Your GASTON VIRTUAL ACADEMY ELEMENTARY
SYNCHRONOUS & ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Parent & Student Handbook
2020-2021

Welcome to the Gaston Virtual Academy!!! We are excited to have the opportunity to educate our children virtually.

Gaston County Schools is a public school system using an innovative educational model to provide your child with the best education possible. As a Virtual Academy available to all Gaston County residents, our unique educational approach allows us to tailor an education that is specific to each learner.

Gaston Virtual School uses a rigorous, content-rich curriculum that meets or exceeds state standards across all subject areas. Students demonstrate their knowledge and skills through state standardized tests.

By enrolling in our virtual academy, you are partnering with a team of knowledgeable and experienced educators. North Carolina Certified teachers work with you in monitoring student progress, attendance, and content mastery while providing professional insight, instruction, and support. Our administrative staff is committed to the success of every child in the program.

Gaston County School goals include creating lifelong learners by challenging and giving our students unique learning experiences. We know that choosing the right educational setting for your child is not a decision to be taken lightly. We encourage you to learn more about our program and how it may benefit your child. Our dedicated staff is here to assist you as you go through this exciting endeavor. On behalf of all of us here at Gaston Virtual School, we hope to welcome you soon to our school family.

Sincerely,

Torben Ross   Dr. Jill Payne

K-2 Principal   3-5 Principal
                                                         K-5 Asynchronous Principal

Gaston Virtual Academy is committed to providing learning opportunities that inspire success and a lifetime of learning.
The mission of Gaston Virtual Academy is to provide motivated students a quality academic experience with the flexibility to complete their coursework in a virtual setting. In alignment with Gaston County School's mission, our mission is to provide innovative educational opportunities for all students in a safe environment.

Gaston Virtual Academy Administration

Torben Ross tjross@gaston.k12.nc.us Grades K-2 Synchronous Principal		
Kindergarten gvakindergarten@gaston.k12.nc.us	**First Grade** GVAfirstgrade@gaston.k12.nc.us	**Second Grade** GVAtsecondgrade@gaston.k12.nc.us
Cassie Bryson-Evans cjbrysonevans@gaston.k12.nc.us	Lynne Stamey lgstamey@gaston.k12.nc.us	Miranda Buchanan mpbuchanon@gaston.k12.nc.us
Tamara Houchard tmhouchard@gaston.k12.nc.us	Joy Hilliard johilliard@gaston.k12.nc.us	Taner Jarrett tajarrett@gaston.k12.nc.us
Dr. Jill Payne jspayne@gaston.k12.nc.us Grades 3-5 Synchronous Principal Grades K-5 Asynchronous Principal		
Third Grade GVAthirdgrade@gaston.k12.nc.us	**Fourth Grade** GVAfourthgrade@gaston.k12.nc.us	**Fifth Grade** GVAfifthgrade@gaston.k12.nc.us
Celeste Sadler acsadler@gaston.k12.nc.us	Dan Barber dabarber@gaston.k12.nc.us	Kristin Haskett kghaskett@gaston.k12.nc.us
Jodi Edwards jnedwards@gaston.k12.nc.us	Connie Greene cwgreene@gaston.k12.nc.us	Stacy Huffman shhuffman@gaston.k12.nc.us

Parents, we are committed to providing good customer service. Your first point of contact is to email your grade level administrator or the grade level email all located above. All messages should be responded to in a timely manner no later than 24-48 hours after receipt of the message.

The Structure of Gaston Virtual Academy

Students in GVA will have the availability to pick up a device from their home school. It is the responsibility of the family to pick up the device or provide a personal device for online learning. Gaston Virtual Academy offers two programs of learning for students to meet the needs of the student and / or family :

- ***Synchronous learning*** requires students to be logged in each school day to meet with a virtual teacher from 8:30am - 12:00pm as well as 12:30 - 2:30 each afternoon. Morning sessions focus on English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies while scheduled afternoon sessions focus on flexible small group instruction, individual conferencing and interventions.
- ***Asynchronous learning*** allows students to work independently through their coursework. Their work will be housed in Schoology beginning each Friday afternoon for the following week. Students must complete all work each week by Friday afternoons. Students must also meet virtually with his/her own learning coach at least one time per week who will monitor their progress and support their learning.

Your teachers will speak with parents/guardians primarily through emails, messages within the Schoology Platform, virtual conferencing tools, or by phone call if necessary. **When needed, teachers are available for face-to-face support and interaction.**

Guiding Principles

1. Gaston County Virtual Academy will support our students and their families on an individual level by providing regular and clear feedback.
2. Gaston County Virtual Academy will strive for flexibility and compassion when dealing with the unique circumstances of each of our students and their families.
3. The staff of Gaston County Virtual Academy will commit to an environment of professional learning that emphasizes communication and collaboration to best meet the needs of our students

Enrollment

Students enrolled at Gaston County Virtual Academy are selected through an application and screening process. Not every student who applies to the Virtual Academy is accepted. Students, to remain eligible for participation in GVA, are expected to remain in good standing academically, behaviorally, and in the area of attendance per GCS Policy 4170. Any student not meeting any one of these requirements will require a parent conference with administration to discuss a plan of action.

