

# 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook

## Distance Learning Addendum

As a result of COVID-19, IMSA has transitioned to a “virtual campus” for an undetermined period of time. Officially, the Academy will remain in this state until a safe return to campus is possible. For a full description of that policy, please [click here](#).

This document is an addendum to the IMSA 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook to address policies specific to distance learning, and it will be in place until our return to campus. Some of the policies included herein are intended to complement the Handbook, some are intended to reinforce the Handbook, and some are intended to replace their corresponding policy in the Handbook. Context should make these distinctions clear; but if there are any questions, please reach out to the Principal’s Office (630-907-5053 and [Prinoffc@imsa.edu](mailto:Prinoffc@imsa.edu)) for any academic related questions and contact the Student Affairs team (630-907-5009) with any questions related to the distance learning experience outside of the classroom.

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# A Note to Our Families on Distance Learning

As announced in May 2020, IMSA has committed to beginning the 2020-2021 academic year with distance learning; and will continue along that path until IMSA meets the criteria for the Restore Illinois plan and there is treatment or a vaccine for COVID-19.

Distance learning is a huge paradigm shift from in-person instruction. We know that the road ahead will have challenges; but as an institution outside of the traditional K12 system, we are in a unique position to overcome those difficulties and thrive.

Our faculty are retooling IMSA courses to be fully realized online classes, with an appropriate balance of synchronous class time and asynchronous activities to balance high impact student learning with student health and wellness and required non-academic responsibilities. Our resident counselors are adapting their programming to help students build life skills that will help them in a digital landscape and nurture friendships across the state. Our staff continues to seek ways to optimally and equitably support our students while at home, and the IMSA administration has crafted distance learning policies that we think will best serve all IMSA students.

That being said, it is important to acknowledge the challenges distance learning will put before our students as well, and acknowledge that those challenges will look different for every IMSA student. While at home, our students will have more responsibility for their education because teachers won't always be able to pick up on their puzzled look or glance over their shoulder to quickly determine how their coursework is going. Their RC won't be able to knock on their door, and the students won't be able to swing by the CAC Office just to check-in. Moreover, we recognize our students may have greater distractions and increased non-academic responsibilities while at home.

As such, we need your help to ensure our students find ways to make online learning work for themselves while also prioritizing their health, safety and wellness. For most, this will mean:

- Creating a daily routine, with significant protected time for school work;
- Finding a low-distraction physical space within your home;
- Being particularly mindful of their coursework and upcoming assignments;
- Regularly checking for course announcements and other communications from faculty and staff;
- Reaching out to their teachers and IMSA staff when they face issues - academic or otherwise; and
- Establishing informal support structures (e.g., a set of study partners).

We have no doubt that the students are up to this challenge. Our faculty and staff promise to be there every step of the way to guide and encourage them, and we count ourselves fortunate to have you as partners in that work.

Thank you,



Comfort Akwaji-Anderson, PhD  
Principal and Chief Academic Officer



Katherine Berger  
Chief Student Affairs Officer

## Academics

### Academic Behavior Code

The Illinois Mathematics & Science Academy maintains a strict Academic Behavior Code which will be adhered to during the period of distance learning. Please review it (available in the 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook).

In a typical classroom setting, there are many built-in norms that naturally encourage students to remain academically honest. In an online course, many of these barriers are removed; and the temptation to cheat can be strong. As a result, it will be even more imperative that students self-monitor their academic progress, hold themselves accountable to the appropriate conduct, and be honest with the level of their own understanding. To do otherwise deprives themselves of a true learning experience.

### Grading and Evaluation

During the COVID-19 crisis, IMSA moved to a Pass/Incomplete grading system. As we resume distance learning in the Fall 2020 semester, we will return to our traditional letter grade system as outlined in the 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook.

Even still, we recognize that the workload balance during distance learning may not be the same as that of in-person courses. To accommodate this, the IMSA faculty will adjust each courses' category weighting and coursework as appropriate for each particular course.

### Add/Drop

Traditionally, add/drop is done after the first week of classes in order to allow students to get acquainted with their courses and make a better informed decision about their class schedule. Unfortunately, the added logistics required to distribute course materials during distance learning makes this a difficult practice to continue while remote. As such, the add/drop process

will happen before the beginning of the school year. Specific details will be provided in a separate communication.

## Pass/Fail Guidelines

We recognize that returning to traditional letter grades may prove difficult for some students while they balance their “IMSA life” with their “home life”. As such, we are temporarily adjusting the guidelines for students who wish to take a course Pass/Fail (P/F).

