GEMS Westminster Ras Al Khaimah

Remote Learning Plan

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Remote Learning Plan Overview

The purpose of this document is to outline the actions and approach GEMS Westminster School RAK will put into action in the event of a school closure. We will continue to offer an effective and outstanding education through a Remote Learning Plan (RLP).

At GEMS Westminster School RAK, we are committed to delivering our high-quality education and fulfill our mission for our learners. We are relentless to find effective means to do so under exceptional circumstances that may require a full campus closure. In such conditions, our commitment is to provide an alternative means of education in the form of a Remote Learning Plan. The RLP outlines the experience that students will have when school remains in session, but when students are unable to physically attend school because of campus closure. While an RLP cannot replicate onsite learning, our teachers can deliver powerful instruction that allows students to meet expected standards in an online environment.

The WSR RLP experience aligns with our WSR mission, guiding statements and curriculum expectations. Our students will be empowered to achieve clearly defined learning goals; have opportunities to collaborate online to solve authentic problems; take intellectual risks and persevere through challenges; be supported with modeling, differentiation, individual feedback, and opportunities for reflection and revision. The aim is for our learners to continue to be inspired, passionate, and intrinsically motivated to reach their learning goals.

The success of our RLP requires a true partnership. Firstly, our dedicated teachers will commit to careful planning, maintaining an online presence, and providing regular feedback. Our students will need to bring motivation, presence and engagement to each session and subsequent online work. Lastly, our families will need to support this alternative mode of instruction in the home environment. The result of such learning experiences will continue to support students' academic progress and will be mindful to attend to student social and emotional well-being.

While this is a challenging time of uncertainty and change, these circumstances also provide an opportunity to explore innovative learning opportunities for our students. Our infrastructure and faculty is prepared to support our learners. Our students are exceptionally committed and will rise to any occasion set before them. WSR is prepared for this challenge and will work tirelessly to ensure that there is continuity and support for our community.

Leadership Expectations

First and foremost, WSR leaders set the tone and model what is expected for every member of our learning community. Administrators' daily support and on-line presence and responsiveness are essential.

Roles and Responsibilities

The list below outlines some of the commitments you are expected to make but is not all-encompassing. As leaders, our job is to rise to any occasion or need from our learning community.

- Develop, monitor and adjust divisional plans for remote learning.
- Share the RLP with the student and parent community.
- Communicate with staff and parents on a daily basis.
- Support /staff and parents during the RLP.
- Ensure effective implementation of RLP and accountability to student learning.
- Monitor staff and student attendance and act upon regular absences to ensure staff and students are engaged in the remote learning expectations.
- Support with any technical issues that may arise with the online platforms being used through our IT Support Team.
- Respond to emails in compliance with our norms of no more than 24 hours.
- Disseminate a weekly student and parent survey and analyze results to make the necessary changes to the program.
- Continue to hold regularly scheduled meetings virtually i.e. department
- Attend virtual Senior Leadership Meetings, Core SLT meetings, and other regularly scheduled meetings.

Teacher Expectations

As a WSR full-time teacher, you are expected to maintain our high expectations for professionalism and conduct. As a result, we have outlined the school-wide expectations for teachers below.

School-wide Teacher Expectations

- Be available to students, colleagues, and parents during normal working hours. (i.e. 8:00 am -2:30 pm).
- Document parent outreach in the PULSE system regularly.
- Deliver lessons per school expectations.
- Follow your current daily class timetable.
- Communicate Learning Targets and describe Learning Activities for the week.
- Provide Assessments/Feedback/Interactions as per divisional agreements to support students' learning.
- Track students' daily achievement and progress.
- Connect with your students on a daily basis
- Assign meaningful work that is personalized to students' needs.
- Collaborate with other members of your team or department to design remote learning experiences for student learning during your scheduled or agreed upon collaborative planning time.

Specialist Teacher Expectations

- **Physical Education:**
    - Develop a bank of exercises and physical activities for students and share these with classroom teachers and families.
- **Art:**
    - Staying mindful of the resources and tools families may not have in their home, develop a bank of projects and activities for students and share these with classroom teachers and families.
- **Music:**
    - Staying mindful of the instruments or resources families may not have in their home, develop a bank of activities for students and share these with classroom teachers and families.
- **Modern Foreign Languages:**
    - Consider how you will demonstrate and assess speaking and listening activities.
- **Arabic:**
    - Collaborate with colleagues in designing RLP experiences in accordance with schoolwide plans.
    - Develop high-quality learning experiences.
    - Communicate with and provide timely feedback to students and parents.

