

Student and Family Handbook Supplement: **Remote Learning, 2020-2021**

Dear parents, caregivers, and families,

We are so excited to welcome you (or welcome you back) to our Unity community for the 2020-21 school year! The information below represents the most important information related to the year ahead and the unique circumstances of remote learning. We ask that you take time to review this supplement in order to become more familiar with our school's policies and practices. If you have any questions regarding any of the material presented here, please don't hesitate to contact us. For general inquiries, please reach out to Ms. Darline Charles (dcharles@unityprep.org) or Ms. Alana Morel (amorel@unityprep.org) or by phone at (929) 274-1443. We're excited to serve you and our community in the school year ahead!

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Guiding Principles:

In order to determine the best model of learning for our school community, we used the following six design principles to guide our thinking:

- We prioritize the well-being and safety of our community by following state and federal guidelines (and in some cases going beyond recommended guidelines given the needs and challenges of our stakeholders).
- We focus on building on previous successes with remote learning, including strong access to learning when remote, strong attendance, participation, synchronous teaching, and targeted interventions.
- We utilize our strengths as a school and community, including our small size and ability to adjust to unknowns and our strong relationships with students and families.
- We plan with our most vulnerable students and community members in mind.
- We plan with equity and culturally responsive teaching at the forefront of our minds - that is, how we ensure that ALL students are experiencing academic growth and the most comprehensive educational experience possible.
- Given the unknowns and evolving guidance we are receiving, we strive for simplicity, feasibility, flexibility with a focus on execution and fidelity.

Health and Safety Policies Related to COVID-19:

All students, staff, and visitors will be expected to follow the following Unity policies and protocols related to COVID-19. All students who enter the building for any reason will sign a contract agreeing to abide by the policies and protocols outlined below. All visitors to Unity's school building (including parents, guardians, family members, couriers, vendors, delivery people, etc.) must wear cloth face coverings to limit the spread of the virus and slow unknowingly infected people from transmitting it to others. Unity will distribute disposable face coverings to anyone who does not have one upon arrival to the building. While remote learning will limit the amount of in-person contact between students, staff, and community members, the following policies apply to anyone visiting, working in, or attending school or other programming on site.

- Temperature screening and testing policies:
 - Unity will keep all scholar and staff medical information private.

- Unity reserves the right to screen the temperature of any student or person. All scholars and staff will have their temperature checked using non-contact thermometers upon entry into the building. Any scholar or staff member with a temperature above 100 degrees will be restricted from accessing classrooms and sent home.
- Each campus will have a health exclusion room for scholars who cannot be picked up immediately.
- Students and staff who test positive for COVID-19 will be asked to stay home for a period of at least 14 days
- If a scholar or staff member tests positive, Unity staff will implement a normed communication protocol that will:
 - Communicate cases to the Department of Health and ensure that they can take appropriate contact tracing measures.
 - Inform relevant stakeholders, while taking measures to protect the privacy of scholars and staff members.
- If another person in the same residence of the scholar or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, that scholar or staff member should not attend school in-person.
- If someone is contacted via contact tracing and told that they have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, and are told to quarantine, they should do so.

Face covering:

