
Strong Start 2020 Question and Answer (Q and A)

The following questions are specific to instructional options in St. James due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The SJPS Virtual Academy (Total Virtual School) option is compared to the Traditional School Option that will begin in a Hybrid Model due to Phase II status upon school opening August 10, 2020. This document is set up to compare the two options side by side in an attempt to better clarify differences for parents. Questions were taken from parents and the community using the startstong@sjpsb.org email.

100% VIRTUAL SCHOOL VS PHASE II HYBRID (Comparison)

SJPS Virtual Academy <i>100% Virtual School Option</i>	SJPS Traditional Schools <i>Hybrid Model based on Phase II Status</i>
<p>The Virtual Academy is the Total Virtual School Option and does not require students to physically attend school. They work virtually every day with teachers behind the scenes giving virtual support when requested or needed.</p>	<p>In the Hybrid Model students attend their normal school two days of the week (Monday and Wednesday OR Tuesday and Thursday) for face to face instruction with teachers. Students will work virtually from home the other three days under the supervision of their regular teacher. Letters telling you what days your child will attend have been mailed.</p>
<p>Do I have to apply to the Virtual Academy? The Virtual Academy <u>does</u> require an application that is due by August 3, 2020 to the Student Services Office. This is a one-year commitment for elementary and a one- semester commitment for high school. No matter what Health and Safety phase we are in as a state or community, you will be in the Academy (virtual school) for the year in elementary and for the semester in high school.</p>	<p>Do I have to apply for the Hybrid Model of instruction? The Hybrid instructional model is how traditional schools will open under Phase II guidance. It <u>does NOT</u> require an application. If you are enrolled in school, this is the educational model you will begin with in order to ensure CDC health guidelines can be met while at school. Students will come to school with half of students enrolled two days per week while working virtually the other three days. This allows for proper distancing between students. If the state moves to Phase III, students will come back 5 days a week like normal. If the state or community moves to Phase I, students will be in virtual instruction 5 days supervised by the classroom teacher. This model has flexibility built in, in order to move with the health and safety phases of our state and community with the hopes of getting all students back safely.</p>
<p>What is the Virtual Academy curriculum? Is it the same as the Hybrid (traditional) school model?</p>	<p>What is the Hybrid (Traditional) Curriculum? How does it differ?</p>

Programs used for state standards in the Virtual Academy are different from the Hybrid (traditional) option. The Virtual Academy programs are PathBlazers (all elementary grades and subjects) and Edgenuity (all high school courses).

Can I have my same courses or schedule in the Virtual Academy?

In the total virtual school (Virtual Academy), most traditional courses are offered, but not all. You are not guaranteed the identical schedule you may have had in the traditional/hybrid model.

Examples: Music in elementary will not be an option. All face to face Dual Enrollment courses offered in the traditional/hybrid setting will not be available, but CLEP exam options could be offered. This is specific to courses.

Will my child have a homeroom teacher in the Virtual Academy?

A student does NOT have a "homeroom." The child will be assigned a teacher or teachers based on the grade level and subject matter. For example, in Kindergarten through second grade one teacher works with the students in all grades/areas. Starting in third grade, the student may have up to four different teachers.

How does a student get help if they are struggling in the Virtual Academy?

Online teachers monitor progress through online reports. If students fall behind, struggle, or do not log on, the teachers reach out (email, calls, etc.).

Are report cards and grading the same in both models?

Grading and report cards are different. The Virtual Academy does not use JCampus reporting like the traditional school. Progress reports from the programs are provided via email and final grades are put into JCampus at the end of the year. Pass/Fail accountability remains.

Will instruction be live or videos? Are videos SJPS teachers?

The Hybrid (traditional) curriculum is very specific to grades and subjects. It includes but is not limited to Eureka, Wit and Wisdom, iReady, PHD, Edgenuity and InSync. Dual Enrollment, CTC, SMA and other electives also differ per course. Curricula is much more diverse and specific. The Hybrid curricula includes two days of TEACHER INTERACTION and instruction each week.

