

Kent County Digital Scholars

In-District Learning Coach and Student Handbook

SY2024-2025



KENT COUNTY
DIGITAL SCHOLARS

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INFORMATION FOR THE LEARNING COACH

2024-2025 School Calendar

In-District students follow the Kent County Digital Scholars academic calendar, including breaks and deadlines. If a student chooses to take off any day not already acknowledged as a vacation day on the KCDS calendar, they must submit vacation days to acknowledge absence with regards to their KCDS Attendance.

KCDS will post a calendar of important dates and events on our [KCDS website](#). Additionally, please check your student's online school "Announcements" section each day and contact your teacher should you have any questions or concerns. The school calendar includes school holidays, which are days when the students will not be required to but may complete work. The current KCDS School Calendar is included in this Handbook under Appendix A.

Role of Learning Coach

A learning coach (LC) is a caring adult who supports the KCDS students in their online education. The learning coach's role varies depending on the student's grade level, but, most importantly, the learning coach is there to create a successful learning environment for the student. ***Learning coaches for all grades are expected to be active in the student's DAILY learning activities, monitor completion of lessons and assessments, supervise Class Connect attendance and participation, provide a distraction-free learning environment, and enter daily attendance.**

Grades K-2: Lessons are written to guide the adult as they work with the teacher regarding instruction for the student. At times, the learning coach and student will sit at the computer together to look at pictures, read a story, answer questions, and attend live class connect sessions.

Grades 3-5: Lessons reflect the student's growing abilities. Much of the instruction on the computer is designed for students to engage independently. Often, the learning coach will sit with the student at the computer during a lesson. Lessons that require adult guidance are indicated.

Grades 6-12: In middle school and high school, the focus begins to shift towards more independent learning for students in grades 6 to 12. Students are expected to take on more accountability and responsibility for their learning. They will develop more independent study skills and submit assignments to their teachers to be evaluated or graded. Direct interaction increases between students and teachers.

Learning Coaches continue to provide a supporting role and are required to help students to stay organized, monitor student grades and progress in schoolwork, ensure student submissions of work directly to teachers, and provide motivation as needed.

Change of Contact Information

Parents are required to notify both their home division and their student's homeroom teacher/advisor and registrar immediately of any change in name, mailing and/or shipping address, emergency contact, responsible adult, or court order designating a change in guardianship. Address changes require an updated proof of residency which can be verified with a copy of a current utility bill or driver's license stating current physical address. Complete a change of address using the following [form](#). Updates to email addresses and phone numbers should be made by the learning coach in the OLS under "My Account." This information is part of your student's educational record and must be kept current. It is very important to keep addresses updated as this could affect the student's educational record and placement with both KCDS and their home division.

Parent-Teacher Communication

KCDS teachers are responsible for monitoring and validating student attendance, curricular progress, and educational growth. **The homeroom teacher is the family's first point of contact.**

Email and telephone are the primary methods of communication between the KCDS teachers and the learning coaches; therefore, it is essential that parents, guardians, and learning coaches check their email and voicemail at least twice a day. Parents should promptly reply to emails or voicemails received from KCDS or STRIDE K¹². KCDS teachers/advisors are instructed to allow their voicemail to answer all incoming calls. This allows the teacher/advisor to thoroughly research answers to questions or concerns. **All families MUST have a working phone number on file with an active voice message system.**

*All communication between KCDS administration, KCDS teachers, the parents/learning coaches, students, and other parties directly related to KCDS must be conducted with appropriate professionalism. Demeaning or profane language, derogatory remarks/innuendos are not acceptable. This includes all communications with KCDS staff members. Any violation of the above can cause immediate student withdrawal.

Non-Custodial Parents

Should a non-custodial parent request access to a student's Online School or school record, a conference will be scheduled with the custodial parent, legal guardian, learning coach, and others as needed. Necessary documentation may be requested during that conference.

Problem Resolution

We recognize that at times issues may arise which require administrative attention. If attempting to resolve an issue, parents should use the following steps:

- **Step One** All concerns and issues should first be directed to your student's teacher.
- **Step Two** If the issue is not resolved through the teacher, the In-Division Administrator should be contacted.
- **Step Three** If an issue cannot be resolved using steps one and two, it then may be referred to the Head of School.

POLICY, PROCEDURES, AND NOTIFICATIONS

Admission and Entrance Requirements

Any student participating in the KCDS program must be a Kent County, MD resident. All In-Division students must be registered in their local school district to participate in KCDS program. In-Division students may not be enrolled without the knowledge or consent of their local school district due to the binding legal contract that the division holds with KCDS.

Parent/Student/Staff Conferences

Parents and students are required to participate in scheduled conferences. The date and time of conferences will be arranged by the staff and parent/guardian/learning coach. Conferences will be held via phone, Class Connect, or in both formats simultaneously at the staff's discretion. Parents and students are required to attend all scheduled conferences. Should a conflict arise that interferes with a scheduled conference, the parent is expected to provide notice to the teacher at least 24 hours in advance and be available to reschedule within 3 business days. In the case of an emergency, notification should occur as soon as possible. Failure to participate in conferences may result in implementation of the non-compliance procedure.

Attendance & Instructional Time

The state of Maryland requires all public schools by law to be open for at least 180 days school days, and a minimum of 1,080 school hours during a 10-month period in each school year. At the beginning of each school year, KCDS teachers provide a schedule outlining cumulative expected progress and attendance hours by week to assist families with remaining on track to reach a minimum of 1,080 hours by the last day of school. Additionally, Maryland law requires school attendance for all students between the ages of 5 and 18.