- According to the CDC, “COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.”
 - All Unity staff, students, and visitors will wear cloth face coverings to limit the spread of the virus and slow unknowingly infected people from transmitting it to others. Face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.
 - Unity will distribute, at a minimum, 1 reusable mask to each staff member and student. Extra disposable face coverings will be kept on site.
 - Staff will wear masks at all times.
 - Students in all grades will be required to wear masks at all times, and most notably in times when physical distancing is difficult.
 - Students should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering.
 - Unity will give all community members guidance around sanitation of face coverings and reuse.
- Social distancing
 - All staff and students must adhere to CDC physical distancing guidelines (currently 6 feet apart) at all times.
 - Each classroom will maintain a desk configuration that enhances physical distancing, allowing students and staff to remain several feet apart.
 - Handshakes and any other routines that call for physical contact are prohibited. Staff may not touch students. Only virtual/“air” hugs, handshakes, and high fives.
 - Tape markings and other physical dividers will be placed on the floor in areas where students transition to assist in maintaining distance.
 - Hand hygiene:
 - Students will have access to sinks with running water and will be encouraged to wash their hands regularly, especially before and after consuming food or using the restroom, or after sneezing/coughing.
 - Schools will be stocked with needed supplies for good hygiene, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol, paper towels, tissues, and disinfectant wipes.
 - Gloves will be available for staff to wear when cleaning classrooms or touching shared items.
 - respiratory hygiene:
 - All students and staff must:
 - cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
 - use the nearest waste receptacle to dispose of the tissue after use.
 - perform hand hygiene (e.g., hand washing with non-antimicrobial soap and water, alcohol-based hand rub, or antiseptic hand wash) after having contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials
 - Failure to comply:
 - In order to ensure the safety of all members of our community, any student, staff member, or visitor that refuses to or repeatedly fails to comply with the policies above may be sent out of the building or prohibited from entering until further notice.

Meals:

Note: The following section reflects the most up-to-date available regarding school meals for the coming year. As more information is made available, Unity will update parents and families accordingly.

Unity relies on partnership with School Food making use of the shared cafeteria in the building. Unity’s middle school site, a co-located building at 432 Monroe Street, has meals available during remote learning. Free "Grab and Go" meals are available for all New Yorkers, Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 1:30 pm. Meals Hubs will operate for children and

families from 7:30 am to 11:30 am, and for adults from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. All adults and children can pick up multiple meals at once, no one will be turned away at any time, and no registration, ID, or documentation required. As of the time this document was created, no dining space is available so meals must be eaten off premises. Parents and guardians may pick up meals for their children.

Dress Code/Uniform:

All Unity parents and families are encouraged to purchase a Unity uniform for the start of the school year in order to be prepared for the return to in-person learning at some point in the future. For the duration of remote learning, all students are encouraged but not required to wear the Unity uniform.

Tops	Bottom	Footwear
1. Navy short-sleeve polo 2. Navy long-sleeve polo 3. Light-blue, long-sleeve, button-up, oxford shirt Unity sweater Unity navy crewneck sweatshirt	1. Navy, khaki (tan), black, or gray pants (no jeans) 2. Navy, khaki (tan), black, or gray shorts (no jean shorts) (shorts may not be shorter than just above knee level) 3. Navy, khaki (tan), black, or gray skirts (skirts may not be shorter than just above knee level (all stockings and tights must be solid black, blue, white or neutral)	Closed-toed, all black (or almost entirely black) shoes, sneakers, or boots

If not wearing Unity uniform, all students are asked to wear clothing appropriate for a virtual school setting (e.g., no tank tops or spaghetti straps, no overly revealing clothing, pajamas, etc.).

SCOL (Safe Center for Online Learning):

To support our students who experience challenges or barriers in participating in remote learning from their home, Unity plans to offer a safe and productive setting at our school sites for a limited number of students to engage in their coursework under the supervision of a Unity staff member. Any students who participate in Unity's SCOL will be required to abide by the health and safety policies listed above. In this setting, Unity classrooms will be set up to accommodate students working on computers in a socially distant manner. Supervising staff would be present to support student learning, answer questions, and ensure that students can work and learn safely and effectively. Student eligibility for participation will be based on both student, parent, and family requests for this option as well as school recommendations based on student needs, academic performance, social-emotional wellbeing, and other criteria. Information about Unity's SCOL will be shared as soon as they are available.

Remote Learning Technology:

Unity is committed to setting up the infrastructure, resources, and tools that enable our teachers to flexibly and reliably deliver instruction so that the school can provide the best remote learning experience for students and families. This investment includes, among other things, developing the capabilities for students to view and review live instruction, virtually submit work and receive feedback, and engage in academic social interaction with teachers and peers.

