possible.

6. **PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN INSTRUCTION:** Parents/guardians and responsible adult caregivers are prohibited from interfering with, disrupting or directly participating in distance learning lessons unless explicitly requested by the teacher or with written permission of the teacher. Parents/guardians and responsible adult caregivers are not permitted to log into or attend distance learning instruction, meetings, or other school-related activities unless specifically requested by a District employee.
7. **CONFIDENTIALITY: There is no expectation of privacy during distance learning.** When logging in to distance learning, parents/guardians and students are acknowledging their understanding that anything that they say, write, or do while on video or audio might be viewed by others.
 - a. Parents/guardians and responsible adult caregivers must maintain strict confidentiality of any information they inadvertently obtain or observe regarding other students while supervising a student's distance learning.
 - b. Students, parents/guardians, responsible adult caregivers, and any other individual who may be in or around a student's work area are not permitted to photograph, video record, audio record, or screenshot any distance learning.
 - c. If a student is receiving virtual, online or telephonic counseling services from a District employee or contractor, no other individual, including, but not limited to parents/guardians, responsible adult caregivers or siblings are allowed in the room or within seeing or hearing distance of the room, or place in which the student is receiving the counseling services for confidentiality purposes.
 - d. The identity of all students participating in any small group counseling session with a District employee or contractor and other student(s) and all the statements made or discussions occurring during such counseling sessions are confidential and may not be disclosed to any individual.
8. **TECHNOLOGY POLICY:** Students, parent/guardians and responsible adult caregivers must comply with the Board's Technology Use Policy #6142.10 and the Board's Use of Electronic Communications and Recording Devices Policy #5516 at all times during the school day and when utilizing District technology.
 - a. District technology includes, but is not limited to, District electronic mail, servers, online accounts and platforms, computers, laptops, tablets, or other digital, electronic or multimedia hardware, software or other applications. District technology and equipment may only be used for educational purposes in accordance with the Board's Technology Use Policy #6142.10, the Board's Use of Electronic Communications and Recording Devices Policy #5516, and the Technology Acceptable Use Agreement.
 - b. Students and parents/guardians acknowledge that District technology and equipment are owned by the District. By logging into or accessing District technology or equipment, users acknowledge that they have no expectation of privacy in the use of District technology or equipment, even if such technology is used on a personal device. The District reserves the right to access

communications, files, and other data stored on or sent over District technology or equipment.

- c. Technological resources provided by the District must be used in a safe, responsible, appropriate, and legal manner in accordance with District policies and in support of its instructional program for the advancement of student learning.
 - d. Downloading, uploading, viewing, posting, or sharing inappropriate content, including pornographic, defamatory, discriminatory, harassing, bullying, or otherwise offensive material is prohibited.
 - e. Students must not access District online or virtual classrooms, meeting spaces, or chat forums unless authorized to do so.
 - f. Students may not access personal electronic devices or any software, applications, or websites during District distance learning instruction or school-related activities unless specifically instructed to do so by the teacher and consistent with the Board's Use of Electronic Communications and Recording Devices Policy #5516.
9. **APPLICATION OF DISCIPLINARY RULES/POLICIES:** All other District rules and policies regarding student behavior and discipline including but not limited to the Conduct/Discipline Policy #5131, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Policy #5131.1, and the Student Code of Conduct continue to remain in effect. Students who fail to adhere to the above requirements may be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited suspension or expulsion.
- a. Any parent/guardian who believes their child has been subject to misconduct prohibited by the Board's Harassment, Intimidation, Discrimination, and Bullying Policy or has witnessed such prohibited misconduct is encouraged to immediately report such misconduct to the Anti-Bullying Specialist for their child's school.

This Policy is subject to change as the Distance Learning program develops, and all students and parents/guardians must immediately read and comply with any amendments or modifications to this Policy issued by the District. By participating in Distance Learning, students and parents/guardians are acknowledging and agreeing to the terms expressed herein.

Adopted: January 19, 2021