In particular:

- Each semester, students must take a minimum of **3** courses (not including Wellness or Fine Arts classes) for a grade (A-D, not P/F).
- Distance learning courses taken P/F **will** count towards graduation credit for seniors only.
- Students wishing to take a course P/F must meet with their CAC **and instructor** during the Pass/Fail Declaration week during the **eighth** week of the semester. Pass/Fail status cannot be changed after the approval form has been submitted to the CAC office.
- Each semester, a student may take **a maximum of 2 core classes** P/F.
- Two courses at IMSA can only be taken P/F: Independent Study courses and Student Inquiry and Research.

These guidelines will be in effect for the Fall 2020 semester, and will be extended into the Spring 2021 semester should IMSA remain virtual at the beginning of Q3.

## Altered Weekly Schedule

During the fourth quarter of the 2019-2020 academic year, we found that students and faculty were mentally exhausted by prolonged periods of back-to-back synchronous sessions via video conferencing. In order to mitigate this issue, we have redesigned our weekly schedule to limit the amount of possible class meetings a student and faculty member may have in a single day.

During our distance learning timeframe, we will use the following schedule for a “normal” week:

	<b>Monday</b> <i>A-Day</i>	<b>Tuesday</b> <i>D-Day</i>	<b>Wednesday</b> <i>I-Day</i>	<b>Thursday</b> <i>A-Day</i>	<b>Friday</b> <i>D-Day</i>
<b>9:00-9:50 am</b>	Mod 1	Mod 2		Mod 1	Mod 2
<b>10:00-10:50 am</b>	Mod 3	Mod 4		Mod 3	Mod 4
<b>11:00-11:35 am</b>	Titan Crew				Titan Crew

12:30-1:20 pm	Mod 5	Mod 6		Mod 5	Mod 6
1:30-2:20 pm	Mod 7	Mod 8		Mod 7	Mod 8
2:30-3:30 pm	Navigation	LEAD		Res Life Educational Programming	Assemblies/ Music Enrichment

It is important to note that a few things about this schedule:

- Friday afternoons have been reserved for assemblies or other similar school-wide events. In weeks when such a gathering is not happening, Fine Arts faculty may choose to meet with music ensembles to better accommodate the large size of those classes.
- While the schedule controls for the number of possible synchronous sessions in a single day, instructors will also be assigning asynchronous course work to accompany those sessions.
- Instructors have discretion to use this time as they see fit. Some may choose to meet with small groups of students during this protected time instead of meeting with the entire class. Consequently, your student may or may not be required to be in a video conference for the whole period. This will be clearly communicated to students by their instructor.
- A built-in benefit of this schedule is that it allows for increased flexibility of when students may meet with teachers one-on-one or in small groups outside of dedicated class time. Students should contact their instructors to schedule these sessions, if desired.
- Changes to this schedule may be necessary from time-to-time, as dictated by the school calendar.

We anticipate resuming the traditional eight mod schedule (as outlined [here](#)) when we return to campus.

## Attendance and Tardiness

Please reference IMSA's full attendance policy in the 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook. There is an expectation that students will attend all synchronous class sessions scheduled by their instructors and be present, on time and ready to work and engage. Therefore, **attendance will be taken while distance learning and unexcused absence and tardy points will be given, per policy.** Students found to "fake" attendance during virtual learning will be held accountable and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Students will also be expected to virtually attend or participate in activities or events in which student presence is required, e.g. Sophomore Navigation, Sophomore LEAD, Student Inquiry and Research-SIR (if applicable), internships (if applicable), Convocation, staff programming and general assemblies, unless otherwise stated or communicated.

Please review the revised schedule for distance learning in the Academics portion of this addendum.

Please note below for the only exceptions to IMSA's attendance policy while distance learning:

1. Restricted study will not be an expected response to unexcused absences/tardies that take place while distance learning.
2. Physical sign-outs will not be necessary during distance learning.

All other attendance policies will be applicable. Some are highlighted here:

- Teachers will take attendance at the beginning of class and report it via PowerSchool;
- Teachers will submit student attendance period by period.
- Any absence, excused or unexcused, will be reported and recorded in PowerSchool by the Attendance Clerk. Families will have access to attendance information via PowerSchool;
- Pre-arranged absences need to be approved by a parent and communicated to the attendance office a minimum of 24 hours in advance;
- Illness needs to be reported immediately to the attendance office by the parent/guardian and no later than 9:00 AM on the day classes will be missed;
- Absences will not be excused "after the fact";
- Parents/guardians should report absences to the Attendance Office via the 24-hour voicemail and/or email (630.907.5029 or [attendance@imsa.edu](mailto:attendance@imsa.edu)).