Attendance applies to KCDS students in the form of daily OLS log ins and logged attendance hours as well as participation in required academic activities, including Class Connect sessions.

Kent County Digital Scholars has a responsibility to enforce Maryland's Compulsory Educational Laws. The responsibility for compliance with this law belongs to the parents, but the program is obliged to keep an accurate record of daily attendance. **Learning coaches are required to log attendance hours in the OLS (Online School) and OMHS (Online Middle and High School) each day, Monday through Friday, and additional time may be entered on the weekends.** Logging attendance hours is the responsibility of the learning coach. Hours may be logged for time spent completing lessons, activities, and assessments, in Class Connect sessions, and on supplemental educational activities.

Regular attendance is essential to academic success. For this reason, the policies regarding attendance will be strictly enforced.

Frequently Asked Attendance Questions

1. When can I log attendance?
 - a. Attendance can be logged beginning on the first day of school and can continue until the last day of school. Attendance must be entered Monday through Friday and additionally may be entered on the weekends.
2. What constitutes earned attendance hours?
 - a. Attendance hours include time spent on the OLS/OMHS, academic Class Connect sessions, completing assessments, submitting assignments, and completing supplemental activities.
3. Where do I need to log my student's attendance and how often?
 - a. Student attendance hours need to be logged under the learning coach account and should be entered daily, Monday through Friday, except days that the parent/LC has denoted as "Days Off" in the student's attendance calendar and days denoted as KCDS holidays on the school calendar.
4. How much attendance may I log each day?
 - a. You should log the actual number of STRIDE K¹² and supplemental work hours completed by the student. Supplemental activities are available to all students. Supplemental activities refer to non-k12 activities, including but not limited to, reading for pleasure, journal writing, visits to the public library, and family trips to museums. Eight (8) hours per week may be entered in this category. Questions regarding supplemental activities may be directed to the homeroom teachers. Logging an average of 6 hours per day will keep students on track to meet the minimum expectation of 1,080 attendance hours by the last day of school.
5. What should I do if I forget to log my student's attendance?
 - a. If you have already entered hours for that day and have clicked the "Submit" button, your teacher may need to adjust the hours for you. Contact your teacher and s/he will assist you.

Absences/Extended Inability to Participate

The Kent County school calendar includes our official school holidays for students. Student and staff holidays are included on the KCDS calendar to denote dates on which teaching and administrative staff are not available to provide instruction to students or communication to families. Students will not be required to complete schoolwork or enter attendance on KCDS Holidays.

If a student is absent (will not be logging in to the OLS/OMHS on a school day), please inform your teacher by email that morning and complete the appropriate Excused Absence Form below.

[Absence Request Form](#)

The following factors are excused/lawful absences, excusing the student from logging into the online school:

- Personal illness – written physician’s statements may be required to verify extended or repeated absences due to personal illness
- Serious illness in the immediate family that would prohibit school attendance (if the illness prevents the LC from working with the student for multiple days, arrangements for a substitute LC must be made and plans should be communicated to the teacher)
- Death in the immediate family
- Observation or celebration of a religious holiday
- Other such good cause as determined by the Executive Director

The KCDS administration reserves the right to verify such statements and to investigate the cause of each individual or prolonged absence.

Students whose absences are excused for one of the above reasons will be permitted to make up all schoolwork missed with no loss of credit. However, it is the responsibility of the student to arrange make-up assignments/times with his/her teachers.

Unexcused/unlawful absences are those which are not based on any of the conditions listed in the previous paragraph.

In the case of a planned absence, a parent must notify teachers at least one week in advance to obtain approval. The student will be expected to work ahead on all assignments and turn in any date-specific assignments before leaving for the planned absence.

Any time a student is absent, the learning coach must update the student’s schedule in the OLS to reflect those dates as “Days Off.” This will create a verifiable record that a student was not participating in educational activities on that date and will alert school and division staff as to why progress and attendance were not recorded on that date. The Maryland State Department of Education requires a minimum of 1,080 hours of logged attendance for the school year.

Truancy

Responsibility for compliance with the Maryland Department of Education attendance statutes and regulations require KCDS to keep an accurate record of daily attendance and progress. As

KCDS students are registered, full-time, public-school students, compliance with all state attendance requirements is mandatory and the responsibility of the parent. Students may not be enrolled in any other public school system during their enrollment with Kent County Digital Scholars.

Attendance is expected to be logged each day following the completion of assigned lessons. Attendance may only be logged by the parent/learning coach and must be kept up to date. Attendance applies to Kent County Digital Scholars (KCDS) students in the form of regular, “logged in” participation in the educational activities of KCDS’s OLS, OMHS, Class Connect sessions, and supplemental activities.

Habitually Truant: A student who meets ALL of the following criteria during the school year:

- Was age 5 through 20 years old
- Was enrolled in the Kent County Public School System for 91 or more days
- Was unlawfully absent for 20% or more of the total days of enrollment.

