

# GreatHearts®

## Great Hearts Texas Distance Learning

### An Update for Families

August 10, 2020

**Vision: To provide students with an outstanding and equivalent Great Hearts education in an online form.**

#### Dear Parents and Guardians,

Based on our ongoing conversation with teachers and families about the need for a robust, high-quality distance learning option in the upcoming school year, and in light of the large percentage of the families interested in it, Great Hearts Texas has developed a completely new plan for Great Hearts Distance Learning (GHDL), and we are happy to share it with you.

#### Program Summary

Students will be enrolled in courses and taught by teachers from their own academy with regular video contact. In some cases, distance learning students will be consolidated into full sections. In other cases, students will be in a blended section with in-building peers.

Lower school students will experience lessons and video contact with their teacher every day, and upper school students will have three lessons on average with each classroom teacher per week, including both synchronous and asynchronous video. Humane Letters seminars will take place for all high school students. Participation in these activities will be required for student attendance. Zoom tutoring will be available, and students will be assessed every week and held to the same academic standards as their in-building peers.

#### Anchors of Our Approach

The fundamentals of a Great Hearts education are rich and rigorous subject matter grounded in truth, goodness, and beauty, high expectations for academics and behavior, and vibrant school culture and community. We know that these are the reasons families choose Great Hearts, and we know that this is what families desire in a robust distance learning option.

#### Curriculum & Content: Equivalent, Not Identical

Distance learning students will learn the same subjects and take the same courses as they would in person. They will receive instruction that is equivalent, but not identical: lessons delivered by teachers may be over live video or may be pre-recorded; lessons and tests may be shorter and more frequent than in the classroom; independent student activity may be unsupervised rather than under the watchful, real-time classroom eye of the teacher. While distance learning students will progress through the curriculum at a similar pace to their in-building peers and reach the same endpoint, they may spend less time on some topics and more time on others to ensure that the most essential knowledge and skills are mastered for future years.

#### Student Expectations: Required Attendance and Engagement (updated August 6, 2020)

All distance learning students will have a daily program of regular, structured school in which they must participate. Some of this will be live, synchronous Zoom video classes, lessons, and activities which take place at scheduled, regular times. Daily engagement through Google Classroom will be required. The GHDL model will not be one of independent work with occasional teacher interaction; it will be one of regular online instruction and contact with teachers and peers at their school supported by independent work. The new GHDL is not homeschooling; it is, rather, *school at home*.

Students will be accountable for daily work, and teachers will regularly and actively assess student progress. Discrete grades and scores will be given for activities, assignments, and assessments; there will be no “pass/fail” grading at the end of the quarter or semester.

A student will be considered as “present” on a given day of distance learning if any of the following occur:

- A student submits on-line “bell work”, or a daily attendance assignment
- A student logs into a Zoom synchronous class or tutoring session
- A student submits an assignment, activity, or completed assessment on its due date
- The teacher communicates with the student regarding academic progress via phone and/or email

But merely being “present” at school, even distance learning school, does not ensure that students are learning as much as they need to be. In the regular classroom, students are invited by the teacher to engage actively in lessons, activities, and discussions. They volunteer, get called on (with or without raised hands) to share their work or answers, ask their own questions, and take part in discussions; in all of these activities, students build their understanding just as surely as they do by studying, practicing math facts, or completing homework independently. And as experienced Great Hearts families know, active participation in class, especially in upper schools, and especially in the seminars of Humane Letters, is a component of student grades.

Thus, it is doubly important that students attend *and actively participate* in synchronous, live Zoom video sessions in distance learning. Not to do so will adversely affect student progress and may even have a direct impact upon students’ grades in certain courses.

### Community & Culture: Personal Engagement, Human Connection

It is not enough for distance learning students to be academically engaged in school. Opportunities must also be present for social and emotional engagement with teachers and peers. Part of this will be satisfied by daily, synchronous video lessons and classes, but schools will also create new forms of online community to keep students connected to each other and to their school. Class celebrations, themed social events, school assemblies, and other activities will be created to complement the new plan for distance learning.

## Summary of Changes from Spring 2020

Returning Great Hearts families will have recognized that the new approach to distance learning brings with it some big changes from the packet-based remote learning delivered to students from March through May. Here is a summary of the most important differences.

### Instructional Schedule

- Regular schedule of daily activities
- Daily video lessons, assignments, classes, and support
- Daily video engagement with teachers and peers

### Grading & Academic Feedback

- No pass/fail grading for terms; no weekly “completion” grades
- Assignments and assessments scored and graded regularly

### 100% Online

- Use of Google Classroom and Zoom required
- No option for paper packets or paper turn in; unless a specific accommodation necessitates it

### Required Attendance and Engagement

- Daily login to Google Classroom required
- Daily submission of student work (not weekly submissions)
- Attendance in classes required
- Academic and other consequences for non-attendance

### Equivalent Student Learning

- Regular assessments for distance learning students (MAP, DIBELS, etc.)
- Required state standardized testing (STAAR) in Spring

### Transitioning In and Out of GHTX Distance Learning

- Parents may opt into GHTX Distance Learning at any time; students will remain in GHTX Distance Learning from that point forward until the end of the quarter.
- There are a few individual exceptions to this policy: students temporarily quarantining for COVID-19 symptoms or for close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case will follow TEA guidance for transitioning in and out of GHTX Distance Learning on specific timelines.
- Please also note that if a section or school closes for a period of time in alignment with county health orders and/or our COVID-19 Incident Response Plan, all students will be enrolled in GHTX Distance Learning for the designated period of that campus closure.

More details will be shared by headmasters in the coming days and weeks ahead. In the meantime, please visit [www.greatheartsamerica.org/safereturn/tx](http://www.greatheartsamerica.org/safereturn/tx) for more information.

Thank you,

Great Hearts Texas