Will I have my same courses or schedule in Virtual School?

In the Hybrid, we are working through all currently offered courses making them available in the hybrid model. There could be some temporary schedule modifications for PE, Art and Music as needed in elementary.

Will my child have a homeroom teacher?

Yes, students will have homeroom teachers in the Hybrid Model. They will also have their normal "classroom teachers" for subject instruction on the face to face days and those same teachers monitoring and assisting with the virtual instruction the other three days.

How does a student get help if they are struggling with online instruction?

Students will be attending school two days face to face allowing teachers to follow up, support and assist with the online expectations of the virtual days on a regular basis. Teachers will reach out virtually on Fridays to further assist students struggling. Fridays are virtual support days for students in need.

Are report cards and grading the same in both models?

Report cards and grading will not change in the hybrid model. Grades/ assignments will come from the face to face assignments and virtual instruction. Teachers will combine and record grades from test and assignments in JCampus like in the past. The timelines and communication stay the same. Pass/Fail accountability remains.

Will instruction be live or videos? Are videos SJPS teachers?

No, they are not live. The videos are not SJPS teachers. The programs provide the instructional videos. Live virtual help can be scheduled upon request.

Does the Virtual Academy program include PreK?

No, currently the virtual academy does not include PreK. The virtual academic programs available are not appropriate or aligned for PreK.

How is attendance handled at the Virtual Academy?

The Virtual Academy attendance is based on progression. Student must progress (work) at adequate rates per week. Technically, a student can skip a day or two of working, but must catch up within the week in order to not be considered absent. The Virtual Academy handbook has more details. This is more flexible than the hybrid model.

Truancy policies are still required in hybrid and virtual academy.

Is the Virtual Academy effective for students in grade 3 and below? Students in grades 2 and below will need parental involvement. Learning to read is complex and requires active engagement in actual text. There are no Tier I (top rated) early comprehensive reading virtual programs approved in the state because this is such a challenge to teach virtually. It can be done, but it is not widely recommended. Students in grades 3 and up have more success as the concept behind reading changes in third grade from Learning to Read to Reading to Learn. This is a big difference in the teaching of reading.

Can a child switch from the Virtual Academy to the (traditional school) hybrid model at any point?

No, elementary **and middle school** students can switch at the end of the school year. High School students can switch at the end of the semester **because high school is on a block schedule**. There

No, they are not live. Most of the videos are not SJPS teachers. Most programs provide instructional videos. However, there are some courses without program videos and teachers will provide recorded instruction. Live help will be given on the face to face days in the hybrid PLUS Fridays will be used to offer additional (possible live) support.

What do I do if I have a health concern with my PreK student with the Hybrid option?

Call 225 258 4512 or 225 258 8126 to understand the option available. We are committed to working with our PreK families. We will handle PreK academic needs differently as they are unique with age, content and virtual appropriateness. Please contact the number above before disenrolling your PreK student and leave a message if needed. Someone will get back to you.

How is attendance handled in the Hybrid virtual days?

All students are held to daily attendance on the virtual days. Students and parents will be given specific instructions on attendance systems that will be used. In elementary, attendance will be done using google classroom daily once iPads are distributed. In High School, attendance will be taken through program course log in (Edgenuity or Google) depending on the High School Course.

Truancy policies are still required in hybrid and total virtual programs.

Is this program effective for students in grade 3 and below? While we would want all our children on campus 5 days a week, we believe the hybrid gives students face to face instruction and interaction needed in the primary grades for effective reading instruction. We have aligned the virtual and face to face as much as possible to ensure success.

Can a child switch from the Virtual Academy to hybrid at any point?

No, elementary students can only switch at the end of the school year. High School students can switch at the end of the semester. The hybrid model will allow for flexibility for short term absences as well as

are many factors that are different (pacing, curricula) making switching back and forth not a viable option for student success.

a possible Phase 1 implementation. This flexibility is separate from the total virtual option.

