Discovery Trails Online School (DTO)
PARENT GUIDE

VERSION 2.2

Contents

Introduction – Principal's Message

Dear Discovery Trails Online School (DTO) community,

It is my pleasure to welcome you, or welcome you back, to Discovery Trails Online School! We are very excited to continue building upon the foundation that was laid by our staff, students, school council, and community members in our first years as we create a vibrant, engaging school! Our school council is looking for members to join and new families are welcome to become part of the council and help support our work. In collaboration with the school council, this year we are going to be expanding upon our "Activity Day" events and intend to have one in-person event or activity each month starting with Terry Fox run in September and concluding with our Discovery Trails community picnic in June.

Being online provides an opportunity to remove barriers to learning and ensure that learning is universally accessible for all of our students: our philosophy is to meet the students where they are at and live the aspiration that "If you don't learn the way we teach, we will teach the way you learn." Online learning also offers some challenges which means that our students are most successful when they are able to fully engage with their online lessons, come to class prepared for learning, maintain an organized workspace, and be able to work independently. Fortunately, these requirements are all skills that can be taught and practiced, and we will be working with our students to support their ability to work in the online environment.

I am looking forward to working with our Discovery Trails community over the coming year as we continue to build a vibrant online learning community. I welcome parent feedback and will be sending the Principal's Newsletter "Tales of the Trails" to all of our families. A response to this newsletter will come directly to my in-basket and so I invite you to send your thoughts and suggestions as we build this community together.

All my best,

Bob Rodgers

Section 1 – Getting Started

Technology…an excellent first step for parents.

☐ Become familiar with the technology your child's teacher is using. RVS Online Technology Tips – *includes Google Classroom and Moodle tutorials.*

☐ Make a note of needed sites and passwords and place them in your child's workspace for easy access.

☐ **Student/Parent Technology Support Hotline** studentsupport@rockyview.ab.ca 403-945-4083

Connect with your child's teacher.

☐ Watch for a communication from your child's teacher. *Tip: Check your email junk folder!*

☐ Be aware of how best to communicate with your child's teacher.

☐ Reach out before or after learning times are scheduled: check your teacher's office hours.

☐ Be patient. Your child's teacher will try to respond to you within 24-hours during the workweek.

Create a learning space for your child.

☐ Incorporate comfortable seating with devices and other school supplies easily accessible.

☐ Limit background noise and distractions. Keep siblings and pets out of the learning space.

☐ Be nearby so you can see your child and provide support as needed.

Good to know – EVEN WHEN YOUR CHILD IS WEARING HEADPHONES the class can see and hear what is happening around your child.

Support for Elementary/Middle School Students

Support your child to follow daily learning routines similar to in person school.

Your child should:

☐ Get up and get dressed in school clothes.

☐ Have breakfast.

☐ Be ready for learning. Check devices are charged and working.

☐ Log into synchronous Zoom sessions just before the start time.

To best support your child's learning, follow 'The Goldilocks Rule'

• Not too MUCH – Hovering and providing answers can be distracting and inhibit thinking/learning.

• Not too LITTLE – Learners who need help are at risk of becoming frustrated and sometimes quit.

• JUST RIGHT – Learners with 'just the right amount of support' are willing to take risks and become self-directed learners over time.

• Many skills need practice to achieve mastery. Remember, no one can practice for someone else: the person who does the practice builds the skills.

Be aware of the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP) Do not record or take pictures of students and their teachers during synchronous learning times.

What to Expect the First Week

Support your child and your child's teacher through this adjustment period of online learning.

• **Remember:** Your child's teacher will take time to teach the class how to use their new tools and how to work together online.

• **Trust** your child's teacher to adjust expectations as the class becomes more comfortable with their new school – usually after the first week or two.

Section 2 – Communication

Communication and the School

It is important to be informed about your child's school.
- ☐ Receive **school communications** via email and phone for essential updates.
- ☐ Bookmark and regularly check the **school website** for 'need to know' and 'just in time' information placed there by Rocky View Schools.
- ☐ Read Principal's weekly newsletter.

Communication and the Classroom

- ☐ Grade 1-9 parents, be sure to read the weekly teacher newsletter and prepare or monitor your child's preparedness to learn.
- ☐ Consider your child's age and independence level, determine 'how close to the action' you will need to be.