Learning Coaches will be contacted via our Automated Engagement Notification system to inform them if their student has not logged into their courses on the OLS/OMHS; please note attendance will need to be updated by the Learning Coach daily. Students will receive a missing attendance email upon the third (3) day of an unexcused absence. Upon the fifth (5) unexcused absence from school, every effort will be made to have direct contact with the student and the parent. An attendance plan will be developed to help increase attendance, engagement, and success at KCDS. Upon the seventh (7) unexcused absence, students will be invited to a Truancy Class connect session and receive an email from the Student Attendance Specialist. Upon the (10) unexcused absence, an email will be sent, and the Learning Coach will receive a phone call from the Student Attendance Specialist. Upon (15) unexcused absences, a Pending Withdrawal email will be sent followed by a phone call from the Student Attendance Specialist. Upon the (16) unexcused absence and all attempts to contact the Learning Coach have been made, the Student Attendance Specialist will email the student’s Advisor/Principal for automatic withdrawal. Please note that the Student Attendance Specialist reserves the right to enforce the compulsory school attendance law that occurs through involvement of Kent County States Attorney’s Office.

To avoid potential truancy situations, please communicate with your student’s teacher regarding any planned vacations or illness issues that could be misinterpreted as truancy. The responsibility of student compliance with the law belongs with the parents. Students whose learning coaches fail to maintain accurate attendance are in violation of the attendance policies as stated above.

Impact on learner’s permit issuance: a student who is under 16 years of age and applying for a learner’s permit must present a copy of their school attendance record. The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration may not issue a learner’s permit if the applicant’s school attendance record indicates more than 10 unexcused absences during the prior school semester pursuant to [Md. Code, Transportation §16–105](#).

Appeals Process

Parents/Guardians may follow the process listed below to appeal attendance violation decisions related to the “Student Attendance Policy”:

1. The parent/guardian will be notified by the school administration when the student exceeds the limit for absenteeism.
2. The parent/guardian shall have the responsibility of filing an appeal upon the receipt of the notification letter.

3. The appeal must be submitted to the school administration no later than 7 school days following the distribution date of the report card for each marking period.
4. The Executive Director or his/her designee will schedule a conference with the parent/guardian and student (when appropriate) to hear the appeal.
5. The Executive Director or his/her designee will notify the parent or guardian of the outcome of the appeal no later than 7 school days following the hearing.
6. The right of due process permits the parent/guardian to appeal the decision rendered by the Executive Director or his/her designee to the Superintendent's designee.

Withdrawal/Removal from KCDS

Students may be removed from the KCDS program due to disciplinary action, lack of attendance/progress, failure to participate in state-mandated assessments, or failure to comply with division or KCDS policies outlined in this Handbook.

If a parent wishes to withdraw their student from KCDS, for any reason, they must first notify the In-Division Administrator in writing before enrolling their student elsewhere. The request for withdrawal must include the name of the receiving school or a statement that the family will pursue homeschooling. The supplied equipment and materials must be returned in a timely manner. Each student will be sent pre-paid shipping labels to help expedite the return shipments.

Re-enrollment Policy for Students Withdrawn Due to Excessive Absenteeism

KCDS is under no obligation to re-enroll a student who has been withdrawn due to lack of attendance. Should the administration allow a student to re-enroll, the parents and student must work with the student's teacher(s) and KCDS administration to create a plan outlining specific parameters for continued enrollment. Non-compliance with the plan may result in withdrawal from KCDS.

Confidentiality and Student Records

Every effort is made to maintain the confidentiality of students attending the Kent County Digital Scholars (KCDS). Official student records will be maintained by the KCDS office and our division partners. Please contact the KCDS office to obtain a copy of student records. Before confidential student information is transferred over the Internet, it is password-protected or encrypted and can only be decrypted by another party employed or assigned by KCDS. Kent County Digital Scholars is committed to protecting the confidentiality of personally identifiable data regarding students. **Student files are accessible only to school officials.** Parents and students should be careful not to share their STRIDE K¹² OLS username and password with any unauthorized individual(s). Should a parent or teacher believe that the security of a student's OLS account has been compromised, the parent should use the tools provided in the OLS to change their username and password.

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is the acronym for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, codified at 20 USC 1232g, sometimes called the Buckley Amendment. Under FERPA, a parent or eligible student has a right to inspect and review the student's education records and to seek to have them amended in certain circumstances. A parent or eligible student must also provide a signed and dated written consent before an educational agency or institution discloses personally identifiable information from education records. Exceptions to this requirement are set forth in § 99.31(a).

FERPA applies to any “educational agency or institution” that receives funds under any program administered by the U. S. Department of Education (USED). This includes all public K-12 schools and virtually all postsecondary institutions, public and or private. The USED’s Family Policy Compliance Office (FPCO) is the federal office that has oversight authority for the implementation of FERPA and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA).

- [Family Policy Compliance Office](#)(FPCO) – information from USED

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants parents and students over 18 years of age (“eligible students”) certain rights regarding the student’s education records:

(1) The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days of the day the school receives a request for access.

To request an inspection and review, the parent or eligible student should submit a written request to the KCDS administration that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The KCDS administration will make access arrangements and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

(2) The right to request an amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate.

Parents or eligible students may ask the school to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate. They should write to the school administration; clearly identify the part of the record they want changed and specify why it is inaccurate. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

(3) The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA allows disclosure without consent.

An exception, which permits KCDS to disclose information without consent, is when the school discloses information to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by or contracted to provide services to or designated by the contractor to provide services to KCDS as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, support staff member, or contractor (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Board of Directors of the School; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks; officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for the purposes related to the student’s enrollment or transfer.

A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.