What is the expectation of the 3 days of virtual in the hybrid model? Will these days use zoom with the SJP teachers?

Teachers will use google classroom daily to communicate virtual expectations. Students will be assigned daily lessons in virtual programs like Edgenuity **in high school and InSync in elementary** (Eureka, Wit and Wisdom, PhD Science), but this communication will funnel through Google Classroom. Classroom teachers will be responsible for all communication, pacing, monitoring, assessments using Google Classroom and the virtual programs. There are some courses that Edgenuity is not used in high school (some CTC course, specialty electives, dual enrollment). All courses will use Google Classroom.

In the hybrid model, will teachers be available for assistance on the virtual days. The teachers will follow up with virtual instruction on the face to face days two days each week. In addition, virtual assistance via google classroom meeting will be available on Fridays. The two face to face days and Fridays will serve as support for virtual instruction in this model. Please keep in mind that when your child is home with virtual instruction, the teacher still has a group of students face to face. Our teachers will have face to face classes Monday thru Thursday.

Do students have to take state test in the Virtual Academy?

Yes. At this point the state has not waived state testing.

Do all students get devices in the Virtual Academy?

Yes, student will get an iPad. Email communication will be used to plan iPad pick up for immediate use in virtual instruction.

Do students have to take state test in the Hybrid Model?

Yes. At this point the state has not waived state testing.

Will all students (including elementary) get devices for virtual learning?

Yes, elementary students will get an iPad to take home. Students will NOT be given iPads immediately in elementary school. We will work on routines and expectations with the devices on the days at school before sending iPads home in elementary. Therefore, the true virtual learning expectations at home will begin toward the end of August. Traditional, low tech (paper pencil) home learning will begin immediately in elementary as we prepare our students for success in the virtual instruction.

Do students get 504 accommodations?

Yes, most accommodations do apply in the virtual academy. Some do not apply such as preferential seating as there is no physical setting in the Virtual Academy.

Do students get 504 accommodations in the hybrid?

Yes, we are working to keep consistency as much as possible in the hybrid. However, some will not apply in the virtual at home days (example: preferential seating).

Can you provide clarity on how students can get hotspots for internet in the Virtual Academy or for virtual/distance learning in the Hybrid model? Why didn't we get information on this?

In March parents were asked to complete the Internet Availability and Contact Survey made available to them on the website and social media outlets. In April teachers were given the results of the survey by homeroom and teachers called parents to check on students' well-being and to verify the data that was submitted through the survey. Teachers also called parents for those that we hadn't collected data on through the survey. By mid-April, we reached over 98% of the parents of our students enrolled in the district. The district purchased hotspots based on the results provided from the survey. **This week** more information will be provided on the website allowing parents the opportunity to request a hotspot device if internet assistance is needed. **(All parents - virtual and hybrid - will have the opportunity to request, even if a prior survey was done, and circumstances have changed. We need all parents in need of internet to request once the release of information has been made public this week on the website).** Once the request is made, a call will be placed to the parent. Each hot spot is programmed to provide internet service to ONLY SJPS iPads. iPads are managed to only allow students access to educational online services and applications. To ensure peace of mind, these **hotspot** devices use internet content filtering and are scheduled so that they cannot be used between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. This device will monitor all web activity and daily and monthly data limits are also in place. Use of these devices will also be monitored remotely. A support email will be made available to the parent when the device is picked up.