  - Grade 1-2 Nearby and available (especially for start up)
  - Grade 3-4 Available (especially for start up)
  - Grade 5-9 Available if needed

- ☐ Let your child be 'front and center' during synchronous sessions; this is a 'students only' time with their teacher.
- ☐ If you have comments/observations you would like to share with the teacher, please send them at the end of the day, when the teacher is not in a live session.
- ☐ **Teachers are NOT able to answer parent emails during online sessions with students.** Teachers will respond to student questions within the school day and are expected to respond to parent communications within 24 hours.

Communication and the Classroom – Body Language

- Body language – and language – is fundamental in a virtual context.
- Just a quick reminder. Headphones may cancel out what your child can hear but the microphone is projecting the conversations in the household…into the classroom.

Communication – Addressing Concerns: A Solution Focused Approach

Addressing Concerns
Alberta school authorities make reasonable efforts to resolve concerns of parents. Despite these efforts, when parents do not agree with a decision related to their child's education, the first step is to talk to the teacher to try to resolve the concern together. If you are unable to resolve the concern, the next step is to talk to the school's principal or assistant principal. Together with the parent, teacher and school administration, most issues can be resolved.

(retrieved from https://education.alberta.ca April 2016)

Steps for Parents
- ☐ Share your concern about your child's learning and/or school experience with the teacher(s).
  Include the impact that you see for your child. Is your child's education being impacted? Is your child struggling with a social or emotional aspect of school?
- ☐ Share how you have supported your child in this concern to this point and how your child has responded.
- ☐ Ask the teacher to share his/her perspective. What is the teacher seeing at school? What ideas does the teacher have to address the challenges that you have put forward?

☐ Develop a plan together. What will happen at school to support your child? What will happen at home to support your child?

☐ Determine a date for review. When will you talk about 'how things are going' with your shared supports in place?

☐ Are you still concerned? Contact your child's school administrator for additional conversation.

Take the time to celebrate with teachers when you see that your child is doing well – your investment of time goes a long, long way in building that very important partnership that ensures we are all doing the best we can and building the best school community for families.

Section 3 – Routines and Procedures

Attendance

What does it mean to be in attendance online?

At Discovery Trails we take attendance twice a day for elementary students in the Morning and Afternoons, and for Middle School we take attendance for each class.   To be considered present, students need to log into the Zoom class and stay in class for the entire lesson. It is ok for a student to leave the class briefly during a lesson, but as in a physical classroom they should let the teacher know they are leaving by putting a note in the chat box or by using the "Coffee Break" emoji in the response box.   Our concern is that in the past, some students have joined the zoom class, turned off their camera and microphone, and then left the computer to watch TV or play video games. In these cases, the student is effectively absent from the class.

We are able to tell that a student is not in class if they have not joined the zoom class, or if they have joined, but:

- Their camera is off and,
- They do not turn on their mic when called upon, and
- They do not respond to messages in chat, and
- They do not use the 'response' emojis during class discussions, and
- They do not move into a breakout room when asked to do so, and
- They stay logged into the zoom room when the class is dismissed.

In short, if a student is away from their computer for an extended length of time, the teacher will be able to tell because the student will not use any of the communication tools to respond (camera, microphone, chat, emojis), they will not follow class instructions such as to move into a breakout room, and they will not exit the room when the class is over.

So, in order for the teacher to know that the student is in class they should:

1. Join the zoom class on time, and:
   a. Turn on their camera (best choice!) and/or
   b. Use their microphone to speak with the teacher and/or
   c. Use the chat box to respond to the teacher and/or
   d. Use the emoji response buttons and
   e. Respond to the teacher if called upon, and
   f. Move to breakout rooms when asked to do so, and
   g. Leave the class when it is over unless staying for extra help.

Occasionally, a student will minimize the zoom application on their computer to use other apps. In this case, it will appear to anyone looking at the student that they are working since they will be at their computer, but if they are not engaging in the class they are still effectively absent.

Please let us know if you have any questions about attendance by contacting your homeroom teacher, admin, or the office.

Absences

Absence – Student

Discovery Trails uses the SafeArrival Student Absence Reporting.

With SafeArrival, you are asked to report your child's absence in advance using any of these three convenient methods. To create your account, please use the same email address/phone number that you use for PowerSchool. If you do not have your PowerSchool login information, please contact your child's school for assistance.

1. Using your **mobile device**, download and install the SchoolMessenger app from the Apple App Store, the Google Play Store, or via the links on the SchoolMessenger website.
   a. The first time you use the app, select Sign Up to create your account.
   b. To report an absence, Select Attendance.
2. Use the **SafeArrival website**.
   a. The first time you use the website, select Sign Up to create your account.
   b. To report an absence, Select Attendance.
3. Call the **toll-free number** (1-833-244-5565) to report an absence using the automated phone system.