(4) The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the school to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605

(5) FERPA requires that the school, with certain exceptions, obtain a parent's or eligible student's written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from a student's education records. However, the School may disclose "directory information" without written consent, unless you, the parent or eligible student, have advised the school in writing that you do not want all or part of the directory information disclosed. The method for objecting to disclosure of directory information is specified below. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the school to include the following information from education records in certain school publications or disclose it to certain parties. Examples include:

- Shipment of school materials to and from student's home
- Entry of student enrollment information into a computer database for use by school officials
- Honor roll or other recognition lists
- School yearbook

Non-Compliance

As a public-school program, the Kent County Digital Scholars is required to monitor student attendance and progress, in accordance with all applicable statutes and Department of Education rules and regulations. KCDS student attendance is recorded by the time spent "logged in" to the OLS or OMHS, completing assignments associated with OLS or OMHS lessons, and attending Class Connect sessions. KCDS student progress is recorded by the mastery of lessons and submission of completed assignments and assessments. KCDS teachers and administration will monitor student attendance and progress which will be a determining factor in student advancement to the next curricular level and continued enrollment in KCDS. The progress of 3rd & 4th grade students who participate in intervention services will be monitored closely and taken into consideration before grade promotion is determined. Intervention will focus on the student's specific needs and may include participation in mandatory programs.

*A KCDS parent or student may also be deemed non-compliant for any of the following reasons:

- Failure to register with local division
- Failure to make sufficient progress as established during the student goal setting conference (i.e. 15 lessons or the equivalent of 3 days missing attendance)
- Repeated failure to log completed progress and attendance in a timely manner
- Failure to respond to teacher/administrator phone calls and/or emails
- Failure to accept any KCDS certified mail
- Failure to participate in scheduled parent, student, and teacher conferences
- Failure to attend mandatory Class Connect/Engageli sessions
- Failure to submit required work samples or assignments by deadlines
- Failure to participate in state-mandated or school division required assessments
- Failure to participate in required, synchronous, instructional sessions
- Falsifying attendance and/or progress in the OLS or OMHS
- Falsifying work samples or submitted assignments
- Providing student(s) access to adult's OLS or OMHS username/password
- Failure to follow other school policies

- Failure to follow individualized improvement mandates as set forth by the Teacher, Academic Administrator or School Principal
- Cyber-bullying and/or inappropriate behavior in any online capacity or at any KCDS event
- Failure to maintain consistent residence of student within the boundaries of Kent County during the school year

Objectionable Materials Policy

If a parent finds certain lessons, books, or materials to be objectionable, they should contact their KCDS homeroom teacher and utilize the feedback option within the OLS. The teacher will work with the parents to find alternative lessons to meet the lesson objectives. The alternative assessment for the lesson in the OLS, or an alternatively selected and approved upon assignment, must be completed to show that the objectives have been met.

KCDS CODE OF CONDUCT

Student Dress

Students and adults must dress appropriately for school-sponsored outings, testing, events, and class sessions. The two criteria for determining appropriateness are safety and decency. Student and adult dress that distracts others from the learning process is unacceptable. Please refer to the directive in the section entitled “Outings and Events.”

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the moral behavior related to students and academic achievement. A breakdown in moral behavior that would lead to academic dishonesty may include any level of cheating and/or plagiarism. Academic fraud is considered a serious violation at Kent County Digital Scholars and any one or more of the following actions may be recommended if academic dishonesty has been suspected or confirmed.

Kent County Digital Scholars may:

- require students, parents, and guardians to permit live desktop and application sharing with teachers or other school staff to evaluate technical issues, grade/data discrepancies or suspected academic dishonesty.
- require students to submit to in-person or online proctoring of some or all graded assessments and/or activities as determined by the school staff.
- require students to submit all or some specified number of teacher-scored assessments or assignments in order to pass a course, earn course credit, or be eligible for a course grade at or above a specified level regardless of the grade earned by solely computer scored assessments.
- require parents or other caring adults to serve as official proctors of students during high-stakes assessments (i.e. unit or end-of-course assessments).
- require students to submit to live, one-on-one quizzing or conversation about the related topics.
- require learning coaches to submit a written log of attendance activities completed.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Instructional Model

The Kent County Digital Scholars instructional model will rely upon:

- rigorous academic standards and expectations
- highly qualified educators providing synchronous and asynchronous instructional support
- student-to-student and student-to-teacher interaction using a variety of learning technologies
- grades K-5 mastery-based, grading scale and progress reporting
- grades 6-12 lesson, assignment, and assessment completion, grading scale and evaluation
- opportunities for student leadership and participation in school-sponsored activities, both virtually and face-to-face

In this educational model, teaching and learning include the accessibility of teachers during typical school hours (8 a.m. – 5 p.m.) via email, telephone, and Class Connect live sessions (via the Engageli web conference site) involving individual students, and small or large group instruction.

Students participate in school daily for an average of 5.5 - 6 hours. Students will be assessed frequently to determine achievement and mastery in their assigned and scheduled courses. Students and parents can view and update student progress and attendance at any time. Students should prioritize working between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Class Sessions

Kent County Digital Scholars staff are required to accurately assess your student's independent ability and monitor progress in the online setting. This requires students to be on camera and use their microphone as directed by staff during instructional sessions.

While students are engaged in Class Connect sessions, the Kent County Digital Scholars Student Code of Conduct is in effect. Abusive language, profanity, harassment, racial, religious, or ethnic slurs, cheating, disruptive behavior, unauthorized access, false information, or threats constitute a violation of the student code and are subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion.

