



## Dear parents of students in embedded virtual classes,

The following information is designed to help clarify and answer questions about the embedded GCVSP virtual classes within district schools and programs. Please know that if you have concerns or questions, you are always welcome to contact either the virtual instructor of the class or the manager of the program, Laura Herd. In addition, by giving your contact information to the virtual instructor, you can request that you receive every email that your child receives so that you are “in the loop.” You are welcome to explore the course itself with your child by using his/her username and password to log into the LMS (Learning Management System). GCVSP uses Google Classroom as the LMS.

- 1. When did schools start embedding virtual classes and why?** The current model of the GCVSP embedded program was started six years ago to address staffing and curricular needs at the middle school level. We were able to provide a staffing option designed to lower class size by providing instruction for classes that were overloaded. We also provided scheduling options for high school courses when the school did not have a high school certified teacher. In addition, many of our middle schools wanted to expand their curriculum offerings in an effort to help their students get ahead as part of the district’s “Graduate Plus” initiative. As GCVSP has expanded, other schools and programs have adopted the embedded model. In 18-19, 2500 students in Greenville County are enrolled in embedded virtual classes.
- 2. How does the virtual embedded model work?** The brick/mortar school provides computers or devices, and a space to use them, as well as an adult staff member to act as a “facilitator.” The facilitator takes attendance and manages the space; he/she also has viewing rights in the Google Classroom. On the flip side, GCVSP provides the certified instructor and the course content. The courses are deadline driven, and modules are rolled out on a set schedule. However, the virtual instructor has the ability to adjust the pacing guide to meet the needs of each of his/her schools. But, for the most part, the course is developed to meet state standards, and the curriculum content is the same from school to school. From 3 middle schools in 2012 to 18 in 2018, the GCVSP has expanded its enrollment by 800% in six years.
- 3. Does GCVSP or the school select the students?** GCVSP is not a gatekeeper; the school is charged with selecting and registering students. Most schools are aware of the type of student who is successful and may design their own process for selecting the most appropriate candidates. ALL students in virtual classes must have their parents sign required permission forms for participating in the class. Those documents are housed at the school and assure the program and the school that the parents are aware of the guidelines for taking a virtual course.
- 4. Can a student work from home to catch up or do homework?** Yes, as long as the computer he uses complies with the Computer System Requirements as specified in the course. He can access Google Classroom from anywhere he has the internet. Most courses require some homework.
- 5. Is the facilitator of the class an “extra” teacher? What are the duties?** No, the facilitator of the class is not an extra teacher. The only instructor, and the student’s first point of contact for all issues, is the virtual instructor. The facilitator is trained to take attendance, troubleshoot limited technology issues, check on uploads, grades and submissions, and communicate often with the online teacher.
- 6. Do students often have technology issues with submission of assignments or tests?** No, in Fall 2017 over 850 middle school students were enrolled in embedded virtual classes. Fewer than 2% reported having issues with uploads or submission of assignments, and those were traced back primarily to a misunderstanding of the process by the student.

7. **What does the program do to make sure that students understand how to work in Google Classroom?** At the beginning, courses have initial Orientation and Intellectual Integrity Modules which explain many of the broader functions of the online classroom and expectations of students enrolled in the class. Students must take a quiz and sign a contract related to their understanding of those modules. Furthermore, each course contains navigational and academic resources for helping students traverse the course and experience success with the content. Those resources include everything from video tutorials on navigating and using course features, to activities, websites and slide shows that illustrate and clarify the instruction and assignments. They can be accessed by students at any time.
8. **How often are virtual instructors required to communicate with students?** Virtual instructors are required to post their office hours with contact information at the beginning of the course on their ABOUT tab. These office hours represent dedicated time and attention to the course. Most office hours are at night or on weekends because every virtual teacher is also a brick/mortar regular teacher in GCS schools. In addition GCVSP requires that teachers respond to emails and phone calls within 24 hours. GCVSP teachers are not expected to meet face-to-face with students or parents.
9. **How are students supposed to communicate with their teachers?** Most communication takes place through the Google Classroom platform messaging system or the school district email system. Other than the online classroom, students must use their district email. Some of the teachers collect cell phone contact information and message reminders and updates. Some teachers use REMIND, SKYPE or FACETIME.
10. **Do virtual teachers ever meet with their students?** No, not usually.
11. **What does it mean that these courses are “high school courses?”** All GCVSP courses award Carnegie units toward the SC high school diploma; therefore, they fall under the high school rules that govern high school instruction as set out by both state law (Uniform Grading Policy statute) and the SC Education Department’s regulation for high school courses. Since GCVSP offers only high school courses, all GCVSP courses follow the same rules for grading that are followed by courses taught at GCS high schools. This means that the only floor is the final grade floor of 50. All other assignments and assessments receive the true grade that is commensurate with the work the student submits.
12. **What if my student is struggling?** The student should immediately contact his or her virtual instructor.
13. **What if my student makes a low final grade?** The Uniform Grading Policy (SC statute) says *“A student who has taken a course for a unit of high school credit prior to his or her ninth grade year may retake that course regardless of the grade he or she has earned. A student who retakes a high school credit course from middle school must complete it before the beginning of the second year of high school.”* (Students who think they may need to use this exception, should make sure that the “next” school they attend offers the course they have taken.)
14. **How does my student take a virtual class that is not offered at his school?** Visit the GCVSP website at [www.gcsvirtual.com](http://www.gcsvirtual.com) and click on the Enrollment headings page for instructions.

**Visit to see the full listing in the course catalog:**

<https://gcsvirtual.com/Upload/Uploads/CourseListTimeline1711.pdf>