*In summary, the **Phase II Hybrid Model is the default educational setting for all St. James students beginning August 10, 2020 (you do NOT need to fill out an application for the hybrid model virtual learning).** However, the (100%) **Virtual Academy is a choice. This total virtual choice requires an application and registration due August 3, 2020.** We understand health and safety are first in this current situation. If you remain in our traditional Hybrid setting, we will follow all guidance for reopening in a Phase II status. This hybrid traditional model utilizes virtual learning, but face to face teaching is still a very big part of the instructional model. The hybrid model allows us to have smaller class sizes to practice the distancing and other safety protocols necessary while offering some traditional face to face instruction with a teacher. In the event all students must go virtual due to a Phase I status, we have the ability and flexibility with the Hybrid model programs to continue in a 5-day virtual setting. However, this plan is built on temporary periods of time with the end always moving towards a safe reentry into a traditional face to face model. We believe the best education is an education with our teachers in our schools. Given the circumstances we must make decisions and give options with health and safety first. **Students with underlying conditions and high-risk factors where a doctor or parent does not feel it is safe for interaction with a face to face traditional teacher, total virtual is the recommended option. For students without underlying conditions, we feel we have planned a safe model that allows teacher/student face to face interaction two days a week. We believe this model provides a safe learning environment conducive to academic and social interaction needs.***

Other General Questions and Answers

Have we considered pushing back the start of school? Yes, but feel the current schedule has cautiously and carefully considered safety and instruction. We have been in communication with local government and health officials in making this decision.

Considerations included but were not limited to:

- Prolonging the start pushes us closer to cold and flu season.
- If needed, our hybrid model can easily transfer to full virtual in a Phase I event.
- We want to give students who are able the opportunity to start with teacher interaction as soon as we can. We have implemented all CDC safety guidelines. While safety is first, we believe students need their teachers.
- Instructional minutes count (no current state waivers). Although we have the ability to change the calendar if we need, we will adhere to the calendar as much as possible within safety guidelines in helping our working families and community. We understand the importance of a calendar for our families, but unfortunately everything is flexible at this point.

There have been several **questions concerning our mask policy and expectations**. Please see the board approved policy for more details on mask expectations in schools. If a doctor feels a student needs to be exempt from wearing a mask, there is a mask exemption form that must be completed and sent to our Student Services office for approval. A doctor's note should be attached. Please see the following links for the mask policy and exemption form. [Mask Exemption Form](#) [Mask Policy](#)

There have been many **safety questions** concerning the reopening protocols. Please refer to the safety video that has been created to help answer these questions. The video can be found in the link below.

[Strong Start 2020 Safety Video](#)

In addition to the safety video, we have received questions about our return to school and work protocols, as well as how we will respond to students and staff who are symptomatic or exposed. Please see the link below to the flowcharts and algorithms for student and faculty safety. [COVID-19 Safety Protocol](#)

There have been many **special education questions** concerning reopening. All special education students will be given an A/B schedule in the hybrid model. IEPs are individual and every IEP will be revisited in the district to ensure we are meeting individual needs during this time. Students with significant disabilities are also being looked at individually and individual phone calls and conferences will be held to determine how to best meet the needs of the students. Please see the link below for details on the special education reopening plan.

[SPED Parent COVID-19 Reopening Plan](#)

How will parents be communicated if phases change in St. James Parish Schools?

Parents will be communicated with through their child's home-based school and the district office. The district will communicate using robocalls, text messages and emails. The district will be explicit about how the phase is changing and what will be different for their child.

Full virtual students' parents communication is done totally through email. If a robocall is needed it will be sent. Students' mode of instruction will not change regardless of the phase the district is operating in.

Additional Important Information

- **Meals** will be offered in both options.
- There are **attendance** expectations in both options. **Truancy** policies are still required in hybrid and total virtual.
- In the Hybrid Model, SMA and CTC transportation is still available and follows CDC guidance.
- Students can still bring their own lunch in the Hybrid Model - no sharing or teacher assistance with meals that students bring (containers must be able to be opened by the student without help, etc.).
- The district is supplying face masks (3 per student). Students can use their own masks, but please see school guidance for color guidelines and restrictions.

- *Virtual learning is a part of both options. **Virtual learning requires time management, effort and student responsibility to log on and do the work!** Help is given, but that help can take many different forms (not all traditional). Students and parents must be dedicated to online monitoring and diligence.*
- *SJPS faculty, staff and administration are committed to working through this difficult time. We know we must all do our part.*

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