To get the maximum benefit from Engageli, all users should have speakers attached and the volume turned on. All families should have access to a working microphone and camera for each session. For an optimal experience, KCDS highly recommends that you access Engageli via a high-speed Internet connection

Progress Reporting

The Online School (OLS) offers an on-going report of a student's academic progress and attendance information. A parent may log on to the system at any time and view this information. If a parent wishes to have a printed version of academic and attendance information, they may print a copy of the progress/grades and attendance screens in the OLS/OMHS account for the student.

The local school is provided with weekly reports of students' grades.

K-5 Progress Reports: Progress reports will be sent after quarters 1 and 3 for Elementary students. Report cards will be sent after quarters 2 and 4. Students will be evaluated on the following components:

75% OLS Coursework and Progress

15% ClassConnect Attendance and Participation
 5% ClassKick Assignment Completion
 5% PlayPosit Participation

Elementary Grading Scale:

Percent of Expected Progress	Grade Mark	Details
89.5% +	C	Fully Compliant
79.5% - 89.4%	P	Partially Compliant
79.4% and less	N	Not Compliant

6-12 Progress Reports:

KCDS uses a 10-pt. grading scale (below). However, In-Division High School students will adhere to the grading scale of their home division. Please reference [In-Division High School Student Scheduling](#) for more information.

Grade	GPA	Percent
A	4.0	90-100
B	3.0	80-89
C	2.0	70-79
D	1.0	60-69
F	0.0	<59

Promotion and Retention of High School Pupils: Progress reports will be sent each semester. Students will receive letter grades in each of their courses on the grading scale used by their division.

Promotion shall be determined by the successful completion of each course and SOL proficiency.

The guidelines for grade placement are as follows:

Grade Level Credits:

9 to 10 completion of 5 units, and pass 3 core courses
 10 to 11 completion of 10 units, and pass 6 core courses
 11 to 12 completion of 15 units, and pass 9 core courses

These are minimal requirements that are cumulative in nature. Core courses are English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science. Each pupil should learn relevant grade subject matter before promotion to the next grade level.

Parents shall be notified of unsatisfactory academic progress which might affect a pupil's progression to the next grade level or his/her eligibility for graduation.

Grade Appeal Process

Administration does not determine grades for a student. This authority lies solely with the teacher of record. If students and learning coaches are dissatisfied with a grade they have received in a course, on an assignment or assessment, they are expected to appeal those decisions directly to the teacher of record. If a final decision cannot be mutually agreed upon by both the teacher and the student or learning coach, the student and learning coach may make the appropriate administrator aware of any perceived wrong in the grading process.

High School Credit Option for Middle School Students

Students in good academic standing and/or appropriate course prerequisites may receive recommendation/approval to take high school credit courses as a middle school student. Grades earned in these courses will become part of the student's official high school transcript but will not count towards the grade point average (GPA) on that high school transcript.

Additional high school specific academic information can be found in the [High School Student Handbook SY24-25](#)

Student Course Level Advancement Policy

Course promotion eligibility will be determined by the division, based on student course progress and completion, formative assessment completion, Class Connect attendance, overall attendance hours, student work sample submission, and fulfillment of testing requirements.

Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)

All assignments are assumed to be the student's original work. Therefore, if the student utilizes any ideas that are not their original thoughts, the student must cite their sources using MLA format (or other specific format if required by the course teacher). A student who fails to abide by these standards will be subject to disciplinary action and a possible reduction of points.

Please Note: Our Online Middle and High School (OMHS) utilizes plagiarism identification software that identifies potential incidents of plagiarism and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Division will be notified of infractions.

Student Work Samples

In an effort to fully support our students, Kent County Digital Scholars **requires** students to submit work samples on a regular basis **to meet promotional requirements**. Work samples offer teachers an opportunity to determine if a student is mastering curriculum objectives. They also provide teachers with examples of student work so they can gauge academic growth throughout the year as well as verify the completion of work.

KCDS requires parents to maintain and assist with submitting student work samples for accountability purposes. Each family will be supplied with a list and a designated schedule of the required work samples

that are to be submitted to your student's teacher. Students failing to submit work samples will be considered non-compliant. Teachers will provide families with submission guidelines and with timely, detailed feedback regarding student work samples. Please attend all scheduled conferences and read all emails so you know the requirements and dates.

Supplemental Activities

A supplemental activity is work that the student completes in addition to the STRIDE K¹² curriculum assigned to the student. It does not replace the STRIDE K¹² curriculum. Supplemental activities should represent new learning for the student or provide practice for work appropriate for his/her grade level.

Supplemental activities should be logged into the Online School on the attendance screen under the heading of "Supplemental Activities." Learning coaches may enter up to 8 hours per week of supplemental activities. These include, but are not limited to, pleasure reading, journal writing, and visits to the public library. To ensure that supplemental activities are appropriate and recorded properly, please discuss these with your KCDS teacher.

Assessments

Assessments at KCDS play a critical role in monitoring student growth and mastery of state standards while also meeting requirements set forth by the Maryland State Department of Education, K12 and our district partners. KCDS staff will provide students with access, instructions and support on how to complete all assessments.

