



Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School

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April 5, 2020

To: Students, Parents & Guardians of Monty Tech
From: Tom Browne, Principal
Re: Monty Tech Remote Learning Operational Plan

Dear Students, Parents and Guardians,

At Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School District, our concern is always for the well-being of all our students and staff. As a district serving over 1,400 students and employing over 220 staff members, we are committed to responding to this unprecedented moment in history and have made a curricular decision as a district to move to a remote delivery of learning and our services. This document addresses expectations for how we, at Monty Tech, can best provide continuity of service for our students through the ongoing school closure which is scheduled to end on May 4, 2020.

Our goal is to support all of our students' well-being as well as their academic and vocational progress, while fully understanding the conditions for teaching and learning are not like anything we have experienced before. As such, we know that we will need to all come together to best support our students and each other through this difficult time. We want to acknowledge that for some of us, the amount of information shared below, as well as the conditions of uncertainty, may cause some understandable stress. We are committed to working together to support the social, emotional, and learning needs of our students and families.

As we move forward in this effort, we are compelled to acknowledge that the next several weeks will not be perfect. Things will at times get messy, but we will learn together. We will adapt and come out of this stronger and more prepared than we were before.

Improving on a Great Start

Since Governor Baker announced the original three-week closure in March, Monty Tech faculty and students have remained connected through remote lessons via Google Meeting or Zoom sessions and students were able to keep their academic and vocational skills up to date through a series of enrichment activities. However, with the extension of the school closure, Governor Baker and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Commissioner Jeff Riley have issued a series of recommendations tasking school districts *"to help students continue their learning over this extended period."* Specifically, the recommendations include the following –

- *"Nothing can replace the in-person schooling experience, and we should not expect that remote learning can replicate the traditional school day."*
- *"At the same time, with school closures now extended, districts, schools, and communities have an obligation to engage students in meaningful and productive learning opportunities through an appropriately structured educational program."*

- *“We recommend that districts support students to engage in meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day. We expect this learning to take place via a combination of educator-directed learning and student self-directed learning.”*
- *“While technology can be a supportive tool, districts and schools should also consider ways that student learning can continue offline. This could include exploring the natural world, activities to support students’ local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging, hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students’ own passions and experiences.”*
- *“Examples of remote learning tools include large-group video or audio conference calls, 1:1 phone or video calls, email, work packets, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students.”*
- *“To the extent practicable, teachers should provide feedback on student work completed at home...we strongly recommend that academic content be graded as “credit/no credit”...”*
- *“We strongly urge districts and schools to consider whether the students have had equitable access to learning opportunities during this closure, keeping in mind the variety of technology, health, disability, and language challenges that could occur.”*

Based on these DESE recommendations, Monty Tech will build on the remote learning foundation we have developed together over the previous three weeks. However, we will do so by providing some formal structure to our practices that we hope will provide students with the additional support needed to complete their assignments and properly demonstrate their skills while receiving feedback and comments from their instructors as an indication of their achievement.

General Expectations for Students and Families –

The following is a general description of the distance learning environment that Monty Tech will institute to support students and families. We will strive to provide the best education we can while acknowledging the limitations that arise due to our mandatory school closure. Please note that beyond the responsibilities associated with instruction, our teachers will continue to address their additional tasks such as monitoring their school email and, when available, participating in virtual IEP meetings. However, because of such circumstances including limited access to all curricular resources as well as the obvious loss of school time, there is no expectation that students will receive the full year’s instruction in their course curriculum. Please understand that all learning activities will continue to be assigned through a variety of online platforms including Google Classroom, Schoology, Quizlet, Monty Tech email, etc. However, the school will also provide alternative methods of accessing school work to families who lack full access to online resources. There will additionally be opportunities for daily check-ins with teachers, but these are limited to the daily office hours (as laid out below).

As has been the case, teachers will provide assignments with instructions in advance, links to related materials, independent practice and exit tickets that **will** receive a mark and teacher

feedback. Please note that work assignments will not necessarily be introduced during a virtual face-to-face class/activity. However, in many cases, teachers may schedule a live face-to-face class meeting through a variety of platforms. These formal “classes” will be announced at least two days in advance and may occur any time during the normal school day (8:00am-2:30pm). In addition, teachers will be asked to add any scheduled class session to a school-wide calendar in order to avoid scheduling too many teachers’ sessions occurring at the same time. A student may be excused from this session if an online class is scheduled at the same time that a student is participating in teacher office hours, but just as if a student has a Guidance appointment during a regular school day, it is the student’s responsibility to reach out to the teacher in order to get their assigned work.