- o Communicate the weekly learning and homework as per school agreements.
- **Islamic Education:**
  - o Collaborate with colleagues in designing RLP experiences in accordance with schoolwide plans.
  - o Develop high-quality learning experiences.
  - o Communicate with and provide timely feedback to students and parents.
  - o Communicate the weekly learning and homework as per school agreements.

As you consider your instructional day, be sure to maintain what is familiar for your students. Utilize apps, subscriptions, and other learning tools your students are proficient using.

SEND Teachers / SENCO:

- Maintain 1:1 communication with your assigned students.
- Communicate regularly with the subject or classroom teachers who teach the students on SEND register.
- Ensure that you are added as a collaborator on each learning platform.
- Offer to scaffold or modify assignments, as per IEP recommendations, for students on your caseload to support subject or classroom teachers.
- Help subject or classroom teacher differentiate lessons and activities for the students on the SEND register.
- Communicate regularly with students on the SEND register and/or their parents to ensure they have success with distance learning.
- Provide supplementary learning activities for students on your caseload who may benefit from additional practice to close academic and curricular gaps.

Learning Support Assistants:

- Communicate regularly with classroom teachers to identify ways you can support students and contribute to planning and instruction
- Monitor student learning and provide feedback to students, as requested by the teachers and teams you support.

Recommendations:

When planning your learning blocks you may consider the following lesson structure.

Prepare the learner	*What is your hook? How have you linked this lesson back to prior learning?*
Input of new learning	*What is the focus of this lesson? How will you provide explicit instruction?*
Practice	*How will students engage with or process the new learning?*
Evaluation	*How will you determine what progress has been made?*

As the professional responsible for student learning, individual teachers will provide input into what this looks like and how to execute it for their respective classes.

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Points for Further Consideration (K-12):
The transition to remote learning will not be simple or easy. Teachers will need to think differently about how to communicate, give instruction, and provide feedback; how to design lessons and assignments that are authentic and meaningful; and how to ensure students continue to collaborate and communicate with others. The ten points provided below are intended to help teachers across all divisions reflect on challenges they'll confront in shifting to distance learning.

1. **Culture of Kindness** *WSR's Commitment is to Care and Support. In the event of school closure that leads to implementation of this Remote Learning Plan (RLP), your students may be stressed or worried. Before diving into curriculum, take the time to assess your students' mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing. How are they doing? How are their families? Continue regular check-ins with your students as long as this RLP is in place.*

2. **Evaluate your students' conditions for distance learning** *While most students will have reliable online access at home and the necessary devices to shift to distance learning, others will not. Teachers should remember that each family's circumstances will vary and they should avoid assumptions about limitations or restrictions students are facing. Ask your students and/or their parents to confirm their location (possibly not the UAE) and time zone; whether their online access is reliable; and what devices the student has at their disposal. Open a dialogue with families and avoid assumptions that all students' circumstances are the same.*

3. **Stick with the familiar** *Especially in the first weeks after moving to this RLP, teachers should continue using existing communication channels and learning management systems. In other words, stick with what's familiar to your students. Teachers should remember that while many students will thrive with distance learning, others will struggle. In the event that the school remains closed for a longer period of time, it may become necessary to explore new or different learning platforms that provide different experiences. In the beginning, stick with the familiar.*

4. **Less is more** *Should WSR implement this RLP, one challenge confronting teachers will be how to best streamline content and elevate the most essential learning for students. In other words, teachers need to take a less-is-more perspective, including the pacing of lessons and assignments. It can also be hard to know exactly how long school closure might last, which makes longer-term planning difficult*

5. **Seize the moment; embrace new opportunities and possibilities for your students** *Years or decades from now, how will your students remember the circumstances that resulted in school closure? While distance learning should attempt to bring some normalcy and routine to students' lives, teachers shouldn't ignore the opportunities resulting from school closure either. Teachers might require students to keep a daily journal or diary for the duration of the school closure. Personal journaling and/or other creative writing assignments can help students process their thoughts, worries, and emotions, particularly in times of crisis. Students might use other media as well, including video, drawing, painting, and music. Moreover, the school closure might also provide other real-life opportunities to study scientific phenomena associated with the situation, how the media is reporting, how governments are responding, and many other opportunities to seize the moment and design new learning transdisciplinary experiences for our students.*