Unity Email:

All Unity students receive Unity email addresses and Google accounts. These accounts are essential during remote learning because they provide students with access to their remote learning “classrooms” as well as access to Google classroom.

Google Classroom:

Student assignments will frequently be assigned in Google Classroom. Students can view and access assignments, view deadlines, and complete and submit work to their teachers via Google Classroom.

Jupiter Ed:

Unity’s student information system, Jupiter, provides real-time class grades for all students as well as direct access to and communication with all Unity staff. Students and parents and families will be provided with login information so that they have access to Jupiter in order to see class grades, send and receive messages, and receive alerts and notifications regarding school events and programming.

Zoom:

During remote learning, Unity students will access all live teaching via videoconferencing in Zoom “classrooms.” Students schedules will be distributed to parents and families and these schedules will include subjects, class times, teacher names, and Zoom links. Students will log into Zoom through their Unity Google accounts. To safeguard against unauthorized visitors or disruptions (e.g., “Zoom bombing”), all participants in Zoom classrooms will be required to have an “@unityprep.org” account. Also, Unity teachers will establish “waiting rooms” where students can await being admitted to their class.

Unity teachers and staff will provide clear, concise directions for accessing Zoom classrooms and will be accessible in the event that a student, parent, or family member requires support with any aspect of this process. Please see below for more information and expectations related to the use of Zoom video conferencing:

- **Name and Profile:** In order to be identified by teachers and staff, all Unity students should list their full name (first and last name). Nicknames, abbreviations, and other deviations from full names must be avoided in order for teachers to identify student participants in Zoom.
- **Camera:** All members of a Zoom classroom (Unity teachers as well as students) should leave their cameras on as the default mode. In order to engage with students (e.g., interact in visual ways, make eye contact, etc.) as well to observe student work habits, it is critical that cameras are left on unless students are otherwise directed by teaching staff. If a student has an issue with keeping their camera on at any point, they should inform the teacher of the need (e.g., a bathroom break, a need to transition or moment of privacy for whatever reason, etc.) by using a private chat message (to the host, not to everyone in the Zoom classroom). If there are other issues that need to be addressed, parents and families should contact Unity staff in order to create a plan that attends to a student or family's individual circumstances.
- **Background:** Zoom offers a virtual background feature that allows users to set up a picture as your background during a Zoom meeting. Unity students are allowed to set a virtual background that allows them some degree of privacy while still allowing teachers and other staff to see student faces. Students' virtual backgrounds must be appropriate for school. School staff reserve the right to request or mandate that a student change their background if it is deemed inappropriate for any reason.
- **Microphone:** Zoom users can turn their microphones on and off in order to mute or enable other users to hear them. Students should follow teacher directions as far as the use of their microphones in order to hear their voices, have them participate in class, or, conversely, to eliminate background noise that might otherwise distract the virtual classroom.
- **Chat:** The chat function in Zoom allows students to type responses that can be seen by their teacher and/or the rest of members of the classroom. Unity students are expected to use the chat function for academic reasons (e.g., to answer a question, ask a question, provide a response, etc.) or social functions (e.g., greeting others, having conversations, etc.), depending on the nature and purpose of the classroom setting. Unity students and staff are expected to use the chat responsibly (e.g., use school-appropriate language, show respect for all members of our community) at all times.
- **Session Recording:** On some occasions Unity virtual classrooms may be recorded for the purpose of teacher development, archiving lessons for absent students, and other internal uses. Any recordings will be stored and shared exclusively among Unity staff and will not be shared or posted externally for any reason.

Student Technology:

Unity will provide all students with internet-enabled laptops (Chromebooks) for use during remote learning. Unity requires students and parents to sign out laptops and sign an agreement acknowledging the terms and conditions that apply to the use of school technology. Students and families are responsible for the safekeeping of computers and any other technology provided by the school for the period of remote learning.