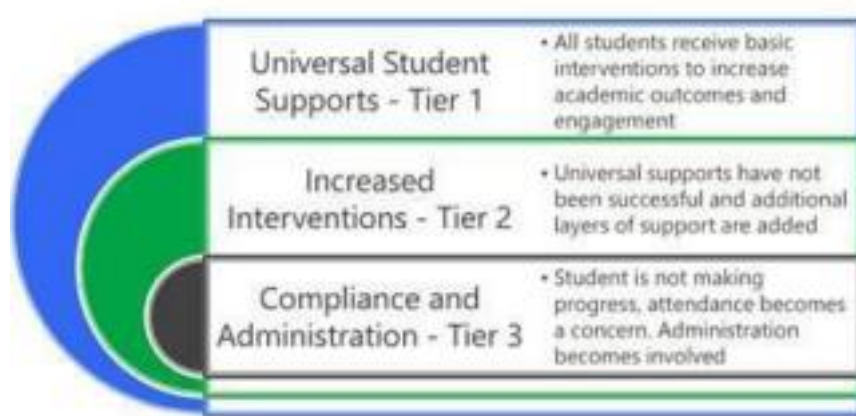
All in-division students will take state mandated assessments through their local divisions

Engagement Model

The Engagement Model is a school support program focused on improving student engagement by fostering students' academic, social, behavioral, and emotional skills through relationship-based interventions developed in tandem with students, learning coaches, and teachers.

Understanding the Tiers

If a student is lacking engagement or demonstrates compliance issues, they will be entered into a tier system and will remain until their situation is resolved and the case is closed. The tiers of the Engagement Model are defined below.



Tier 1: Universal Support

School wide prevention and interventions, along with teacher support, provide the first level of service to all students and families. This may include phone calls, text messages, Strong Start activities, homeroom meetings, and more.

Tier 2: Support Team Referral

Universal support has not been successful and additional support is needed. This can be for a variety of reasons. A referral is initiated to address any concerns. Referrals can be made for academic, compliance, engagement, or social/emotional concerns. The Referral Team meets regularly to review these referrals and assign the appropriate interventions.

Tier 3: Increased Student Support

The student has been working with the teacher(s) and administration is notified. The student is not making progress with these interventions and the student's personal and educational needs must be addressed with increased support. Excessive Absenteeism or Truancy becomes a problem, and the Student Attendance Specialist is often added to the referral at this tier.

TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIALS

In order to participate in our online school, families must have a reliable source of internet. Each family should be prepared with a fully functional desktop computer or laptop equipped with a camera and microphone by the student's first day of school. Computer systems must meet the minimum specifications to access the STRIDE K12 Online School (OLS/OMHS). To see if your technology meets the specifications, you may visit <https://www.help.k12.com/s/article/K12-Computer-Technical-Requirements> for more details.

Basic computer skills are essential as a learning coach or student mentor. While it is vital to access the learning coach portal, your involvement within the students OLS/OMHS account will depend on the grade level and maturity of the student(s). Should a learning coach need support or have questions, you can visit <https://www.help.k12.com/s/search/All/Home/learning%20coach?tabset-963be=2>.

Computer Use Policy

Access to the internet via computer equipment and resource networks provided to qualifying students because of enrollment in KCDS are intended to serve and help the student to pursue educational goals and purposes. Communications and internet access should be conducted in a responsible and professional manner reflecting the school's commitment to honest, ethical, and non-discriminatory practice. Therefore, the following is prohibited:

- Any computer use that violates federal, state, or local law or regulation.
- Knowing or reckless interference with the normal operation of computers, peripherals, or networks.
- The use of KCDS Internet-related systems to access, transmit, store, display, or request inappropriate materials.
- Any use that is deemed to adversely affect KCDS.

School Property

KCDS provides materials, books, and other curricular supplies. These materials are school property and must be kept in good condition. Parents are responsible for the repair or replacement of all lost, stolen, or

damaged school property. All property and equipment must be returned in good working condition upon withdrawal from the program. All printed materials are copyrighted, and unauthorized copying of that material is a copyright infringement. Materials cannot be sold or transferred and are to be used solely by the student enrolled in the KCDS program.

Missing Materials

The Kent County Digital Scholars provides students with complete sets of materials for each subject. Families are provided with a packing list for each subject, and it is the responsibility of the parent/responsible adult to check the packing list against the items shipped. If items are missing, the parent/responsible adult is accountable for notifying STRIDE K¹² within two weeks of receiving the materials, so that a missing materials report can be submitted to have the item provided. Missing materials reported mid-year may be considered lost materials and could result in charges to the family for replacement.

Lost or Damaged Materials - Materials that are lost or damaged should be reported to STRIDE K¹² as soon as possible. The parent/responsible adult is accountable for the cost of replacing lost or damaged materials.

Consumable Materials vs. Returnable Materials

At the beginning of the school year, parents/responsible adults may view a list of “Provided Materials” on the OLS. Each item is marked with an icon that designates it as “Return,” “Return if Unused,” or “Do Not Return.” All items designated as returnable cannot be written in and must be returned. STRIDE K¹² will arrange for pick-up of these materials at the end of the school year. The parent/responsible adult will be accountable for the replacement cost of items on the list not returned. Consumable materials are not required to be returned.

NOTE: When a student withdraws prior to the end of the school year, all items, regardless of condition, must be returned. This includes student and teacher printed pages. Exceptions for liquids and certain consumable items may be specified in the reclamation process.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Student Organizations

To be eligible to participate in KCDS extracurricular activities, students must comply with the KCDS progress and attendance requirements set for that student. Teacher approval may be required before final eligibility can be determined.