6. **Provide space for personalized learning** *Remote learning can provide opportunities for students to personalize what, how, and when they learn. Students can move more flexibly and freely through content when teachers create nonlinear curricula. Distance learning can also provide students with the opportunity to learn at different paces (e.g. SAM Learning). School closure could also create opportunities for more authentic learning, particularly if students are spread around the world. What museums, galleries, concerts, or memorials might they experience where they're located? How might they share these alternative experiences with their classmates? How might students be empowered to create their own learning pathways and experiences?*

7. **Designers of experience; facilitators of learning** *In shifting to remote learning, it is especially important for teachers to think of themselves as designers of experiences and facilitators of learning (as opposed to distributors of knowledge). Remote learning places a premium on a teacher's ability to think more deeply about how to introduce content, design experiences, and coach students with thoughtful, specific feedback. Teachers need to establish conditions where students have a clear sense of purpose, opportunities to express themselves, and experiences that allow them to work toward mastery. This will help students stay motivated and engaged in learning, even when they are not physically at school.*

8. **Design asynchronous learning experiences** *When school is closed and students are spread across many time zones, teachers can still connect them asynchronously. For example, teachers can use familiar discussion forums or tools like Google classroom and Dojo Portfolios to allow for student responses and dialogue during a set time period, knowing that students might not all be online at the same exact time.*

9. **Design synchronous learning experiences** *When it comes to student engagement and learning, relationships matter as much online as they do in person. If WSR' s campus was closed, students might be able to gather for synchronous learning times via video chat using Google Meet and other apps. Collaboration remains important and there are many ways teachers can foster it through synchronous learning.*

10. **Think differently about assessment** *Assessment is one of the most challenging adjustments for teachers new to distance learning. Distance learning should be seen as an opportunity for students, individually or collaboratively, to complete writing assignments, design infographics, make video presentations, or complete oral assessments via video chat. Teachers are encouraged to think differently about the end goal to performance instead of forcing a traditional assessment method that doesn't fit distance learning. Thinking differently about assessment will positively influence the experience for students, leverage the strengths of distance learning, and prevent frustration on the teacher's part when traditional methods do not work*

Parent Expectations

With the transition to remote learning, parents, in partnership with teachers will need to think differently about how to support their children; how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful; and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students will thrive with remote learning, while others may find it challenging as this is a new way to access the curriculum. The guidelines provided below are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children find success in a remote learning environment.

1. **Establish routines and expectations**
   Parents need to establish routines and expectations, and WSR encourages parents to set regular hours for their children's school work. We recommend keeping normal bedtime routines for younger children and expect the same from your older children, too. Your children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents set these expectations for how their children will spend their days.

2. **Define the physical space for your child's study**
   Your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. This could be a family space, and not necessarily in a child's bedroom. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and have a strong wireless internet signal, if possible. Above all, it should be a space where parents/guardians are present and monitoring their children's learning.

3. **Monitor communications from your children's teacher(s)**
   Teachers will communicate with parents and students through email, or other educational platforms when and as necessary. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your children's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. WSR wants parents to contact their children's teachers. However, we ask parents to remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families, if not 100+, and that communications should be essential, succinct, and self-aware. We also encourage parents to have their children explain the Learning Platforms/Systems (e.g. Google Classroom, Seesaw. etc.) that teachers are using.

4. **Begin and end each day with a check-in**
   Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask what is your child learning today? What are their learning targets or goals? How will they spend their time? What resources do they require? What support do they need? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents, but they should nevertheless. Parents should establish

these check-ins as regular parts of each day. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

5. **Take an active role in helping your children process and own their learning**
In the course of a regular school day at WSR, your son or daughter engages with other students or adults dozens if not hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, parents should regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they're learning, whenever possible. However, it's important that your child owns their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they find it challenging.

6. **Establish times for quiet reflection**
A huge challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs, especially when those children are of different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones to block out distractions.