Technology Support:

Unity staff are committed to making sure that all students have access to functioning learning devices, access to wireless internet connection, and ongoing support for any issues related to technology (e.g., accessing student accounts, accessing virtual classrooms, resetting passwords or log in credentials, etc.). Students, parents, and families can email help.ms@unityprep.org to request support for any tech-related issue. All requests should receive a response or resolution within 24 hours. Any student experiencing technological issues (e.g., disruptions in wifi service, a malfunctioning laptop, etc.) should also inform their teachers, to the extent that they are able, so that they are aware of the problem as well.

School Start Time and End Time:

Unity's school day will begin at 8:00 and end at 2:45 PM each day. Supplemental programming, including tutoring, afterschool programs, special events, and Saturday sessions will also take place beyond the regular school day

Attendance:

Attendance, whether in a remote or in-person setting, is critical to student learning and academic success. Unity's goal with attendance systems for the duration of remote learning is to understand who is present for virtual learning time, who is not, and to provide supportive follow-up to students and families regarding their presence in class and in school.

During remote learning, Unity teachers will present live, synchronous instruction via video conferencing. Students are expected to be present in Zoom classrooms for this live instruction. Unity parents and guardians are counted on to support strong student attendance and participation, communicate with the school regarding absences, and promptly respond to Unity outreach regarding students absences. Unity staff are responsible for taking prompt and accurate attendance for each class and supporting students, parents, and families via prompt and effective outreach.

Absence from School:

Unity teachers will take period-by-period attendance using our student information system, Jupiter Ed (www.jupitered.com). Students' attendance will be marked based on who is present in the Zoom classroom. Students who miss multiple periods of the school day will be marked as absent for that school day. Unity's operations team will ensure that attendance is taken promptly, verify its accuracy, and document any excused absences (e.g., medical exemptions, bereavement, etc.). For any absence to be excused, students must provide documentation (e.g., written notice, photos of relevant paperwork) on the day following their absence that explains the nature of the illness or emergency. Please contact Ms. Alana Morel (amorel@unityprep.org) or by phone at (929) 274-1443

Attendance Interventions:

When students are absent from classes, parents will receive automated messages via Jupiter when students are absent from class(es). Each grade level dean will lead a grade level outreach team to monitor attendance, contact parents and families of absent students on a daily basis, document attendance outreach, and serve as the first point of contact for attendance concerns. Deans and other operations staff will lead attendance interventions for Tier 1 and Tier 2 students (students with attendance between 80%-100%). Unity's counseling team will manage Tier 3 attendance interventions (students with attendance below 80%) to provide more intensive interventions. Students, parents, and families are expected to work with Unity staff in order to effectively intervene when a student is missing excessive amounts of school for any reason.

Tardiness:

Due to the format of remote learning “classrooms,” students must enter the Zoom room promptly in order to be marked present at the start of class. Students who arrive late will miss key academic information and their classwork assignments may be marked as a zero or missing.

Academic Space:

For students to do their best work and focus on their learning, Unity urges parents and families to create and maintain a dedicated work space for students. To the extent possible, this space should be comfortable and free of distractions. Unity recommends:

- a desk or table as a flat surface for the laptop computer and as a writing surface
- a chair with back support
- being intentional about limiting distractions:
 - situating the study area so that it has a clear field of vision or view (e.g., nothing in the student’s line of sight to distract, such as a television) and minimal distractions (noise, interruptions, etc.)
 - removing phones, video games, and other potentially distracting items or technologies

School Supplies:

For remote learning, all students will need their school-issued (or personal) laptop and charger. All work during remote learning will be submitted in digital form (e.g., via Google classroom or other platforms). Despite this Unity requires the following additional supplies for remote learning:

- 5 composition notebooks
- 10+ pencils
- 10+ pens
- Ruler with centimeters (science only)
- Blank white paper
- Colored pencils
- Library Card

Grading Policy:

Grading at Unity reflects what our students know and can do. Our systems and policies for grading support a cycle in which students practice, receive feedback, and demonstrate what they know, then have an opportunity to re-learn and re-demonstrate in the event that they don’t demonstrate success in learning the first time. The clock does not run out on learning the most important skills and content.