## Course Materials

IMSA-owned materials (e.g., textbooks) may be provided to students for their use in courses during this time. These materials are the property of the state of Illinois, and IMSA will charge for anything damaged, lost or not returned.

Guidelines for the distribution and return of these materials will be issued in communications separate to this document. If you have any questions or concerns, please direct them to the Principal's Office (630-907-5053 and [prinoffc@imsa.edu](mailto:prinoffc@imsa.edu)).

## Supply List

For the 2020-2021 academic year, all students are required to have the following:

1. Laptop computer- please see specifications:  
<https://www.imsa.edu/academics/one-to-one-computing/>
2. Webcam (often built-in to the laptop)
3. Microphone (often built-in to the laptop)
4. Reliable high-speed internet access
5. Graphing calculator- please see information:  
<https://www.imsa.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calculator.pdf>
6. The book *March* (sophomores only)

Recommended:

1. Headset/earphones

## The SIR Program

The SIR program will continue during distance learning but has been streamlined because of the lack of access to IMSA's lab facilities and the complications of traveling to off-site SIR projects. The number of "on-campus" SIR courses has been reduced. These courses will meet via distance learning on I-Days (exact meeting time to be determined by the teachers).

Continuing and new SIR projects that involve working with IMSA or off-campus (non-IMSA) mentors will be allowed to take place, as long as the student and mentor agree that meaningful work can be completed remotely.

Enrollment in SIR courses, as well as arrangements for working on a project with an IMSA or non-IMSA mentor, must be approved by the SIR management team. The program will be managed by two faculty members, Dr. Sowmya Anjur and Dr. Dave DeVol.

## Academic Support

In addition to your instructors, there are many resources to help you academically. In particular:

- **Learning Strategies Coordinator (Ms. Amy Keck):** Ms. Keck will continue to work with students with increased academic needs through distance learning. This will occur via weekly online meetings with a select group of sophomores. As needed, she will schedule teleconferences with parents/guardians to provide information on resources and coordinate support structures for their students.
- **Academic Support Specialist (Dr. Linda Hefferin):** Dr. Hefferin is responsible for creating education plans for identified students needing additional assistance. These plans list any and all academic accommodations provided to support a student's diagnosis. She will work with parents/guardians, students, teachers, and other appropriate parties to craft an education plan that will effectively support each identified



student during distance learning.

- **Peer Tutors:** The peer tutoring program will continue during distance learning. The academic support team will communicate a list of peer tutors and other details of the program at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester.
- **Review Sessions:** The academic support team will also be coordinating subject-specific, large group review sessions as requested by teachers. The sessions will be run by student tutors with adult supervision via Zoom.
- **The Writing Center (Ms. Erin Micklo, Director):** Along with the rest of the IMSA community, the Writing Center will be moving online during distance learning. A list of tutors and their contact information will be available for all students who want help to develop their writing skills, and Ms. Micklo has expanded the number of tutors in order to specially engage sophomore courses that are writing intensive.

<https://imsa.edu/academics/the-writing-center/>

- **Mathematics IPA (Ms. Tina Loos):** Ms. Loos is the Instructional Program Assistant in Mathematics and can help with most non-elective math courses. Students can reach out to her via email ([cloos@imsa.edu](mailto:cloos@imsa.edu)) to schedule individual or small group help sessions.
- **IRC:** Although we are currently teaching and learning at a distance, the Information Resource Center (the IRC/library) will continue to support IMSA's classes, programs and student creativity through its collections, services, and team of information professionals. Please email our library staff at [irc@imsa.edu](mailto:irc@imsa.edu) or contact Angela Richardson (Library Supervisor) directly at [angie@imsa.edu](mailto:angie@imsa.edu) for any questions, suggestions or concerns you might have regarding library services.

<https://imsa.edu/academics/library/>

<https://www.imsa.edu/resources-for-working-remotely/>

## Communication

### Information for Students

Students are expected to regularly check their IMSA email, Canvas account, and other online platforms in use by the academy. Faculty and staff will assume that any communications or announcements posted to these platforms have been seen by the student.

We strongly recommend that students download the Canvas app on any mobile device they regularly use and then set up email and/or push notifications. More details about doing so can be found [here](#).

## Information for Parents

Parents can actively monitor their student's course progress through the following platforms:

- PowerSchool (IMSA's Student Information System)  
Student grades and teacher comments will be posted on this platform.
- Canvas "Observer" Account (IMSA's Learning Management System)  
Specific course details are available on this platform.

In order to get in contact with an instructor, we recommend email. You can find their email address in the IMSA [Staff Directory](#).