7. **Encourage physical activity and/or exercise**
Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and to their learning. WSR's physical education teachers will recommend activities or exercises, but it is important for parents to model and encourage exercise! Think also about how your children can pitch in more around the house with chores or other responsibilities. Don't let your children off the hook – expect them to pitch in!

8. **Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry**
It is imperative for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult though it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide. As usual, feel free to reach out to your division counselors for strategies that support your child as needed.

9. **Monitor how much time your child is spending online**
WSR is mindful of how much screen time students may be exposed to, and we believe in a program that balances online and hands-on learning experiences.

Therefore, we will endeavour to plan a balanced program. We thank you in advance for your support and partnership.

10. **Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions**

The initial excitement of school being closed will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends and see them in person when circumstances permit. Please also monitor your children's social media use, especially during an extended school closure. Older students will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Facebook are not official school-sanctioned channels of communication. WSR asks parents to monitor their children's use of social media. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others.

Primary School

Early Years (KG1) Priorities & Considerations
1. After receiving initial notice from the Head of School about school closure and timelines, families will receive an email with grade-specific information.
2. The primary tools for communication between teachers and families will be Class Dojo and email.
3. Learning for Early Years students will remain holistically focused on broad language, cognitive, physical and social-emotional development.
4. Learning activities and experiences will emphasize interaction and creativity.

Primary School (Grades 1 to 5) Priorities & Considerations
1. After receiving initial notice from the Head of School about school closure and timelines, families will receive an email with grade-specific information.
2. The primary tools for communication between teachers and families will be Class Dojo, Fridge Facts and email.
3. Students will have both off- and on-screen learning activities designed to engage learners in experiences that connect to the current curriculum.
4. Learning tasks and activities will provide direction to families on how best to support student learning and the expected level of adult involvement. It is expected that students in grades KG-2 will need higher levels of support than students in grades 3-5.

STUDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
1. Establish daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences (8:00am start).
2. Identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where you can work effectively and successfully.
3. Regularly monitor online platforms (Class Dojo, email, etc.) to check for announcements and feedback from your teachers.
4. Complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty, doing your best work.
5. All students must reply to the Good Morning and Good Afternoon messages sent by the teacher to register their attendance. The Good Morning message will be sent at 8am and the Good Afternoon message will be sent at 12pm.
6. Meet timelines, commitments, and due dates.
7. Communicate proactively with your teachers if you cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.
8. Collaborate and support your WSR peers in their learning.
9. Proactively seek out and communicate with other adults at GEMS Westminster School RAK as different needs arise (see below)

For queries about ….	Contact …
Classroom learning or resources	Your classroom teacher
A technology-related problem or issue	studentIThelpdesk_wsr@gemsedu.com
Personal or social-emotional concern	myvoice_wsr@gemsedu.com Fateha Begum fateha.b_wsr@gemsedu.com Basma Ibrahim basma.i_wsr@gemsedu.com

Other issues related to learning beyond the classroom walls	ilne.g_wsr@gemsedu.com jane.s_wsr@gemsedu.com

WEEKLY LEARNING

On Sunday morning students will receive a Weekly Learning Plan from their classroom teacher. The learning provided will be broken down into a daily schedule.

Each Weekly Plan will include the following:
1. Weekly Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for each subject area;
2. Daily Learning Activities in each subject;
3. Assessments and Assignments that need to be completed;
4. The necessary learning resources.

Secondary School

Priorities and Considerations
• After receiving initial notice from the Head of Secondary / Principal about school closure and timelines, families will receive an email with grade-specific information. • The primary tools for communication between teachers and families will be Google Classroom and email. • Teachers will either link materials in Google Classroom or share materials directly to each student's Google Drive. • Remote learning for our early adolescent learners will focus on having a balanced, holistic learning experience. Students will have both off- and on-screen learning activities designed to engage the middle school learner. • Learning experiences are designed to be completed independently or in collaboration with other students. Tutoring is not recommended, nor should a parent/guardian be too involved. • Resources vary by class and lesson, but will include links to videos, graphic organizers, scanned material to read and engage with, independent research material, reading materials including ebooks and audiobooks via Google Classroom. • Students are encouraged to be proactive in reaching out to teachers when they have questions or assignments are unclear. • Counselors, Tutors and subject teachers are always available to support students with academic, social, or emotional needs.
STUDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
• Establish daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences (8:00am start). • Identify a comfortable, quiet space in your home where you can work effectively and successfully. • Regularly monitor online platforms (Google Classroom, Gmail, etc.) to check for announcements and feedback from your teachers. • Complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty, doing your best work. • Meet timelines, commitments, and due dates.