KCDS offers a variety of student organizations. In-Division students may participate in student interest clubs. If a student wishes to join an honors organization, they must do so through their local school.

Student Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities

Kent County Digital Scholars and STRIDE K¹² will provide student participation opportunities that are designed to meet the students’ academic, recreational, and social interests. Activities may include, but will not be limited to, virtual clubs, service projects, and scholastic activities such as spelling bees or science fairs. An adult sponsor, approved by the school administration, will supervise each school-related club/organization.

Students are encouraged to participate in organizations endorsed by the school, which are formed to share common interests or are an integral part of the educational program of KCDS. All student organizations will operate according to approved guidelines and procedures and will not discriminate based on race, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. Participation in school-sponsored athletic programs or activities is at the superintendent's discretion of the school division where the student lives.

Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Discipline Policy

1. Sponsors are responsible for maintaining discipline among student participants in KCDS clubs and activities that they sponsor, including enforcing the student conduct code set forth in this Handbook and additional approved rules relevant to the club and/or activity.
2. KCDS Code of Conduct rules apply at all times.
3. When a sponsor is considering excluding a student from participation, whether temporarily or for the remainder of the school year, the sponsor should:
 - a. Conduct an informal conference with the student and parent during which he/she should advise the student of the alleged offense, explain the evidence that forms the basis of the allegation and allow the student to respond to that evidence.
 - b. If the sponsor then decides to exclude the student from participation, the sponsor should notify the School Administrator and the student's parent/guardian in writing. This written notice will include the offense for which he/she is being excluded and the term of the exclusion.
 - c. The informal conference need not occur before a student is excluded from participation where circumstances justify emergency removal pending an investigation.
 - d. The parent/guardian of a student may appeal the exclusion from participation to the School Administrator with a written request.

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

The following is a list of behaviors not permitted by Kent County Digital Scholars:

1. Disregard or disrespect for directions of teachers or administrators.
2. Disruption and/or interference with the normal and orderly conduct of school and school-sponsored activities.
3. Use of profanity, vulgar language, or obscene materials.
4. Engaging in insults, verbal abuses such as name calling, ethnic or racial slurs, or using derogatory statements to other students, school personnel or other individuals.
5. Bullying-behaviors that are intended to harass, intimidate, ridicule, humiliate, or instill fear in another individual.

K12 Zone Code of Conduct Policy

The K12 Zone is a new and innovative tool that Kent County Digital Scholars is implementing to improve engagement, retention, and socialization among our students. It is Kent County Digital Scholars's goal to ensure that every student is able to communicate and collaborate in a safe and reliable environment. The purpose of this policy is to identify specific offenses that constitute disciplinary actions within the K12 Zone and outline the Discipline Ladder for each ban from the system.

All students are expected to:

1. Be respectful of themselves, others, and the activities within the K12 Zone

2. Be kind to themselves and others
3. Be safe by following directions and reporting concerns

The following behaviors are specific offenses that constitute disciplinary actions within the K12 Zone
Specific Offenses:

1. Violence
2. Threat of Violence
3. Nudity
4. Hate Speech
5. Hate Symbols
6. Harassment
7. Bullying
8. Sales or Promotion of Drugs
9. Other/Minor Offenses: Include but are not limited to obscene language, materials, gestures or behavior, attendance problems, defiant behavior, deceitful behavior (false accusations, forgery, plagiarism, lying, cheating, etc.), as well as any offense that a teacher or administrator deems inappropriate for this specific virtual setting.

The following Discipline Ladder identifies the time frame in which a student could be banned from the system:

1. First Ban-One Day Ban
2. Second Ban-One Week Ban
3. Third Ban-One Month Ban
4. Fourth Ban-One 9 Week Ban
5. Fifth Ban-One Semester Ban

KCDS RESOURCES

Section 504 Service Plans

Kent County Digital Scholars follows the Maryland State Department of Education's guidance regarding 504 service plans. A 504 plan provides services and modifications to the learning environment for students with special needs. If you have questions regarding a possible or current 504 plan, please contact your local division or contact the In-Division Administrator.

Special Education

If you have questions regarding special education services or an IEP, please contact your local division or contact the In-Division Administrator.

English Language Learner

If you have questions regarding the English Language Learner program, please contact Special Programs at specialprograms@vavirtual.org.

In-Division Administrator

If you have questions regarding the in-division program, please contact Laura Cantrell at lacantrell@vavirtual.org.

School Counselors

In-Division students are assigned to a KCDS counselor who can help answer questions or make recommendations for courses based on student interest and achievement. However, all course decisions must be approved by the student's counselor in their local division.

[List of School Counselors](#)

McKinney-Vento, Migrant, and Foster Care Contact

For questions related to McKinney-Vento, migrant education, and foster care, please contact the appropriate school counselor. [List of School Counselors](#)

Title IX Coordinator Contact

For questions related to Title IX, please contact Tracey Carter at trcarter@vavirtual.org.

Who Can Help Me?

[KCDS Student POC List](#)

FAQs and other information are available: <https://kcds.k12.com/resources/general-faqs/>

Assistance creating an Online School account: <https://www.help.k12.com/s/article/Student-OLS-Account-Set-Up>

K12 Customer Support: 866-512-2273

The Kent County Digital Scholars reserves the right to amend our Handbook during the school year to meet partnering school division and/or state guidelines.