Additional activities beyond scheduled class sessions may include, but are not limited to, voiceovers, video recordings, screencasts, links to other instructional videos, etc. **Again, please note that the assignments that students turn back into teachers will be marked and will serve as a basis for their grade during this time of school closure.** Completion of these assignments also allows for an attendance/ participation component for teachers to communicate back to administration regarding students who may need support or services with this digital environment. If a student is not returning any work, the teacher will attempt either through email or a phone conversation to ascertain if there is an obstacle that is preventing the student from submitting their work. If the student is simply not doing the work, then this information will be shared with guidance counselors and the administration to monitor/assess student engagement and their equitable access to schooling.

In terms of the volume of assignments, this will vary from class to class, but a typical week of work will include 2-3 assigned activities per class with each activity taking between 45 and 60 minutes. Instructors are encouraged to spread out weekly assignments and to be mindful that students will have assignments in each of their courses. In addition, completion dates will be determined by individual instructors. However, in order to allow all students to access support systems if necessary, instructors are urged to provide plenty of time for completion. **Students will receive feedback on their efforts and, during the time of closure, will receive a mark of “credit” for completing the assignment or “no credit” for failing to submit the assignment.** (See below for optional feedback indicators) Students and parents/guardians should further note that they will have access to their usual support instructors and paraprofessionals through office hours so while there will be opportunities to make-up assignments that have been assigned no credit, this time will not be unlimited.

Summary of Student Assignments:

- DESE recommendations state that students should be engaged for approximately half the length of a regular school day (3-3½ hours per day). For each class, this equates to approximately 45-60 minutes per day.
 - Engagement time should not be misinterpreted as strictly teacher instructional time. Instead, this includes the time it takes for a student to access instructional materials and to complete assignments independently.
 - Longer assignments may be assigned over the span of a number of days during the week. Generally, however, 2-3 assignments per class should be expected.
- Assignment due dates should remain flexible and lenient to account for inequitable home situations including access to technology.

Curriculum Standards & Frameworks:

- There are no expectations to cover all of the same standards and material that would have been covered if school had remained in session.
 - Academic courses will focus on year-long core concepts.
 - Vocational courses will continue to provide learning opportunities consistent with their trade recognizing it is not the complete hands-on curriculum.

Student Privacy During Virtual Instruction:

- Group meeting applications (video chats) will ensure that student confidentiality is maintained throughout the lesson.
- If students turn the video off, they can still engage with the class without fear of exposing or showing their home.
- Discussions regarding individual student feedback or/and work or any confidential issues will not be broadcasted in group settings but rather should occur during an Office Hours session.

Grading and Providing Students Feedback –

Based on Commissioner Riley’s recommendations, students’ work will be graded strictly as credit or non-credit earning:

Students whose work has not met requirements will be notified by their instructors that the work does not earn credit. These students, as well as students who have not submitted assignments, will have the opportunity to make up the work for credit. For students with disabilities, teachers will work with their Special Ed. co-teachers to assess student work.

While the student’s performance will be measured primarily based on their completion of the assigned work, teachers may want to provide students with feedback on the general quality of their work. Sample methods of providing that feedback could be by utilizing any of the measurements listed below. However, again, it should be noted that none of these feedback comments equate with a traditional numerical grade.

<u>Numeric Level</u>	<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Criteria for Indicator</u>
4	Advanced Credit	Submission meets all requirements and has no errors.
3	Proficient Credit	Submission meets most requirements and has minimal errors. However, work may be re-submitted later for full credit. *
2	Progressing Credit	Submission meets some requirements but has several errors. However, work may be re-submitted later for full credit. *
1	Developing Credit	Submission meets few requirements and has numerous errors. However, work may be re-submitted later for full credit. *
0	No Credit	No submission: However, work may be submitted later for full credit. *

**Teachers should allow sufficient time for students to resubmit work in order to account for technology related issues or to ensure that a student had appropriate access to support services.*

Overall Course Grading:

If one considers that a grade is a measurement of the student's understanding of the course curriculum as well as their ability to demonstrate their proficiency in course skills, then the simple reality, due to the instructional limitations posed by the school closure, is that it would be unfair to attempt to assign a formal grade for a student's performance during the second half of this year. Therefore, in order to allow students to earn their credits for this year and to either graduate or be promoted to the next grade, Monty Tech will be instituting the following one-time grading formula.

