

Continuity of Education Plan

Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center

Eric D. Palmer, Executive Director
Michael Selvenis, Principal

Dr. Thomas McInroy, Superintendent of Record
(Bellwood-Antis School District)



1500 4th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602

Email/Phone: (814) 946-8450

Website: www.gactc.edu

Goal of Plan

The Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center (GACTC) is working to provide its students with meaningful career and technical education through virtual means. The goal of this plan is to summarize the process and structure through which the GACTC will provide unique and meaningful activities, projects, tasks, discussions and experiences to continue student learning while not able to assemble together at the school.

Overview of Plan

The mission of the Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center (GACTC) is to provide high school students and adult learners with a superior career and technical education consistent with accepted academic and skill standards. As a result of recent events precluding students from physically attending school, the GACTC has been and continues to prepare virtual learning opportunities for ALL of its learners in an effort to continually provide that superior education. Instructors and support personnel are making a good-faith effort to provide students with the best possible education in a virtual format. The execution of virtual learning is occurring through a three phase implementation plan (Phase I: Planning and Preparation of Virtual Learning (3/27-4/3), Phase II: Enrichment and Review (4/6-4/13), and Phase III: Planned Instruction (4/14- end of the 2019-2020 school year)) which is detailed in *“Expectations for Teaching and Learning”*.

Expectations for Teaching and Learning

Of the options for Continuity of Education recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, those being Planned Instruction, Enrichment and Review, a Combination of Planned Instruction and Enrichment and Review, or No Action, the leadership team at the GACTC has chosen to provide learning opportunities to its learners through an Enrichment and Review format, initially, followed by a Planned Instruction format.

Continuity of Education is the overarching term for any educational practices that occur in the event of a prolonged school closure. It is important that students have the opportunity to develop and maintain skills while away from the customary school environment. This can be achieved through Planned Instruction, Enrichment and Review or a combination thereof.

Planned Instruction: Planned Instruction is formal teaching and learning similar to that which occurs in a classroom setting. Within this process, instructors use Planned courses of instruction of new concepts/skills aligned to program and industry standards.

Enrichment and Review: Enrichment and Review consists of informal activities that reinforce or extend students’ prior learning. New standards and skills are not addressed through Enrichment and Review.

The GACTC offers a continuity of instruction to its students using a tiered approach. In order to assure our systems, instructors, and students are functioning well in the virtual environment, a period of Enrichment and Review will occur followed by a move to Planned Instruction.

In 26 of the 27 programs at the GACTC, instructors provided support to students in the Enrichment and Review format during Phase II and were expected to review and enrich previously-learned concepts while considering differentiation of learning opportunities for their students, a typical practice, as some are in their first year, second, third or are graduating seniors. During Phase III of virtual instruction, the GACTC shifted to a Planned Instruction model that includes new content and skills, grading, and attendance for students.

During Phase I instructors had time to develop skills that allow them to stretch their pedagogy because they are accustomed to working with students in-person and not virtually. Virtual learning in a career and technical education setting presents a unique challenge, particularly because much of career and technical learning is predominantly tactile. Therefore, instructors are expected to do their very best to generate learning opportunities that allow students to experience content online (photos/videos, blogs, articles, simulations, essays) and execute tasks of the trade, and when possible, using tools of the trade so that students can engage meaningfully in their current settings, their homes and neighborhoods, while safely following CDC and Department of Health guidelines. Instructors were provided six days to prepare for Phase II and III.

In Phase II, students' participation and performance were not calculated for "grades", but their participation was strongly encouraged. This period provided an opportunity for both instructors and students to become acclimated to virtual education without being subject to grading or attendance. Examples of activities instructors have developed include: Culinary: preparing meals for the family and writing about the ingredients and cooking techniques used, Automotive Technologies: performing a brake inspection on parent's vehicle and submitting inspection records indicating rotor and pad thickness and minimums, Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Technologies: conducting an inventory of HVAC components of the child's home to determine sizing specifications and submitting inventory and analysis, Visual Arts Technologies: students use a medium of their choice to create a visual representation of the phrase "we are in this together", etc.

As the GACTC moves into Phase III of instruction, a Planned Instruction delivery model will be implemented. Planned Instruction includes the coverage of new concepts and skills not previously taught. Students are graded on a Pass/Fail format and attendance is based on assignment completion.