The grades that students earn at Unity are based on the following scales:

Level of Academic Mastery	What the Level Means	Letter Grade Equivalent	Numerical Grade Equivalent
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Exemplary (<i>exceeds standards</i>)	Student work reflects in-depth understanding of content and/or excellence in demonstration of knowledge or skills. The work exceeds what is described in the target.	A+ A A-	97-100 94-96 90-93
Accomplished (<i>meets standards</i>)	Student work meets the learning target. It is proficient work that demonstrates the essential skills and knowledge of the target.	B+ B B-	87-89 84-86 80-83
Developing (<i>approaches standards</i>)	Student work demonstrates progress toward meeting the learning target but is not yet demonstrating grade level mastery of content and skills.	C+ C C-	77-79 74-76 70-73
Underdeveloped/ Remediation Needed (<i>far below standards</i>)	Student work is significantly below the criteria of the learning target and does not demonstrate grade level mastery of content and skills.	F	Below 70

In order to ensure that student grades reflect what students know and can do with multiple attempts at mastery, all teachers weight grades according to the following system:

Category	What the Category Means	Percentage of Overall Grade	Make Up Opportunities
Summative Assessments	Culminating assessments that demonstrate mastery of the course standards, including tests, projects, or other end of unit assessments	40%	Yes, for full credit at any time during the trimester
Formative Assessments	Smaller assessments that demonstrate mastery of the course standards, including exit tickets or quizzes	30%	Yes, for full credit at any time during the trimester
Classwork	All work that students complete in class, such as taking notes, answering questions on a Nearpod, or other assignments. Any homework assigned during remote learning will be included in this category	20%	Yes, for partial credit at any time during the trimester
Participation	Being present and engaged in synchronous classes (see rubric below)	10%	No

Participation Rubric:

Grade	Criteria
4	Student is on camera and fully engaged throughout class
3	Student is on camera and engaged for most of class; may be 1-2 instances when the student does not respond to a prompt
2	Student is engaged in over half of class; student may or may not be on camera
1	Student is engaged during less than half of the class; student may or may not be on camera
0	Student is absent OR student logs in but is off-camera and non-responsive

Late Work and Make-up Work:

All Unity students are encouraged to complete assignments on time and by established due dates. In the event of an absence, students are encouraged to make up assignments as soon as possible. Missing assignments are marked as "0" in Unity teachers' grade books. Students who are absent for any reason should contact their teachers during or immediately after any absence to request missing assignments. When possible, students and families should notify teachers and/or the main office regarding any anticipated absence from school.

Re-Mastery Fridays:

In order to provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, improve their grades, and incentivize high rates of student work completion, Unity designates each Friday during remote learning as "Re-Mastery Fridays" for all courses except for PE/Dance. The expectations for "Re-Mastery Fridays" are:

- Students must log into Zoom for their regular classes. Attendance continues to be mandatory and students will continue to receive participation grades for their attendance on Fridays.
- Students can complete missing assignments from earlier in the trimester.
- Students can re-do low-quality assignments for a higher grade.
- Students who are already doing well can be peer tutors for other students or work on extension activities, at the teacher's discretion.
- Students should focus on re-doing assessments to show mastery of grade-level standards, as these are a much larger portion of a students' grade than classwork assignments.

"Re-mastery Fridays" are designed to give students an opportunity to improve their grades or extend their learning. Despite this opportunity for re-mastery, it is critical that families continue to support students completing their work throughout the rest of the week.

