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# ***New Branches Virtual Academy***

## **Student & Family Handbook**

**\*To be used in conjunction with NBCA Student & Family Handbook**

### ***Your Student's Guide for Virtual Learning Success***

***A PARTNERSHIP IN RESPONSIBILITY***

***"It takes a village to raise a child."***

**2020/2021**

**This guide will be used if the State of Michigan returns to Phase 1-3 of the Michigan Stay Safe Plan and for families who select to learn virtually in Phases 4-6.**

**Canvas Username:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Canvas Password:** \_\_\_\_\_

**REVISED: August 26, 2020**

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## Welcome to New Branches Virtual Academy

Dear New Branches Families,

As we plan to embark on the 2020-21 school year, we are thrilled to offer two options for your student's learning experience, a 100% in-seat and a 100% virtual learning option. If you chose the 100% virtual learning online option, you will still receive the great New Branches education your child would receive in-person taught by a NBCA teacher, with the same robust curriculum and standards, but lead by a Learning Coach (parent, guardian, other designated adult or responsible secondary student) at home using Canvas, our online platform.

We know from our experience in the spring, that you do not have to physically be in the building to learn and thrive academically. Yet, we want you to know that virtual options will be far different this coming school year than the emergency model we employed last March. We have had the whole summer to read and respond to your feedback and plan for a strong online learning platform to mirror the in-person experience.

***Please note as you read this plan, there is the potential for all students to return to virtual instruction if our region moves back to phases 1-3 in the Michigan Stay Safe Plan during the school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If we do return to all-virtual learning, the following still applies to every student.***

The 100% virtual option complements the school's classroom instruction, and is a combination of self-paced and live opportunities for instruction, participation and feedback.

The new virtual learning option includes:

- The grading of student work will resume, and accountability for learning as reported through assignment completion and progress on grade level achievement also resumes.
- NBCA curriculum and assessments will be used consistently.
- Academic goals will be created for each student and a minimum of 2 benchmark assessments will be required to be taken.
- Canvas will be used more consistently across classes and grade levels.
- Teachers will offer more live learning and engagement opportunities.
- Attendance is mandatory and will be determined by a variety of measures including log-in data, assignment completion, and communication.
- Students will be able to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular school activities if available.

Please continue reading the handbook for additional information on expectations, attendance, grade-level support and much more.

We look forward to welcoming back to school, either in-person or online on September 8, 2020.

## Ownership of Learning

### Participation & Program Requirements

As a participant in our virtual learning academy all students will have the opportunity to THRIVE! Parents and students who have chosen the virtual learning option must understand that they are the owner of their success in the program. Of course, the teachers and staff will support you, but the student and Learning Coach must:

- Commit to logging in daily, follow the learning schedule, participate in classes, and to complete all assignments and class requirements.
- Understand and agree to invest the time necessary for successful completion of your classes. You are aware that the number of hours required to complete online classes is similar to the number of hours required to complete traditional courses (to include both time online and the time offline on assignments, projects, and testing requirements).
- Participate in daily scheduled online live instruction or appropriate intervention services.
- Understand the importance of prompt communication with teachers, responding to all messages in Canvas knowing that this communication is part of our attendance protocol (Two-Way Communication discussing what the student is learning with the instructor is required weekly for attendance purposes).
- Must report to the school for all required assessments, interventions, and parent meetings.
- Have reliable access to WiFi/Internet connection.  
Students who do not abide by the policies, guidelines, and rules regulating the virtual learning option will be required to meet with a school leader with a parent present to discuss successful strategies.

### ATTENDANCE

**Attendance is required daily and all students must log in by 8:10 every school day.**

**Teachers will continue to monitor attendance throughout the day and students must be present in all live sessions in order to be marked present for the day.** If you are unable to attend due to illness or appointments, please call the office at 616-243-6221 by 8:30AM to report any absence, just like in-person learning (See NBCA Student and Family Handbook for attendance policies). Similar to a traditional day, if you are not present in class, you will be marked absent and the office will notify the parent/guardian. All state of Michigan truancy laws still apply to online learning. See below for attendance guidelines:

- After missing 2 days of online learning, a staff member will reach out to you for a return date.
- After 3 days of no contact, one of our Student Advocates will be calling you to set up an in person meeting to discuss and create a plan for success in our virtual program.
  - If no response within 24 hours, the school may reach out to your emergency contacts.
  - If attendance continues to be an issue, a meeting with the school administration will be required.

## New Branches Virtual Academy Contract 2020/2021

As the parent(s)/guardian(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Student's Name)

I understand that New Branches Virtual Academy requires my child to meet all conditions that foster a successful online education aligned with Michigan Department of Education Requirements. Conditions defining a successful online student:  
(Initial each line)

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my child will receive grades based on daily participation, assignment completion, and demonstrated mastery of skills.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that attendance will be taken and adherence to Kent ISD truancy and attendance requirements must be met.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will be available for virtual learning and engagement between the hours of 8:10-3:00 every school day.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will have access to the internet during school hours.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will have an appropriate adult or secondary student available to assist them between the hours of 8:10-3:00 every school day. We call this person a "Learning Coach."

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will engage in coursework on a DAILY basis with Learning Coach supervision.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child and designated Learning Coach will establish regular Two-Way Communication with all teachers through Canvas.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will attend all mandatory testing and evaluations sessions at the school (NWEA, M-STEP, PSAT, IEP Evaluations, etc).

