

MARKED TREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

406 Saint Francis Street
Marked Tree, Arkansas 72365
Matt Wright, *Superintendent*
"Home of the Indians"

July 13, 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused great concern for many parents. For various reasons, many are apprehensive about sending their students to school. As your partner, we respect and want to address those concerns.

For next school year, parents have the ability to choose between two options. Those options are:

1. Blended Instruction- The primary method of this model will include face-to-face instruction at school. Students will attend school and will follow safety precautions set forth by the district, the Arkansas Department of Education, and the Arkansas Department of Health. Under this method, students will complete lessons online during temporary shutdowns. Examples of temporary shutdowns are COVID-19 closures, snow, etc.
2. Full-time online learning- Under this method of instruction, students will stay at home, full-time. Education will be provided through MTSD's Virtual Partner, Lincoln Learning. This online platform will have all of the instruction, assignments, and other related materials. Students will be assigned to a MTSD representative who will serve as an overseer of their progress. This representative, likely a teacher, will be responsible for assisting with problems via email, entering grades, and serving as a conduit for online participants. If students select this option, they will be able to participate in extracurricular activities.

Our district has been working since April to create a safe learning environment for our students upon their return to school. Those safety measures include wearing masks during transitions and when social distancing isn't possible (4th grade and up), updated cleaning protocols and cleaning solutions, smaller class sizes when possible, rearranging rooms to accommodate social distancing, and many others. However, we fully understand and respect one's desire to keep their child at home.

On the following pages, you will find our MTSD Virtual Learning Classroom Handbook. This handbook attempts to clarify what is expected of the district, parents, and students. While we are still working to finalize all of the details, we fully anticipate offering students a full array of classes with the same offerings they would have if they were receiving face to face instruction.

In this packet, you will find an application for our full-time online learning program. Unless you register your student for this program online, make sure you return the application to our district on or before Monday, July 27th. You can hand deliver your documents at either campus, Monday through Thursday, from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Applications can also be mailed to the following address:

Marked Tree School District
200 10th Street
Marked Tree, AR 72365

Our community partner, Ritter Communications, has an internet program they are offering at a reduced cost, if you qualify. We have included their brochure and the application. If you qualify for this program, fill out the application and mail it to our office or feel free to bring your application to us. However, please know that anyone in our buildings is required to wear masks. We are taking this precaution to ensure we are healthy for the start of our new school year.

During this uncertain time, we want for you to be certain we are willing to meet your needs. If you have questions after reviewing this document, please email me at wrightm@mtree.k12.ar.us or call (870) 358-2913.

Sincerely,

Matt Wright
Superintendent

Marked Tree School District

K-12 Virtual Learning Classroom Handbook

MTSD is working to create a safe learning environment where all students and parents can be comfortable. Due to COVID-19, we recognize that, for some of you, this means having an online learning environment where your student can participate in virtual courses.

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, students in grades K-12 will have the opportunity to enroll full-time in MTSD K-12 Virtual Learning Classrooms. This will provide parents and students with an alternative to face-to-face instruction.

Those who choose our Virtual Learning Classrooms must understand the responsibility that accompanies being an online student. It requires time management, being a self-starter, and discipline.

Students will be enrolled in core courses and electives based on state requirements and personal interests. Students have access to a variety of virtual courses for core curriculum, electives, Advanced Placement, credit recovery, tutoring, and test preparation. All courses are aligned with K-12 Arkansas learning standards and are taught by Arkansas highly-qualified, licensed teachers. Teachers are employed by MTSD or MTSD vendor partners.

Students who participate in MTSD's Virtual Learning Classrooms must participate in state-mandated tests and other required assessments in person with a teacher.

Once a student enrolls, he/she must remain in the online learning program for the entire quarter (nine weeks).

Enrollment/Withdrawal Deadline

July 27th- Deadline to enroll for the first quarter. Once enrolled, a student remains enrolled unless a parent opts out; however, please remember a student must complete the quarter (9 wks) before being removed .