1. Any student who was enrolled in a half-year course that occurred during Semester 1 will receive the currently assigned grade on their transcript as well as the GPA points earned in that class.
2. All full year classes will be graded as follows –
 - a. Students will earn a half year of course credit with their Semester 1 Average grade representing the final grade for the first half of the year. Because this grade has been determined by the completion of actual assessments, this grade will be applied to the student's GPA.
 - b. Please note, in order to acknowledge that students who received a failing grade for their Semester 1 average should have had an opportunity to improve their grade during the second semester, these student may be eligible to receive a passing grade of 60 by attaining an overall level of "Progressing Credit" on their Semester 2 assignments. All students in this group will be contacted by their Guidance Counselor to further explain this process. Upon the closing of grades, students who do not meet this standard may appeal to the Principal to determine whether or not they receive course credit.
3. In terms of the Second Semester, students will receive a Pass/Fail mark for second semester work based on effort/participation as measured by the credit/no credit indicators. As long as a student receives some level of credit for the majority of the assigned work, they will receive a Pass (credit) and the associated credit. Students who fail to meet this level will receive a Failing (no credit) and will not receive credit. Again, this is why it is essential that all students completed each of the assignments that the teacher gives out during this time of closure. Students who receive a failing grade may appeal to the Principal or his designee to determine whether or not they will receive course credit.

Please note that this overall grading plan will be assessed by April 30th in order to consider any changes by the state to the Governor's school closure plan.

Work Assignment Schedule –

Much like our usual school calendar, during the remaining weeks of this closure, we will follow our traditional A/B Week schedule. Therefore, students will receive work from their academic instructors and vocational instructors as if they were scheduled for that class during

that week. The weekly schedule will occur as follows –

- Week of April 6th – **B WEEK** – (Soph./Srs. – Academics & Fr./Jr. – Shop)
- Week of April 13th – **A WEEK** – (Soph./Srs. – Shop & Fr./Jr. – Academics)
- Week of April 20th – **School Vacation Week** – No assignments will occur
- Week of April 27th – **B WEEK** – (Soph./Srs. – Academics & Fr./Jr. – Shop)

Teacher's Office Hours -

Excluding the scheduled vacation week, all faculty and paraprofessional staff will be available for and follow a daily virtual check-in schedule. Paraprofessionals will be available during the Special Education time slot and should also participate in any scheduled virtual face-to-face meeting for classes that they support. These times will be divided up by content area meaning the teachers of whichever content is scheduled during that hour will be available to answer questions via face-to-face virtual meeting or simply through an immediate email response. Individual teachers may need to schedule a different time for their office hours later in the day but it will not conflict with another subject's scheduled time and it is the teacher's responsibility to share that new schedule with students in a timely manner.

Student participation in these check-ins is optional. If the student has received the assignment and is comfortable completing it independently, then they should feel free to do so. However, if a student needs guidance, they can use this block of time to reach out to their direct instructor, their learning support teacher or an associated paraprofessional who participates in their class for help.

The following schedule represents when content teachers will be available -

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30-9:30	Math	Math.	Math	Math	Math
9:30-10:30	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA	ELA
10:30-11:30	Learning/ELL Support	Learning/ELL Support	Learning/ELL Support	Learning/ELL Support	Learning/ELL Support
	Shop/Related	Shop/Related	Shop/Related	Shop/Related	Shop/Related
11:30-12:30	Science	Science	Science	Science	Science
12:30-1:30	History	History	History	History	History
1:30-2:30	Electives – PE, World Lang., ROTC, Art, Fr. Sem.	Electives – PE, World Lang., ROTC, Art, Fr. Sem.	Electives – PE, World Lang., ROTC, Art, Fr. Sem.	Electives – PE, World Lang., ROTC, Art, Fr. Sem.	Electives – PE, World Lang., ROTC, Art, Fr. Sem.

Example of a Remote Learning Lesson/Activity

Student Action	Estimated Time for Student (minutes)
Watching a teacher's posted mini-lesson aligned to the State Standards Prerecorded video, or voiceover of a PowerPoint.	15-20 min.
Independently practicing and applying knowledge or skill.	20-25 min.
Deliverable/Exit ticket - students submit work to get feedback from the teacher	5-15 min.

To conclude, once again, it is important to emphasize that this temporary transition to remote learning will understandably need to be a flexible exercise. All members of the Monty Tech community will need to be accommodating as we all become more familiar with the intricacies of a new system of instruction that is limited when compared to our much more welcoming face-to-face instruction. Questions and issues will arise, and we will address them as they come. However, we further urge all community members to focus on two other vital issues that encompass the next few weeks. First, we have been thrust into this change in an effort to avoid a nationwide health risk. We must remain vigilant in our efforts of social distancing. Finally, we are adapting our practices because, as a school community, we are committed to maintaining the consistent and essential education of our students to the best of our ability. Without doubt, we can do this as a united school community.

Finally, students and parents should be aware that this new remote learning structure will begin tomorrow (Remember that it will be a B week.) as teachers will be reaching out to their classes to outline their individual plans to move forward.

Best regards,

Thomas Browne
Principal