## Video Conferencing Software

IMSA utilizes Zoom as our primary video conferencing software - which allows us to meet face-to-face with our students. As a paid subscriber, IMSA has access to Zoom's latest security features. You can read more information about Zoom's built-in privacy and security settings on their [website](#).

Zoom's Terms of Service prohibits minors from creating accounts; however, they may join Zoom meeting sessions as participants. Faculty and staff will provide the appropriate links to join these sessions as needed.

In Zoom sessions, students are not required but are **highly encouraged** to keep their cameras on. This helps to build community and relationships between faculty, staff, and students. We recommend that students...

- find a space in their home with good lighting but minimal objects in the background. A table, with a blank wall behind them works great for this.
- utilize Zoom's virtual background feature. Most computers allow participants to set a virtual background that obscures anything behind the individual. IMSA has a [set of backgrounds](#) available to use.

Instructors may record any synchronous sessions to be used by students who miss a class for a valid reason (e.g., a pre-arranged absence) to catch up when they have the time. **An IMSA waiver must be on record permitting those individual students to be recorded. The instructor must receive written confirmation from the Office of Student Affairs prior to any recording taking place. Additionally, the instructor must inform the class at the beginning that the session is being recorded.**

## School Counselor

School counselors are available to provide virtual, 1:1 counseling to a student struggling with challenges including anxiety, depression, loneliness, inability to concentrate, family crises, stress, relationship difficulties, low self-esteem, and self-destructive behaviors (drug and alcohol abuse, purging, bingeing, self-starvation, self-harm, abuse of laxatives). Students may refer themselves to the counselor simply by contacting a counselor for an appointment, or a concerned RC, staff member, or parent/guardian may refer a student. It is highly recommended that concerns be shared with the student prior to the referral. When appropriate, referrals to professionals outside the Academy may be made in consultation with the student and parent(s).

During distance learning, the school counselors use the [thera-LINK online counseling platform](#). Students have the ability to sign up for the thera-LINK platform and then log into the thera-LINK scheduler to select their preferred counselor, date, and time to schedule a virtual appointment. All scheduling and counseling meetings will be done virtually.

When possible, students are encouraged to schedule counselor meetings outside of synchronous class times. If a student is experiencing crisis, school counselors can excuse the student from classes. School counselors will maintain confidentiality standards as outlined in the Student/Parent Handbook during distance learning. Questions regarding school counseling services can be directed to Kevin Kusy ([kkusy@imsa.edu](mailto:kkusy@imsa.edu)) and Keisha Rheams ([trheams@imsa.edu](mailto:trheams@imsa.edu)).

## Health Care Services

IMSA continues to provide student health care services by registered nurses from Rush Copley Medical Center during distance learning. While students are engaged in distance learning, parents/guardians will be responsible for contacting the Attendance Office if a student is ill and unable to participate in synchronous or asynchronous classes. The Attendance Office has a 24 hour voicemail that is checked each morning prior to the start of classes. The registered nurse or designee will contact the family if a student is absent due to illness or injury for four or more days to check on the student's recovery and assist with the student's transition back to learning.

All sophomore students are required to submit the [Certificate of Child Health Examination](#) before classes begin. All seniors are required to provide documentation of two meningitis vaccines prior to the start of classes. The second dose must be administered on or after the student's 16th birthday. If the student will not be 16 years old at the start of school, arrangements should be made with your physician to have this completed as soon as possible and documentation submitted to the Health Office within 30 days of this date.

Additionally, during distance learning, all students will continue to register prescribed medication with the school nurse. The nurse is available to discuss prescription medication questions and treatment plans with students and families as needed. Questions regarding health care services can be directed to 630-907-5008 or [nurse@imsa.edu](mailto:nurse@imsa.edu).

## Residence Life

Although students may not be physically in the halls, Residence Life will continue to provide support and multiple engagement opportunities for our students. All students will be assigned to a Resident Counselor (RC) based on housing assignments. Members of the Resident Counselor staff will be available 7 days per week (hours and staff will vary). Resident Counselors will be reaching out to students periodically to check-in and provide support to all IMSA students. The RC check-in can happen via Zoom calls, phone calls, email, etc. Consider which communication methods work best for you.

- **Programming Requirements**

While we are engaged in distance learning, RCs, with help of the residential student leaders (RSLs), will still host both educational and social programs to help foster positive relationships as well as help our students grow into the great leaders of tomorrow. Required residential programming will take place Thursdays at 2:30pm. Aside from required educational programs, there will be additional optional social programs that students are strongly encouraged to attend.