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will maintain academic integrity through the submission of authentic, original work.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child will honor all rules and procedures established by New Branches as stated in the New Branches Student & Family Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## The Home Environment for Learning

For virtual students, the learning environment is your home and surroundings. The following tips will lead to a successful learning experience.

### DO's:

- Each student should have a designated learning space with minimal distractions.
- A flat surface (desk or table) on which to work
- All learning materials will be kept in this space for easy access during lessons
- The learning space must have a power outlet to keep their device charged
- Get dressed in school clothes each morning before logging in
- Must have camera on and student must be visible for all live sessions

### DONT'S:

- There should be no distractions in the learning space, this includes but is not limited to:
  - TV
  - Video Games
  - Pets
  - Siblings
  - Music
  - Food
  - Other people talking in the background
- Travel around the house during live-lessons
- Use the device for activities other than those required for school
- Have other web pages open during live learning

## CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Classroom Teacher	Office Staff	Canvas Support	Tech Support
Via Canvas Communication	616-243-6221	877-567-0174 nbvahelp @newbranches.org	techsupport @newbranches.org
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student's Progress</li> <li>● Classroom Assignments</li> <li>● Class Procedures</li> <li>● Daily Scheduling</li> <li>● Grading</li> <li>● Student progress</li> <li>● Student behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Absence Calls</li> <li>● Enrollment</li> <li>● School-wide questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Canvas login</li> <li>● How-to questions</li> <li>● Canvas glitches</li> <li>● Mobile App issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Device issues</li> <li>● Device login</li> </ul>

### Office Hours

**School Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

***If you would like to set up a meeting with the school leader, please call the office in advance to determine a scheduled time.***

## **FAQs for Online Learning**

**Q: What will a typical virtual learning day look like for my student?**

**A:** It will vary by grade and by teacher. Students will be required to follow a schedule similar to an in-person student day (approximately 6.5 hours a day). All teachers will hold live instruction during the period/time in which they would normally be teaching and will also give assignments and activities for students to complete on their own.

\*Please see your student's schedule

**Q: Where will my student access online lessons?**

**A:** All teachers will be using Canvas as our learning platform for both virtual and in-person learning. This includes special education teachers. All lessons and assignments can be found on Canvas.

**Q: How does my student access Canvas?**

**A:** Students will log into Canvas using their school-issued username and password.

**Q: When does my student need to log on to Canvas each day?**

**A:** All students must log in at 8:10 each morning.

**Q: How much time will my students need to complete a lesson?**

**A:** The time will vary by student, but in general the time spent on the lessons and assignments on school days will be comparable to the time spent in school for an in-person student. Virtual instruction will include live lessons or Zoom meetings. Students will be expected to follow their class schedule.

**Q: How will we provide services to students with IEPs, EPs, and 504 plans? How will we be able to accommodate their needs?**

**A:** Students with IEPs, EPs, and 504 plans will participate in online learning along with our other students. Accommodations and modifications will be implemented as they would if the student were receiving face-to-face instruction. Students who receive services from an ESE teacher or specialized therapist will receive those services on a reliable schedule virtually (if possible) or at a scheduled time in-person, if desired.

**Q: When and how can I reach my child's teacher?**

**A:** Canvas Communication is the preferred method of communication. Please allow 24 hours for your student's teacher to respond.

**Q: How much communication can I expect from the school?**

**A:** You can continue to expect weekly newsletters, which are a great source of information for school and community updates and information, in addition to summaries and sharings from each classroom teacher. School administrators will continue to share important information and announcements via School Messenger.

**Q: Will attendance be taken?**

**A:** Yes. Students will be required to log in daily at 8:10 AM and complete their morning work. Additionally, attendance will be taken in all live learning sessions. If not present or active, students will be marked absent. Students must also engage in Two-Way Communication with their teacher weekly to discuss what they have been learning. Students who are sick or cannot participate for another reason should contact the office to report an absence. Students in virtual instruction are still subject to the attendance requirements of the state of Michigan.

**Q: Will virtual instruction assignments be graded?**

**A:** Yes. The grades earned during virtual instruction will be the grades used to determine report card grades. Classwork, homework, and assessment grades will be taken into account.

We understand that some students, particularly at the elementary level, may not be able to complete tasks independently and will require the assistance of their designated Learning Coach.

**Q: How will I know if my child is in danger of failing?**

**A:** Promotion for virtual school remains the same as that for in-person learning. Weekly assessments and independent work will keep teachers apprised of student progress. You can track your child's progress through your Parent Account. If students begin to struggle, parents, school leaders, and teachers may schedule a meeting.

**Q: Will students take standardized tests this year?**

**A:** As of August 26, 2020, yes standardized tests are required for all public school students in the state of Michigan.

**Q: My family has technology limitations, how can *New Branches* help?**

**A:** New Branches will provide a device for all students whether in-person or virtual. If anyone needs assistance obtaining adequate wifi, please contact [techsupport@newbranches.com](mailto:techsupport@newbranches.com).

**Q: Will there be any annual events such as Open House, Meet the Teacher Night, Family Nights, etc?**

**A:** Currently we are not able to plan such activities due to the uncertainty of the health crisis and the current executive orders. If we are allowed to gather in groups, we will.

If you have other questions and we can be of assistance, please contact the front office for support.