Summary of the GACTC's Continuity of Education Plan:

Phase I – Friday, March 27, 2020 – Friday, April 3, 2020

- Expectations for staff set related to roll out of Enrichment and Review Instructional Model
- Program instructors worked to plan and prepare trade-specific content for their students and receive support on establishing virtual learning platforms (Canvas, Google Classroom, etc.) and obtain virtual learning materials and resources.
- Expectations for support staff set related to supporting students who receive specially designed instruction and communicating to students not fully engaged in Enrichment and Review
- Expectations communicated to students through the use of Infinite Campus Messenger/Social Media/GACTC website and through partner school district communication tools.

Phase II - Monday, April 6, 2020 - Monday, April 13, 2020 (Friday, April 10th - No School)

- Daily engagements/interactions with students
- Review, practice activities, and projects delivered through online LMS systems and varied internet sources
- Expectation is that instructors are available to students for questions 7:35 AM - 3:05 PM (including a lunch). How that is accomplished is at the discretion of each individual instructor. There is no expectation that any instructor is online the entire time as long as there is sufficient monitoring of students in place.

Phase III – Tuesday, April 14, 2020 - End of 2019-2020 school year

- Daily engagements/interactions with students and feedback provided
- Develop fun and engaging activities for students to complete - differentiated for different levels of learners
- Material is graded on a Pass/Fail basis
- New technical knowledge and skill delivery and competencies earned, particularly for senior students, to the extent possible through virtual means
- Instructors will schedule virtual meetings with students through Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc. at a minimum of 2x/week. These scheduled meetings are intended to provide students with an opportunity to engage with instructors and each other in real time. It is recommended that instructors set these to a) deliver instruction to all or a specific group of your learners, b) provide feedback on work to all or a specific group of learners, c) provide students with an opportunity to discuss ideas, debate topics, or collaborate, or d) to be available to answer questions about assignments and projects.
- Attendance is monitored through completion of work by deadlines
- Expectation is that instructors are available to students for questions 7:35 AM - 3:05 PM (including a lunch). How that is accomplished is at the discretion of each individual instructor. There is no expectation that any instructor is online the entire time as long as there is sufficient monitoring of students in place

Exception: GACTC Cosmetology Program: In Phase II instructors and students in the Cosmetology program followed a Planned Instruction model during which assignments and activities were assessed in order to continually earn credit hours for the State Board Cosmetology requirements for the examination. The State Board has allowed for a specified number of hours to be earned through distance learning. This occurred in order to assure these students would be able to meet the hour requirements set forth by the State Board.

Communication Tools and Strategies

The GACTC utilizes its student information system's (Infinite Campus) electronic messenger to communicate messages via voice, text, and email. All students have school-issued emails commonly used by Instructors to communicate information, assignments and expectations. The school has transmitted messages to all students' families in order to ensure that they are monitoring their school email accounts while out of school as important information would be communicated from Instructors.

The GACTC also provided staff, who would be in frequent communication to students' homes, with a Google Voice account in an effort to eliminate Instructors' use of their personal phone numbers when contacting homes.

The GACTC has also engaged leadership from partner schools in communicating messages on behalf of the GACTC in an effort to bolster communication efforts to students and their families through the partner school tools of communication.

Program Instructors are available for contact from students and parents Monday through Friday from 7:35 AM-3:05 PM (including lunch).

Additionally, school special education and paraprofessional staff contact students on a regular basis. For example, special education Instructors, in tandem with paraprofessionals, make contact with students via phone, text (Google Voice) or school email. Those who receive specially designed instruction will be contacted weekly, at minimum. Students who are not actively engaged in the learning activities will also be contacted.

The Principal and Dean of Students are available to respond to parent inquiries through email and phone calls to the school or directly to their Google Voice phone numbers.

Generally, parents and students are expected to and have been alerted to monitor the child's school-issued email. Other pertinent communications are sent directly to parent's primary contact phones in the form of voice messages and texts, as needed.

Access (Devices, Platforms, Handouts)

Nearly all partner school districts have executed distribution of electronic devices to their students. The GACTC has conducted a home internet and device capability survey to determine which households may struggle with online learning. Most Instructors are utilizing the Canvas LMS and a few others are delivering content through Google Classroom as well as utilizing other web-based resources for content and certifications (Kohler University, CareerSafe, SP/2, etc.). The instructors have all communicated, via school-issued email, to their students and have invited them to their virtual classrooms, as noted previously, through Canvas or Google Classroom. As necessary, students without access are provided paper/pencil copies of work to be completed.

Staff General Expectations

As noted, it is expected that teaching and support staff do their best to access their creativity, collaborate with peers, and research the availability of their content online to generate trade-related, engaging activities while students cannot attend their shops, labs, and classrooms.