- **Study Hours**

Though study hours are not mandatory while we are in distance learning, RCs will host study sessions for a minimum of 2 hours per day Sunday through Thursday. Study sessions may also be provided on Fridays and Saturdays based on the needs and interest of students. Study sessions will be conducted via Zoom video conference calls to connect students in need of academic assistance with one of IMSA's peer tutors. It is highly encouraged that students spend at least two hours per school night studying and completing homework, as it is easy to fall behind. More details and information will come in August with exact dates, times, and links to attend the aforementioned sessions.

## Student Engagement and Involvement

- **Athletics/Co-Curriculars Activities:**

Due to distance learning and without students living on campus, IMSA will not sponsor any fall athletic teams or participate in any fall athletic competitions. Decisions regarding the winter and spring athletic seasons are to be determined. Though a small number of co-curricular programs cannot be offered during distance learning, the Academy will continue to provide 15+ co-curricular activities for students to engage in. More information on how to get involved will be provided in August. Individual questions can be directed to Mr. Richard Palmer, Coordinator of Athletics and Co-Curricular Activities ([rpalmer@imsa.edu](mailto:rpalmer@imsa.edu)).

- **LEAD:**

LEAD is a graduation requirement that all sophomore students must attend. The class is taught by upperclassmen and while engaged in distance learning, LEAD will utilize Canvas, a learning management system, and Zoom video conference calls. The class will be taught after academic classes on Tuesdays at 2:30pm-3:30pm. Attendance is required for all sophomore students and will be taken within the first five minutes of class. Individual questions can be directed to the LEAD program coordinator, Andrea Stuiber, Assistant Director of Student Engagement and Leadership ([astuiber@imsa.edu](mailto:astuiber@imsa.edu)).

- **Navigation:**

Navigation is a graduation requirement that all sophomore students must attend. The class is taught by IMSA staff and is coordinated through IMSA school counselors. While engaged in distance learning, Navigation will utilize Canvas, a learning management system, and Zoom video conference calls. The class will be taught after academic classes conclude on Mondays at 2:30pm-3:30pm. Attendance is required for all sophomore students and will be taken within the first five minutes of class. Individual questions can be directed to our school counselors Kevin Kusy ([kkusy@imsa.edu](mailto:kkusy@imsa.edu)) and Keisha Rheams ([trheams@imsa.edu](mailto:trheams@imsa.edu)).

- **Service Learning**

All students must have 200 hours of service learning, as a requirement of graduation. **Please note: For the 2021 graduating class, the minimum and maximum hour requirements for internal and external service learning opportunities will be suspended.** Please reference the 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook for specific details on the service learning requirement. Also, visit the service learning portion of IMSA's website (<https://www.imsa.edu/student-life/service-learning/>) regularly for important information and suggestions on virtual and in-person service learning opportunities (this will not be an exhaustive list).

Please note: It is up to the student to ensure fulfillment of this graduation requirement, even while distance learning. There are many opportunities available. If you are questioning if an opportunity would meet IMSA's criteria for service learning, or if you have any other questions, please reach out to Associate Director of Student Affairs, Dana Ginnett ([dginnett@imsa.edu](mailto:dginnett@imsa.edu)).

## Discipline

IMSA's Student Discipline policy is one way to ensure the safety and welfare of each member of the Academy. Students are responsible for IMSA's Student Discipline policy while under the jurisdiction of the Academy, meaning while they are on campus, representing IMSA off-campus or while distance learning. While any infractions that could only take place if a student were living on campus would not apply during distance learning, e.g. propping of exterior entrance doors without permission, all other discipline policies will be enforced during distance learning, including the appropriate sanctions that would be incurred if found responsible for a policy violation. Please take care to review all aspects of the discipline policy in the 2020-2021 Student Parent Handbook, including those that would involve inappropriate behavior occurring online or during "live" remote instruction.

Should a policy violation be suspected in which a disciplinary hearing must take place, the hearing will be conducted virtually. Proper notification and procedures will be followed, per the 2020-2021 Student/Parent Handbook. If a student is found responsible for a policy violation, appropriate sanctions, per the Student/Parent Handbook, will be administered.

## Technological Needs

IMSA is able to provide some resources for technology needs - including hardware. If you have any such requests, please reach out to the ITS team at ([1to1questions@imsa.edu](mailto:1to1questions@imsa.edu)).

## Special Circumstances

We recognize that many of our students face unique challenges during distance learning. While many situations may be remedied by engaging with one of the above support systems, if you are experiencing any special circumstances, please reach out to the Principal's Office (630-907-5053 and [Prinoffc@imsa.edu](mailto:Prinoffc@imsa.edu)) or the Student Affairs Office (630-907-5009). We are committed to working with each student to determine the best path forward during this time.