Or you may phone the school absence line at 403-945-4196 if your child is going to be absent. Please include the reason and duration of the anticipated absence. You may also email your child's teacher to let them know, but please be sure to call the absence line first.

Absence – Teacher

If your child's teacher is away or ill, they will call for a substitute teacher as they would in a face to face school. Your child's class will be in the same zoom room as usual – the guest teacher will join the class.

Watch for:

☐ A wonderful guest teacher to meet the class during the online live session and small group work.

Communication of Student Learning

Three-Way Conferences and Goal Setting

DTO classes follow RVS Communication of Student Learning procedures including Three-Way Conferences. In 2024/25 the Three-Way Conferences will be held:

- Tues, Nov 12 – Thurs, Nov 14
- Tues, March 11- Thurs, March 13

Please view the Calendar on our Website for the current year dates.

Before the Three-Way Conference:

☐ Watch for information from your child's teacher about virtual conferences.

☐ Sign up using the instructions provided by the online teacher.

☐ Log in a few minutes prior to your scheduled conference time. You will be in a 'waiting room' until the teacher admits you to the conference. Please be patient as the teacher wraps up the previous conference.

During the Three-Way Conference:

☐ Note your child's strengths and areas for growth.

☐ Work with your child and the teacher to create a learning goal(s) to build on strengths and move learning forward.

☐   Celebrate your child's growth and learning and commit to ongoing support of your child's learning from home.

After the Three-Way Conference:

☐   Support your child and monitor learning goals.

Real Time Reporting (RTR):

DTO uses 'Real Time Reporting" which means that we don't wait for report cards to update student progress, but rather do continuous reporting throughout the year. Please contact your homeroom teacher or the DTO office if you have having any trouble accessing Power School.

Or you can follow this link to find out more about how to access your Parent Power School Account.

The Parent Portal and the Report Card

The Power School Parent Portal provides access to information about your child's learning at any time. Parents can gain insight into how students are doing as they work through assignments and also check on overall grades. You can login to the parent portal here: parent portal link, and find more information here: PowerSchool Overview.

☐   Ensure you have your log-in and password for the Parent Portal. Contact your child's home school if you require assistance.

☐   Monitor the portal for assignment information and teacher provided feedback about your child's learning.

☐   Support your child to focus on the feedback in daily work, where applicable.

A final Report Card will be provided as a summary of your child's learning in June via PowerSchool Parent Portal.

The Digital Portfolio (Elementary/Middle)

RVS uses myBlueprint. You can read more about the use of student portfolios on the Rocky View Schools website.

☐   Watch for specific information about myBlueprint to come to you from your child's teacher.

☐   Learn more about what to expect through myBlueprint.ca.

Connecting with Friends/Families (Elementary/Middle)

At times, parents will want to set up virtual play dates/meets with friends from the online class.
Online teachers are not able to direct or facilitate contact between families.
However, if you would like your own information shared with another family, the teacher may share your information provided there is a written request to do so.

Individual Program Plans (IPPs)

Students who have an Individualized Program Plan (IPP) will be connected to the Learning Supports Team at DTO.
The priorities for your child's program plan may change over time.
If your child is new to online learning, Zoom video conferencing routines, for example, may take center stage for a time.

You, with your child's learning team, will determine the way forward concerning Individual Program Plans.

Scheduling Extracurricular Activities (e.g. Swimming lessons)

Families are encouraged to schedule regular activities, such as swimming lessons, outside of school hours, where possible. Otherwise, it is important to plan regular activities outside of the synchronous sessions. Unfortunately, rescheduling synchronous sessions is more challenging that it would appear on the surface. Thank you for understanding.

School Photos

DTO will share dates/times and locations that school photos will be taken. Watch for information about school photos through your child's school communications which may include:

- Newsletters / Website / Email to families

School Supplies

Students in Grades 1 through 4

- RVS provides student supplies in Grades 1 – 4 at the beginning of the school year.
- DTO will arrange for families to pick up supplies from designated locations in Airdrie, Cochrane, and Chestermere.

Students in Grades 5 through 9
Check with your child's teacher to confirm what school supplies are required.

Student Supplies – Digital Resources

Students in online classes have been provided with digital learning resources which may include:

- ☐ https://www.raz-kids.com/ RAZ Kids
- ☐ IXL
- ☐ Discovery Education (K-12)
- ☐ Other as appropriate

Online teachers will provide site and log-in information to online students.
Additional virtual resources are available through Rocky View Schools Online site and/or by your child's teacher.
Families are encouraged to stay connected to local libraries for additional digital materials as well.