Instructors will be available Monday through Friday from 7:35 AM-3:05 PM to generate and provide virtual learning opportunities, respond to student and parent inquiries, and provide other support as necessary.

Instructors will use school-issued email to communicate directly to students via the students' school-issued email and communicate learning content over learning management systems like Canvas, Google Classroom, etc.

Instructors are required to provide daily instructional activities for their students. Some projects or activities may take students a few days to complete, and instructors were asked to consider the time activities would take when assigning such assignments.

Instructors will monitor and provide feedback to students who choose to complete assignments and participate in the learning activities.

Instructors are not permitted to grade the Enrichment or Review activities or allow participation to impact student grades during Phase II. However, in Phase III assignments are graded on a Pass/Fail format and attendance is based on assignment completion, weekly. Instructors may provide activities that may result in students earning industry-specific certifications.

Regular student-instructor communication is KEY. The GACTC realizes that some students will not be available when the instructors are and vice-versa. The plan to implement asynchronous and synchronous learning is to be respectful of everyone's ability to access and participate within the many challenging circumstances we all face.

Student Expectations

Although student participation in Phase II - Enrichment and Review activities is voluntary, the Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center strongly encourages students to meaningfully engage in these activities. Phase III - Planned Instruction requires students to participate in order to receive credit toward their fourth (4th) marking period grade. Meaningful engagement consists of students monitoring their school-issued email for assignments and communications sent from their program instructor, completing assignments by the due date, which may include reading, researching, watching videos, creating videos, performing trade-related tasks, sharing work, ideas, accomplishments, and generally, actively self-advocating for their continued learning and growth. Overall, students are expected to give their best effort.

Attendance / Accountability

During Phase II (4/6-4/13) of virtual learning, student attendance and participation in the Enrichment and Review activities is voluntary. However, instructors are expected to monitor the students who do/do not participate, specifically underclassmen, as it will determine how those students may need remediation when they return to school. As noted in Communication Tools and Strategies, support staff will be contacting students who fail to participate in learning as described in Student Expectations. During Phase III (4/14 - end of school year), students must participate in order to receive credit for the fourth (4th) marking period. Attendance is taken weekly by instructors and is based on completion of assigned work and projects.

Grading

- The GACTC will utilize the PASS/FAIL approach for assessment, utilizing only formative assessment with an emphasis on high quality specific feedback for learning. The threshold for passing will be 70%.
- When assessing a students' work, what would typically qualify as 70% or higher will be a passing grade.
- Any student who does not meet the 70% threshold will be given specific feedback for corrections.
- For students who choose not to participate or submit work, despite instructor's and support staff's efforts to engage them, a FAILING grade will be assigned.

The primary focus is on student learning – not grades.

The GACTC has communicated with participating sending schools in an effort to seamlessly provide grades, which will be in a Pass/Fail format, for the fourth (4th) marking period.

Good Faith Efforts for Access and Equity for All Students

The GACTC has reached out to all households to determine home internet and device capabilities. Where necessary, students without access are provided paper/pencil copies of work to be completed. A communication plan for ALL students, specifically those students in need of special education services, has been developed. This plan requires special education and support personnel to collectively make contact with parents and their students who receive specially designed instruction, weekly at a minimum. These check-ins are intended to ensure that if students are struggling or have questions, they can receive as much help as possible, given the circumstances.

Special Education Supports

As noted, Instructors and support staff are making personal contact with the homes of students who receive specially designed instruction through phone, text (Google Voice) or school email. Special Education instructors have thoroughly reviewed student IEPs, 504s and GIEPs in order to best provide the accommodations in a distance, virtual model of instructional delivery.

EL Supports

The GACTC does not have any identified English learners.

Gifted Education

As noted, Instructors and support staff are making personal contact with the homes of students who receive specially designed instruction through phone, text (Google Voice) or school email. Special Education instructors have thoroughly reviewed student IEPs, 504s and GIEPs in order to best provide the accommodations in a distance, virtual model of instructional delivery.

Building/Grade Level Contacts

The GACTC is a career and technical education school that provides 27 career and technical programs. Each program instructor is in direct contact with each of his/her students through school email and Google Voice (voice and text). Special Education instructors and paraprofessionals are making direct contact with students through email and Google Voice (voice and text) The GACTC utilizes its student information system's (Infinite Campus) electronic messenger which communicates messages via voice, text, and email. Principal (814)505-1282 and Dean of Students (814) 505-1274 are available to receive phone inquiries from parents/ guardians and students in order to answer questions.

Resource Links

www.gactc.edu

[LINK TO FAQs](#)

www.canvas.instructure.com

www.classroom.google.com