Academic Performance

At Gaston County Virtual Academy, student success is a top priority. Students who are not demonstrating success in their coursework are required to meet with teachers and/or administration to create a plan that ensures the student is in the best possible place to succeed.

Academic Integrity

The students and faculty of Gaston County Virtual Academy value honor, integrity, and responsibility and foster an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect. Upholding these values will build a sense of community and allow students to achieve their greatest potential in character and citizenship.

Attendance

Student attendance is vital to the success of your child. In the elementary synchronous school program, students must be present in their live instruction to be counted present. Students arriving late to instruction will receive a tardy and students who do not attend their scheduled afternoon small groups will be marked as early check out. If a student is absent from live instruction, you will need to email your teacher an attendance note within 2 days of the absence.

In the elementary asynchronous program, student attendance will be determined by the completion of all work by the deadline as well as attendance in a weekly virtual meeting with the learning coach. Students not completing work will be marked absent. Attendance will be calculated based on:

- 1 day - 25% of work completed by end of week
- 2 days - 50% of work completed by end of week
- 3 days - 75% of work completed by end of week
- 4 days -100% of work completed by end of week
- 5 days - 100% of work completed by the end of the week and the student attends a virtual meeting with the learning coach.

Students must remain in good academic standing to be eligible for participation in GVA. Students who begin to accumulate absences will be contacted by the school social worker and administration to create a plan for success.

Documentation of Absences

Absences will default to unexcused if you do not have documentation that meets the reasons approved by the Department of Public Instruction for excused absences. Please email your child's teacher the absence documentation within 2 days of the absence. These reasons are listed here:

- Illness or Injury
- Quarantine
- Death in the Immediate Family
- Medical or Dental appointments
- Court or Administrative Proceedings
- Religious Observance
- Educational Opportunity (prior approval by Virtual Academy staff is encouraged)
- Local School Board Policy
- Absence Related to Deployment Activity

Make-Up Work

Students have 3 days after returning to their synchronous learning environment to get work made up.

Grading
Grading Scale

In accordance with GCS policy, the grading scale is as follows:

Grades K-2	Grades 3-5
M: Meets Standard Expectation	A: 90 - 100
P: Progressing toward Standard Expectation	B: 80 - 89
N: Not Yet Met the Standard Expectation	C: 70 - 79
	D: 60 - 69

Parents and students will be able to access grades at any time through the Schoology platform. Your student´s teacher(s) / Learning Coach (depending on Synchronous or Asynchronous) will monitor work weekly and initiate communication if there are concerns about progress in one or more courses.

Grading Periods

In accordance with GCS grading practices, elementary students enrolled in the Virtual Academy will follow a 9 week grading period. The dates for the distribution of report cards are October 22, January 7, March 18, and May 26. Report cards will be available electronically, however, if

you would like to pick up a report card from your homeschool, you may call and request to do so.

Late Work

At Gaston Virtual Academy, we pride ourselves on the daily flexibility we offer our students. However, it is vital to the academic success of our students that they remain on pace with the standard course of study. Synchronous students must meet the assignment due dates of their teacher and follow their directives. Asynchronous students should complete all work by 5:00 pm on Friday afternoon each week. If you are going to be unable to complete your week, you must request an extension from your learning coach. Administration will meet with students who are not making academic progress including not completing coursework. To be eligible for the GVA program, students must continue to make academic progress.

Student Expectations:

Gaston Virtual Academy
INSTRUCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS — LEARN

Student	Remote Learning - Independent Activities	Computer & Online Activities
Be SAFE	■ Keep school supplies clean and secure ■ Research from appropriate/ approved websites ■ Complete attendance procedures	■ Stay on appropriate/ approved websites ■ Keep login/password info or conference invite codes confidential ■ Use only your own account
Be RESPECTFUL	■ Follow instructions ■ Honor work of others ■ Use time wisely	■ Allow others to learn, and honor the work of others ■ Follow dress code ■ Speak with respectful words, tone and volume
Be RESPONSIBLE	■ Prepared with all materials ■ Attempt and turn in assignments ■ Ask for assistance	■ Show up on time and log off when finished ■ Report issues ■ Use equipment appropriately and keep fully charged

Parent / Caregiver Expectations:

Gaston Virtual Academy
INSTRUCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS

LEARN
FOR HELPERS @ HOME

Parent / Caregiver	Remote Learning - Independent Activities	Computer & Online Activities
Be SAFE	■ Help keep your student's school supplies clean and secure ■ Help your child research from appropriate/ approved websites ■ Inform teacher of absences	■ Help your child stay on appropriate/ approved websites ■ Keep login/password info or conference invite codes confidential ■ Check your email for GVA communication
Be RESPECTFUL	■ Help your child follow instructions ■ Ensure your child honors work of others ■ Help your child use time wisely	■ Allow others to learn; arrange for separate time with teacher (not during live session) ■ Wear appropriate clothing when in view of the other remote students ■ Speak with respectful words, tone and volume; remove background noise from the live class sessions
Be RESPONSIBLE	■ Help your child be prepared with a dedicated space for work ■ Help your child attempt and turn in assignments ■ Ask for assistance	■ Help your child show up on time and log off when finished ■ Report issues ■ Help your child use equipment appropriately and keep fully charged

Required Dates Onsite

GVA may be expected to come onsite for state accountability testing including NC Check-ins (Grades 3-5) and EOGs (Grades 3-5). Students would receive a staggered schedule that promotes a safe learning environment.

Diagnostic Testing and NC Check Ins

For students in elementary, students will be expected to take a beginning of the year and middle of the year diagnostics in both reading and math.   Gaston County Schools uses iReady as the tool for diagnostics.

Gaston Virtual Academy will be administering NC Check-In Assessments. These assessments are not used for grading purposes. Instead, they provide students with practice for the EOGs & EOCs at the end of the year but more importantly they provide parents and teachers with excellent data to help plan appropriately for meaningful instruction.

- Beginning of the Year Diagnostic Window : **Aug. - Sept.**
- Middle of the Year Diagnostic Window: **Dec.**
- End of the Year Diagnostic Window: **April**
- **End of Grade Testing: May**

Communication

In addition to students maintaining a regular schedule of completing schoolwork, it is important for students, school staff, and parents/guardians to maintain regularly scheduled communication. Our staff will communicate via parent link, newsletters, email as well as virtual meetings. Please communicate with your child's teacher if you have a concern.

Behavior Guidelines

There may be times when you are visiting a Gaston County Schools' facility or participating in face-to-face activities. When you are on a Gaston County Schools' site, you are expected to follow the Gaston County Schools [Code of Conduct](#) and dress code.

Redirection will occur via verbal reminder, message to student and/or parent, phone call and / or virtual conference. Removal from instruction is the opposite of what we would like to do if a student is struggling to be successful so thank you in advance for your participation and support in this area. Protocol: Teacher Redirection, Cool down with Reteach privately, Removal for quiet reflection and parent contact, Redirect with administration.

Student Demographic Information
It is extremely important that Gaston County Virtual Academy be made aware of any changes to your demographic information. We must have reliable contact information in case of an emergency. Please inform school staff immediately with any changes to phone numbers, addresses, emails, and/or emergency contact information.

Inclement Weather
Gaston County Schools Virtual Academy will follow regular school closing guidelines. School closings or delays will normally be announced by 6:00 AM on TV channels 3, 9, 21 and 36, and on most local radio stations. In most cases, Gaston County Schools will also notify families at home with an automated phone call.

Student Health Information
If you have any changes in your health status, or if you have any medical conditions or situations that the school should be aware of, please report them to the Gaston County Virtual Academy administrator immediately.

Withdrawal Procedures
Due to teacher allotments and master scheduling, if you or your student enrolls in Gaston Virtual Academy, the expectation is that you are committed to the Virtual Academy for a semester, preferably the year. However, if there is a need to withdraw from school, a parent or guardian needs to go to the Homeschool office to complete the necessary paperwork. You will need to return any books, technology, and any other items that belong to the school. Upon completion of these requirements, your withdrawal process will be finalized.   You will no longer be enrolled or have the opportunity to enroll in the digital platform offered by Gaston County Virtual Academy if you withdraw.

Computer/Technology Accessibility
Students are expected to have the necessary technology to work in this program. Upon enrollment, students should secure a working computer from their homeschool or personal resources and reliable Internet. If you do not have this technology available or reliable internet, contact the homeschool administrator or email the grade level email.

Exceptional Children Services / Accommodations
Our digital program has several built in accommodations to meet the needs of students. Our teachers will work with students and parents to ensure success. Students with IEP's and 504's will be provided the supports and modifications needed outlined in their individualized plan. Please contact your administrator if you have any questions / concerns.

<u>**Curriculum Providers**</u>
Students will be engaged in coursework aligned to the NC Standards. Core curriculum resources include Lucy Caulkins Reading, Writing and Phonics units as well as Math Investigations and Discovery Education. Teachers and grade levels will work to supplement to meet the needs of the learners in their classroom.

After reviewing this document, please complete the [google form (not finished)](#) stating you and your child have reviewed the contents within this document.

Other Back to School forms needed to be completed by Asynchronous / Synchronous students:

- **[Acceptable Use Policy](#)**