Technology

Rocky View Online Technology Tips is a resource of information for:

- Internet and Digital Safety
- Zoom Video Conferencing and Google Meet
- Google Classroom and Moodle
- G-Suite for Parents
- Microsoft Office
- Accessibility/Read & Write for Google Chrome
- Digital Portfolios including myBlueprint
- E-Books and online libraries
- Video Learning Resources including Discovery Education and Criterion on Demand

Acceptable Use Policy

Students and guardians need to review and follow the policies found on the acceptable use procedure which can be seen here: [Responsible use of technology](#)

Field Trips and Presenters

Online classes are encouraged to participate in virtual field trips and host classroom presentations. Virtual excursions and presenters enhance learning and may be available at no cost. Some, however, have an associated per student fee.

☐   Watch for information from your child's teacher regarding virtual field trips/presenters.

☐   Payment, if applicable, may be made through SchoolCash Online.
Consent is not required as the associated risks including site visits and travel are not applicable in a virtual environment.

☐   DTO also offers In person field trips / events – please watch for communication from your teachers with regard to any such events. - Please note that the school does not provide transportation for in-person field trips, so families are asked to make their own arrangements to get their students to the field trip venue.

Volunteering

We love our volunteers! Online classes offer unique opportunities for volunteering. Thank you for your patience while we learn how to best tap into virtual volunteering.

In preparation for volunteering, please be reminded that volunteers working directly with students, even virtually, require:

☐   A Criminal Record Check

☐   A signed Confidentiality Agreement

Please contact your child's school to access a letter to accompany your request for a Criminal Record Check as well as the Confidentiality Agreement.

School Council

☐   Please watch for details from the school regarding meeting times of the DTO school council.

Section 4 – Good to Know

School Days

DTO classes follow the school calendar as outlined by Rocky View Schools.

Bell Times:

Although we do not have traditional bells, we will have 'bell times' as follow: Monday to Thursday	
8 – 9 a.m.	School Office Open
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	Instruction
12 – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch
12:30 – 3:10 p.m.	Instruction
12:30 – 3 p.m.	School Office Open
Friday	
8 – 9 a.m.	School Office open
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.	Instruction
11 – 11:30 p.m.	Lunch
11:30 – 1:15 p.m.	Instruction
1:15 – 3:00 p.m.	School Office Open

Career and Technology Foundations (Options) Classes:

We will be offering Grade 6-9 students two CTF classes per semester with eight classes to choose from. That means that there will be four different options over the year out of a possible 8 choices. More details on option classes and a sign-up form will be coming from the school. CTF course are not optional (despite being sometimes know as 'options') and students are expected to be in attendance for all classes.

Special events:

The school will celebrate special events such as the Terry Fox Run, Remembrance Day, winter festivals, etc., as a community and these events may include virtual and/or in person events. Watch for details from the school.

Extra-curricular Athletics Gr. 7-9:

Rocky View Schools policy permits DTO students to participate in school team athletics with their local physical school, if that school has space available in their program.   This would include sports such as soccer, volleyball, and basketball.   Students who are interested in participating in a team sport should contact the DTO principal or athletic director who will then check with the principal of the physical school. If the other school has space, then the DTO student will have the opportunity to try out for the team in the same way as any other student from that school and will have to abide by the team schedule and expectations.

Discovery Trails will be running our own teams for badminton and track, so students who are interested in trying out for those sports should watch the school newsletter for details on when the seasons begin and where practices will be held.

Face to Face events:

As part of our community building, social wellness, and physical education programs, it is our goal to have face-to-face events such as activity days, community picnics, the Terry Fox run, etc. approximately every 6 weeks throughout the year.   We will rotate the venue between Airdrie, Cochrane, and Chestermere with the exception of the Terry Fox Run which will take place in all three communities simultaneously.   Although we encourage our students and families to attend, these events are optional and most of them will also have online alternatives. The first event of the year is the Terry Fox run in September, and we hope to see you there!

Section 5 – Year-End

Year-End Report Cards

You have been watching your child(ren) learn and grow through the school year. Information housed in the PowerSchool Parent Portal has been painting a picture' of your child as a learner throughout the year.

At the end of June, the teacher will prepare a summary of learning to be included in a Year-End Report Card. Please see the link below for more information.

Real Time Reporting