October 2nd- Deadline to withdraw and enter face-to-face instruction for 2nd quarter

December 1st- Deadline to withdraw and enter face-to-face instruction for 3rd quarter

April 26th- Deadline to withdraw and enter face-to-face instruction for 4th quarter

These dates are only to notify the district of your intention to withdraw from the program. After withdrawing from the program, your student will begin face-to-face instruction on the first day of the next quarter.

Other Important Dates

TBD- Students pick up devices from school

TBD- Orientation Sessions

The dates for device pick-up and orientation will be based on the number of participants.

Our virtual classrooms will follow the same yearly schedule as the rest of the district. This is posted on our district website at markedtreeschools.com.

Enrollment Procedures

To enroll, complete and return the application to our district, either by mail or hand-delivering the application to us. Our mailing address is listed on a prior page.

On July 27th, you must have submitted your registration form online or have mailed your enrollment form back to the district. We will not accept enrollment forms that are not postmarked July 27th or sooner. Each request to participate will be reviewed by our district and we have the right to have an academic review meeting to discuss concerns, create learning plans, and/or to discuss a daily schedule. Students and parents will be required to sign and honor a learning contract to participate (see Appendix B).

Early enrollment is encouraged. Once we receive your enrollment form, we hope to begin the enrollment process. Enrollment in virtual courses is not guaranteed; but, is based on availability. When virtual courses are not available, students might be required to take courses face to face.

Specialized Instruction

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or a 504 plan, contact Jennifer Hall, Director of Special Education (email: hallj@mtree.k12.ar.us).

Course Participation

Virtual learning will work for some students; but, not for others. As previously mentioned, students likely to be successful in full-time, online learning are highly motivated, can self advocate, have strong verbal and written communication skills, and strong time management skills.

It is not essential for students to have these skills to be able to participate. Our hope is if they don't have these skills, they will develop them by having this experience. However, we want our participants to know that their effort will be reflected in their grades, which ultimately will show on a transcript. Please have the needed conversations and make a decision that is best for your student.

Virtual courses will be in quarter, semester, and year-long formats. Students are expected to work at a pace to complete the coursework within the allotted time frame. When students fall behind in their coursework, a MTSD representative will contact the students and/or parents via email or phone call. When students earn a grade below C for a quarterly grade, a MTSD representative will contact parents. If problems aren't resolved or a child continues to struggle, that student might be required to enroll in face-to-face learning.

MTSD expects students to make appropriate progress towards successful completion of every course. Students who fall significantly behind due to lack of activity may be administratively removed from the program. Teachers will take multiple actions when dealing with students who perpetually do not submit assignments or regularly communicate with their online instructor.

When a student does not submit assignments and after parental contact has been made, a student will be removed from the program if there isn't an immediate response or change in effort.

Meals

Meals are not provided to students enrolled in MTSD Virtual Classrooms.

Grades

Student grades are posted in e-School. Parents are given a password to access e-school at the beginning of the year. This will remain the same regardless of the student placement in virtual learning or face-to-face instruction. Grades are based on completion of work and mastery of student learning goals. Grades might be weighted based on MTSD policy as stated in our Student Handbook. Grades earned for courses for graduation credit are included in the student's GPA, class rank, and honor status. Secondary virtual courses are weighted in the same manner as traditional courses.

Use of Technology

MTSD provides students laptops to access the internet to complete their virtual coursework. All students sign and return the Computer Acceptable Use Agreement (create appendix) before receiving a laptop.

Working On- or Off-Campus

Students in grades K-12 enrolled full-time in MTSD Virtual Classrooms will complete their courses off-campus. Virtual instructors are available to facilitate learning and to ensure that the best and most effective practices are utilized to promote student learning and growth.

All full-time MTSD Virtual Learning Classroom students must complete assessments mandated by the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education and/or the district. Students are required to take state and district assessments on-site at pre-scheduled, designated times.

Students in grades 7-12 may participate in AAA activities in person at the school, including band, choir, and athletics.

Attendance

Attendance for the full-time, virtual student is based on utilization of the courseware and completion of assignments. If work is not completed, it could result in an absence for the day the assignments were not completed. MTSD staff makes every effort to ensure all students make appropriate progress towards successful completion. Students who fall significantly behind due to lack of activity may be administratively removed from our virtual learning program and be required to take courses on-site.