- Communicate proactively with your teachers if you cannot meet deadlines or require additional support.
- Collaborate and support your WSR peers in their learning.
- Proactively seek out and communicate with other adults at GEMS Westminster School RAK as different needs arise (see below)

For queries about ….	Contact …
Classroom learning or resources	Your classroom teacher
A technology-related problem or issue	studentIThelpdesk_wsr@gemsedu.com
Personal or social-emotional concern	myvoice_wsr@gemsedu.com Fateha Begum fateha.b_wsr@gemsedu.com Basma Ibrahim basma.i_wsr@gemsedu.com
Other issues related to learning beyond the classroom walls	martin.p_wsr@gemsedu.com chantelle.s_wsr@gemsedu.com ziaur.r_wsr@gemsedu.com remya.u_wsr@gemsedu.com rheamarina.l_wsr@gemsedu.com beena.n_wsr@gemdedu.com
Timeframe and Learning resources	
To follow normal school timetable	
Resources	Google Classroom SAM Learning GCSEpod Seneca Learning Mylmaths Read Theory Rapid Read Pearson Exam Wizard

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Accommodating Inclusion & Online Learning

In many ways online learning is tailor-made for students with special needs. Students who find the classroom environment challenging, learn at a different pace, or need a high degree of differentiated content may find it easier than traditional learning. However, there are a few important things that need to be taken into consideration. For example, students with attention difficulties or low motivation may struggle to complete tasks on their own with little or no supervision. ***Regular communication with parents and students is essential to helping students stay on task.***

What are some of the things we can do to improve online learning for our special population? (Some tips/ideas from Laura Lynch at Learndash.com, and Christopher Pappas from elearning ndustry.com and Joseph Gorski.)

Include both audio and visual formats.
Your content should be accessible in multiple forms. Learners don't need to be blind or deaf to have difficulty seeing or hearing different media forms. By providing both formats, you give your learners options.

Use alt tags on images and headers in your copy.
Screen readers and tab navigation are designed to work with HTML markup in certain ways. When you upload an image, include an alt description that accurately describes what is in the image, so that screen readers know what it represents. And include headers in your copy so that those using tab navigation can easily skim through content.

Enable options for special keyboards and tab navigation.
Learners with motor control difficulties rely on special navigational tools, such as alternative keyboards, to move through your site. Make sure your course supports these navigation tools.

Avoid crowding with large, readable text and lots of white space.
Tight, small text is a bad design to begin with. Now imaging your learners have poor eyesight, suffer from Cerebral Palsy or Parkinson's, or have broken their arm and need to navigate with their bad hand. Not only is cramped text harder to read, buttons and links that don't have enough click padding around them are hard to click. Give your designs room to breathe.

Use contrast and descriptive labels with your infographics.
Colorblindness affects approximately 8% of men and 0.5% of women. The most common form, red-green, makes it difficult for learners to distinguish between some hues. If you have graphics or design elements that rely on color, choose colors that have light/dark contrast, use patterns effectively, and label all elements. If in doubt, put your graphic through a black and white filter to see if it still makes sense. If it doesn't, it may be unreadable by some learners.

Google Docs!

I'm sure most WSR teachers are familiar with google docs. Tracking a student's progress LIVE in google docs offers a great way to interact and provide immediate feedback for students with special needs, especially if they tend to get distracted. In the past, some teachers have also paired students (peer-learning) with the task of commenting, and replying to a comment in docs chat every 2-5 minutes. Don't fight technology, let it work FOR you.

COLOR CODING

We all have a friend who just makes google docs and spreadsheets easier on the eyes. But there is some research that suggests alternating colors and using multi-color text actually helps facilitate reading and understanding. Try and take some time to make intimidating documents easier to differentiate visually.

Other suggestions:

Provide Clear Instructions To Improve Engagement
Summarize The Key Concepts And Ideas Beforehand
Incorporate Subtitles And Audio Narrations
Offer Immediate eLearning Feedback With Recommendations

#OneTribeOneFamily