KCDS PARENT/STUDENT CONTRACT

SY 2024-25

Academic Expectations

- I understand and agree that KCDS is a full-time public-school program, **not a home-school program**, and that my student may not be enrolled in any other full-time public, private, or charter school. I understand that my student is a member of Kent County Public School division and is **not a homeschooled student or a student of home instruction**.
- I understand that KCDS students are required to have **full-time** adult supervision and participation during instruction/learning to be enrolled in the program. I understand that I am expected to become knowledgeable about the curriculum and the Online School (OLS) or OMHS (Online Middle and High School).
- I understand that enrollment includes full participation in all mandated state and division testing on the required dates and at the assigned location and time. It is my responsibility to provide transportation for all required testing and adhere to the requirements of testing as provided by the Kent County Digital Scholars or the partnering school division.
- I accept the responsibility to actively participate in the planning and direct instruction of my student but understand that my student is responsible for completing assessments independently.
- I understand that my student is required to meet expected progress percentages in the curriculum in all courses.
- I understand that my student will complete a minimum of 1080 hours of attendance within the school year to comply with the requirements of the state of Maryland and that I must enter attendance into the OLS or OMHS daily.
- I understand that my student is expected to attend and participate in all Class Connect sessions (regularly scheduled, synchronous lessons presented by the KCDS teaching staff). I understand that attendance at all subject-specific Class Connect sessions is mandatory for all students unless otherwise indicated by the teacher.
- I understand that my student must complete all assessments by the indicated due dates as assigned by my student's teacher.
- I understand that all sick days, vacations, planned holidays, and otherwise declared days off from instruction must be documented as "Days Off" in the OLS as well as submitted to the teacher and approved.
- I understand that if my student travels outside of the state for more than 5 consecutive days, I must receive written approval from an administrator.
- I understand and agree that it is my responsibility to provide a working computer with a microphone and always maintain high-speed internet service as this is a full-time, virtual program.
- I understand and agree that my student must reside full-time in Kent County, MD during enrollment with the Kent County Digital Scholars. I must reside full-time in my district of residence to remain an in-division student.
- I understand that my student's progress and attendance will be reviewed by my teacher and administrator on a regular basis and will be reviewed by our partnering school division.
- I understand that I will be required to submit student work samples at designated intervals to my KCDS teacher.
- I understand that I will have the guidance and support of a Maryland-certified teacher in implementing the STRIDE K¹² curriculum with my student.

Communication

- I understand that my student and I are required to participate in scheduled conferences with our teachers/administrators. I understand that during these conferences, I am expected to have access to all materials and a computer with microphone and web-camera. Scheduled conferences are expected to occur from the primary location that instruction takes place.
- I understand that I must read and respond to emails and phone calls from the KCDS teachers and/or administrators in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- I understand that if my phone number, address, email address, or emergency contacts change, I will immediately inform the KCDS homeroom teacher and/or registrar and/or update the information in the OLS.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to inform KCDS if I decide to withdraw within 24 hours of enrollment in another school and that I will notify KCDS as to the name and location of the receiving school for required transfer of records.
- I understand that my communication with KCDS staff must always be professional and respectful.

Compliance

- I understand that if policies and procedures are not followed and/or the academic goals communicated through progress updates are not met, removal from the KCDS program may be necessary.
- I understand that my student must complete the Welcome to Online Learning/IOL course within three days of my school start date.
- I understand that withdrawal of a student from the KCDS program is at the discretion of the KCDS administration but may also be requested by KCDS's partner public school division staff.
- I understand that an academic review of KCDS students will occur throughout each school year by KCDS staff as per the agreement with the partnering school divisions. Enrollment and re-registration decisions made by the staff are final.
- I understand that attendance must be entered daily and that my student will be withdrawn upon reaching 15 unexcused days of missing attendance.

*****Once you have reviewed the contents of this Handbook, including the Parent/Student Contract, please submit your digital consent using our Microsoft form to indicate your acknowledgement and compliance agreement to the terms and expectations described within the KCDS Parent/Student Contract:***

[Acknowledgement of Learning Coach and Student Handbook](#)

Appendix

Appendix A: [2024-2025 Academic Calendar](#)

Appendix B: Engageli

Engageli is a rich collaborative environment for online meetings. This program will provide real time, remote, one-on-one, small group, or large group teaching or training. Teachers will use this tool throughout the year to meet with students and learning coaches. This tool is the one we use to deliver Class Connect sessions to the students. Class Connect sessions will be listed on the students' online school schedule; to access the sessions, they will only need to click on the link.

While students are engaged in Class Connect sessions, the Kent County Digital Scholars Student Code of Conduct is in effect. Abusive language, profanity, harassment, racial, religious, or ethnic slurs, cheating, disruptive behavior, unauthorized access, false information, or threats constitute a violation of the student code and are subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion.

To get the maximum benefit from Engageli, all users should have speakers attached and the volume turned on. **All families should have access to a working microphone and camera for each session.** For an optimal experience, KCDS highly recommends that you access Engageli via a high-speed Internet connection.

Tips for Participating in a Engageli Session

Preparation

- Find a comfortable place with no distractions.
- Prior to joining your first session, please complete a recommended quick system check using the [Engageli Quick Start Guide](#)
- Students will not be able to “enter” the virtual classroom until the exact time of the session. Be sure your computer is set to the correct time and EST zone.
- To gain the most from each session, you should actively participate in the lesson and ask questions whenever you do not understand something or need additional help.
- Clearing your cache from the browser routinely will also enhance your Engageli connection.