MTSD will take multiple actions when dealing with students who perpetually do not submit assignments or regularly communicate with their online instructor.

Curriculum and Course Material

MTSD has partnered with online course providers offering content and learning experiences to provide authentic, reliable, and rigorous coursework for students desiring the challenge and flexibility of a virtual learning environment. Instruction is provided by Arkansas highly-qualified, licensed teachers employed by MTSD and/or its vendor partners.

Students have individual needs, interests, and abilities; therefore, it is difficult to estimate the exact number of hours each day students spend on virtual learning. General estimates are:

Elementary: Up to 4 hours a day

Junior High: 4 to 6 hours a day

High School: 6 to 8 hours a day depending on number and types of courses

MTSD Technology Acceptable Use Code of Conduct

Students are responsible for their behaviors and are expected to comply with the MTSD Technology Acceptable Use Code of Conduct. A copy of this policy is included in the MTSD Student Handbook.

1. Communication will follow professional standards. Offensive messages or pictures will not be sent, displayed, or downloaded. MTSD harassment policies apply.
2. Users of technology resources will respect the rights and privacy of others.
3. Each student will only use his/her assigned password/ID and will not trespass into the files, folders, or work of other users.
4. Teachers have the right to access the work of students in their classes as it pertains to the class.
5. Students will not allow other students to access the computers or networks using their password/ID.
6. Copyright laws will be respected. All quotations, references, graphics, video clips, digital music, and other information will be cited to give credit to the originator.

MTSD Student Handbook

Students enrolled in MTSD Virtual Learning Classrooms are subject to all MTSD rules and regulations established by the school board and abide by the policies set forth in the MTSD Student Handbook.

Application to Participate

Student Legal First Name:

Student Legal Last Name:

Student's 20-21 School Year Grade Level:

Parent Legal First Name:

Parent Legal Last Name:

Parent Email **CHECKED DAILY:**

Phone Number:

Home Address:

How will your student access the internet?

Will your student require a device?

Discuss reasons for participating in full-time MTSD Virtual Classrooms.

By signing below, you agree that your student's enrollment will last for the duration of an entire quarter and that you must withdraw by the dates listed in this document. Also, you agree to all conditions and criteria set forth in this agreement.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Deadline to submit request to participate: July 27, 2020

Hand deliver to: Marked Tree Elementary or High School Offices

Summer Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:00-2:30

Mail to: Marked Tree School District, 406 St. Francis Street, Marked Tree, AR 72365

APPENDIX B

MTSD Virtual Learning Classroom Contract

Parents/Guardians,

To help ensure your students continue learning, Marked Tree School District has partnered with Lincoln Learning to provide full-time, virtual learning for 2020-2021. This partnership means students have access to online instruction delivered by a MTSD-Partner Educator. Virtual learning may be new to you and your students, the following MTSD Virtual Learning Classroom Contract will offer structure and support to you both.

Virtual Learning Basics

What do I need to know about on-line learning?

- Know when and how often students should log in during the day and if he/she needs to be online at a specific time for live, teacher-led instruction.
- Make sure your student is aware of the requirements and expectations for virtual learning.
- Meet your child's teachers (from MTSD) and find out when they are available for student support
- Ask your child's teachers about options for extra help.
- Learn how to contact the JPS partner vendor for technical assistance.

What are some tips for preparing my student to work at home?

- Designate a comfortable place free from distractions as a work area for your student.
- Offer structure, such as focus time, to increase engagement and promote progress.
- Schedule time with virtual teachers for additional help, as needed.
- Ensure your student has access to the internet and a charged device, such as a laptop, tablet, or mobile phone.
- Consult MTSD staff if you need assistance with your student's device.

- Check in on your student throughout virtual sessions to make sure he/she is actively working and learning and offer help, if needed.
- Print assignments, if needed, to reduce screen time for your student.

At-Home Support for Virtual Learning

The following questions may help students understand that you are invested in their education and that even though virtual learning is different from on-site learning, they are still expected to be actively engaged and to learn.