Report Cards and Progress Reports:

Unity issues report cards at the end of each trimester in December, March, and June. Report cards include the student's grades and comments regarding the student's academic progress from each teacher. These report cards reflect the grades that will appear on student transcripts. The dates of the school's family/teacher conferences correspond with the dates in which the first and second trimester report cards are made available.

In addition to report cards, Unity issues progress reports at regular intervals over the course of the school year. Progress reports are an important way to let students and their families know how students are performing academically. Progress report grades do not appear on official Unity student transcripts.

Students and families are encouraged to stay informed of student progress even more frequently by using Jupiter grades, Unity's online grade platform. Jupiter Grades is accessible at any time and provides a real-time snapshot of how a student is performing in her/his studies.

Honor Roll:

Unity's entire community is committed to celebrating and publicly recognizing excellent student academic achievement. Each trimester, any student earning all A's and B's on his/her report card will have the distinction of being listed on Unity's Honor Roll. Students earning straight A's will earn High Honor Roll. Students achieving Honor Roll status will be recognized during Unity's awards assemblies and celebrations across the school year.

Grade-Level Promotion Policy and Summer Academy:

In each core course (ELA, mathematics, science, and history), students must earn a passing grade of C- or above (at least 70%) for two of the three trimesters in order to receive credit for the course. Students who fail two or more trimesters of a core course will be required to pass the course in Summer Academy by earning a grade of a C- or above (at least 70%). A student who does not pass the core course in Summer Academy will be required to repeat the grade. Similarly, a student who fails more than two core courses (or intervention when taking in the place of a core course) for the academic year is required to repeat the grade. In addition, a student must earn an overall "passing" rating or higher on their end-of-year Roundtable presentation (*see "Roundtable/Learning Portfolios" below*). All final decisions regarding student promotion will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by a number of factors, including but not limited to students' grades in core courses, New York State examination scores, attendance, and Roundtable presentations.

Academic Interventions:

Students who are struggling to make adequate academic progress will be identified by universal screening and benchmark exams. Once identified, these students receive interventions that meet specific areas of need. Interventions for reading, writing, and math skills are provided through intervention classes that meet during the school day. Students class schedules have been designed to include designated periods for students to receive targeted interventions in ELA and Math, including SETSS services. Student progress will be monitored to determine when interventions will be discontinued, continued, or intensified.

Ally Program:

Unity's Ally program was designed to provide a nurturing, trusting forum for addressing both the academic and non-academic needs of our students as adolescents during remote learning. All Unity staff have been assigned to a small group of students. These staff Allies will be in contact with students and families regularly and will serve as the point person for any concerns or questions you might have.

Unity staff will be using Closegap to survey our students on a daily basis. Closegap is a youth-facing emotional wellness platform that combines mood tracking, self-guided emotional regulation activities, and information sharing so all students feel supported. Emails with log in information have been sent out to all Unity student email addresses. Students can use the Closegap app to complete a brief check in every morning, rate their mood and energy level, and also request contact from their Allies. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Casey Burns (cburns@unityprep.org).

Advisory:

Each advisory meets during weekly advisory blocks when the grade team is not meeting for Community Meeting. Each advisory is co-facilitated by two faculty members who act as co-advisors. Advisors are charged with supporting and enriching the individual student learning experiences of each of their advisees. Through participating in advisory, students receive support in cultivating effective study and organizational habits and academic and personal goal setting skills.

Counseling and Mental Health Services:

Unity employs three full-time social workers (MSW/LMSW) and a social work Director (LCSW) that provide services in order to address the social/emotional and mental health needs of the school community during remote learning. These services include: teletherapy (individual and group counseling), crisis interventions services for mental health crisis, risk-assessments, in-house mental health referrals, and referrals for students and families for community supports (including, but are not limited to: counseling, therapy and mental health support; crisis intervention; psychiatric services; preventative services; food, housing, advocacy, legal services and other similar needs; Covid19 specific resources; and so on)