

HOPKINTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY VIRTUAL EDUCATION

The School Committee recognizes that virtual education may be helpful to the District and its employees in fulfilling its educational mission, maintaining educational continuity, and in expanding the reach of school district events and activities to those not able to attend in person. Virtual education comprises all forms of electronically supported learning and teaching, including synchronous and asynchronous learning through livestreaming, video-conferencing and other formats. The School Committee further recognizes that without parameters, virtual education may pose legal risks to the District and its employees.

I. Definitions

- A. **Asynchronous** instruction refers to instruction that does not occur in real time, such as recorded lectures or instruction that is viewed by students at a later time, or instruction that occurs through modules on an online platform that does not involve real time instruction by the teacher.
- B. **Livestreaming** refers to utilizing any camera located on school district property (or, if permitted, from a location of a teacher's choice) to broadcast live video content to participating remote students through the Internet, typically through video-conferencing software.
- C. **Synchronous** instruction refers to instruction and learning that occurs at the same time but does not necessarily occur in-person or at the same place. Synchronous instruction can take different forms. It includes instruction occurring in real time via a video-conferencing tool or a similar platform when the instructor and all participants are in different locations yet able to interact through technology. Synchronous instruction can also occur when the teacher is in one location and the instruction is streamed to another location (or locations) for viewing by students in real time. In a hybrid instruction environment, the teacher is providing face-to-face instruction to some students in a classroom setting, which is livestreamed to other students in another location (or locations) as a form of synchronous instruction.
- D. **Video Conferencing** refers to a private digital gathering in which all participants can use video cameras and microphones to interact in real-time. Video conferencing allows two-way communication and multiple screen sharing, and also allows cameras and microphones to be switched off.

II. Virtual Education Roles and Responsibilities

A. Privacy

1. Students and parents/guardians will not save, record, share, or post sessions or any copies, recordings, materials, or photographs of/from virtual education sessions. Students and parents/guardians will not share their access to the virtual education session or any passwords related thereto.

2. If a teacher wishes to record any virtual education session(s) that capture footage of students, the teacher will secure written permission from parents or guardians prior to recording these sessions. The expectation is that the focus of the recording is the instruction. Recordings of virtual education sessions will only be accessible with appropriate security measures in place.
3. Although students may appear in the recording, there is generally an expectation of privacy in every classroom setting. In accordance with federal and state laws, the district and its employees strive to protect student privacy.

B. Student/Family Requirements

By participating in virtual education, whether remotely or in school, parents/guardians and students consent to the use of audio and video conferencing technology, tools, and services and acknowledge that they have read, understand, and agree to the following, as applicable:

1. Students will treat each other with respect and will obey school rules at all times. The student code of conduct applies to all virtual education sessions. Students may be disciplined consistent with the student code of conduct for violating school rules during the sessions. Parents/guardians are responsible for their child's use of the provided technology. The District reserves the right to remove a student from a virtual education session or from video conferencing for inappropriate behavior or conduct.
2. Students participating in any form of virtual education will also be dressed in proper attire consistent with the district's dress code.
3. Students will be present during online instruction in a manner verifiable by the instructor of the class as delineated in the student handbook.
4. Only students may interject comments, or participate during the class. Parents/Guardians should not attempt to participate on behalf of their child. The District acknowledges that not every family has an isolated area in the home; in these instances, parents'/guardians'/household members' presence and/or background noise in the livestreaming area should not disrupt the educational process.
5. Parents/guardians with concerns about livestreaming in their children's classrooms should follow the typical patterns of outreach: first contact the teacher with concerns; if not satisfied with the outcome, contact the building principal.
6. The School Committee prohibits student-initiated use of livestream video at any time during the school day or at any school sponsored event that is not open to the general public, unless the teacher or building administrator has authorized the use of livestream video by giving written consent.
7. Students and parents/guardians who do not agree to the requirements for virtual education should refrain from joining and/or immediately disconnect from virtual education sessions, and contact the Building Principal via email to receive an alternative learning packet.

C. Educator Requirements

1. Educators who wish to engage in livestreaming or video-conferencing will ensure that parents/guardians and students have been advised of their rights and responsibilities, using the district approved form (FRM-1). Teachers who wish to acquire software, tools, or additional devices will first secure approval from their building principal as well as the Director of Technology and Innovation.
2. Educators will have a dedicated, consistent, and distraction-free “classroom” area in their remote teaching location. People in the educator’s home will not be able to see HPS students in the virtual classroom. Instructors will limit their conversations/verbal interactions during the session solely to the students and other HPS educators who are part of their virtual class.
3. During in-person instructional time, the educator will be dressed professionally in clothing choices that would be similar to what a teacher would wear in the school setting.

D. Intellectual Property of Teacher and/or Student

1. The curriculum, instruction, and materials used during virtual education sessions remain the property of the District and/or the individual teacher. These materials are for student use only and may not be used for any other purpose.

E. District Requirements

1. The District in good faith will attempt to ensure that audio and video conferencing platforms are compliant with FERPA, CIPA, COPPA and all other applicable federal and state laws. The District will take all reasonable measures to preserve the privacy of the students, and each of our educators will continue to maintain the privacy of student record information. Parents/guardians waive any and all claims against the District related to the use of these third-party vendors to provide audio and/or video conferencing services. Examples may include but are not limited to data breaches and internet service disruptions.
2. As with any form of online instruction, the District bears the responsibility for ensuring that instructional methods and use of technology meet all requirements of federal and state law and should be providing appropriate direction and guidance to employees as to how that instruction will occur.

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Second Reading: October 29, 2020

Third Reading: November 19, 2020

Fourth Reading: December 10, 2020

Adopted: December 10, 2020

Policy Amended

Legal References