Avoid asking questions with a “Yes” or “No” answer. Ask questions or make comments that encourage students to reflect on their learning.

- What did your learning focus on today?
- Share one or two questions about what you learned yesterday or today.
- What did you accomplish today? What work did you do?
- What was challenging today? How did you overcome the challenge?
- What was easy for you today?
- What did you like best about your lessons today? What was most fun?
- How will you apply what you learned and/or what personal connections will you make to your learning?

For all learners, especially younger students, the parent/guardian should frequently monitor student learning and offer assistance, as needed. If you have questions or cannot offer assistance to your student, contact the virtual teacher or MTSD teacher.

We are here to support you and want to assure you that even though your students may not be physically attending school every day, they will still receive a high-quality and engaging education that moves them forward in their learning. Thank you for your continued support.

Student/Parent/District Virtual Contract

Student

- I will stay organized and manage my time carefully.
- I will establish a regular, uninterrupted work time each day limiting distractions such as video games and television.
- I will complete all assignments on time and submit them as directed.
- I will immediately contact my teacher, counselor, or MTSD representative as soon as possible when I encounter a problem or have a concern.
- I will respond to teacher emails in a timely manner.
- I will attend all orientation sessions and student conferences as necessary (on-site or online).
- I will take all required state and District assessments on-site at the scheduled times.

Parent

- I will designate a comfortable place free from distractions as a work area for my child.
- I will ensure my child is completing all required assignments and submitting them to the teacher in a timely manner.
- I will contact my child's teacher, counselor, or MTSD learning coach as soon as possible when we encounter a problem or have a concern.
- I will respond to teacher, counselor, or MTSD learning coach emails in a timely manner.
- I will ensure my child does not go longer than 3 consecutive days without logging in. After 3 consecutive days, I will email my child's teacher or MTSD learning coach..
- I will sign up for any parent portal available to receive updates about my child's online courses.
- I will attend all parent orientation sessions and parent/teacher conferences (on-site or online).

District

- District will enroll students in their digital courses.
- District will provide students a MTSD teacher, who receives updates on the student.
- MTSD staff will conduct orientation sessions for parents and students.
- MTSD staff will schedule times for students to take state and District assessments on-site at scheduled times.
- MTSD staff will post grades assigned by the digital teacher to e-School.
- District will ensure parents/guardians and students have email/phone/help desk access between the hours of 7:30 am and 3:30 pm.

Student (Printed Name)

Student (Signature)

Parent/Guardian (Printed Name)

Parent/Guardian (Signature)

Date

To be effective, an online classroom must be a safe space where students feel their voices will be respected, supported and heard. The following strategies will help create and maintain a safe space for online learning.

- Use each other's names. Using a person's name when you respond to his/her postings creates a friendly online tone.
- Read questions and conversational postings carefully to avoid unnecessary confusion.
- Compliment your peers when they post strong responses or contribute original ideas to the conversation.
- Ask questions. If anything is unclear or you want further information or insight on a topic, just ask. If you have a question, there are probably other members of the group who are confused and need further clarification as well.
- Be considerate. Remember that your peers cannot see your body language or hear your tone of voice, so you need to keep your language direct and respectful.
- Avoid slang, jargon, and sarcasm.
- Listen to all the ideas presented. Remember there is no right or wrong in a discussion. A variety of perspectives add depth.
- Stay open-minded.
- Respond instead of reacting. Do not write a response if you are angry or upset. Instead, wait until you have had time to calm down and collect your thoughts.
- *Really* read your peers responses. Avoid skimming. Respect the time your peers have spent articulating their thoughts by reading carefully and thoughtfully.
- Reread your messages before sending them to ensure that your ideas are clearly communicated and supported.
- Critique the content, not the person.
- Do not present your personal opinions as fact. Back up your ideas with information to strengthen your statements.
- Courteously answer all questions addressed directly to you.
- Make "I" statements when respectfully disagreeing. Sharing an opposing opinion or idea is an important part of discussion, but it needs to be presented in a constructive manner that encourages further discussion.
- Do not use all caps when writing. It is interpreted as yelling.
- Avoid emotional punctuation, like exclamation points, unless you are complimenting an idea shared.