

Distance Learning Plan

With appreciation to the American International School of Monrovia
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Table of Contents

Distance Learning @ ISO	3
Communication Channels & Technology Tools	4
Main Technology Tools	5
Supplemental Technology Tools	5
Guidelines for ISO Teachers	6
Guidelines for ISO Parents	9
Roles and Responsibilities	12
During Distance Learning	12
School Personnel	12
Students	13
Parents	13
Elementary School Course Expectations	15
Instructional Breakdown	15
Upper School Course Expectations	16
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Distance Learning @ ISO

The International School of Ouagadougou (ISO) recognizes the value of in-person, relationship-based learning and acknowledges that distance learning **is not intended to serve as replacement** but rather in times of necessity, **can be utilized to leverage value learning away from school**. The Distance Learning Plan (DPL) provides guidelines about how ISO faculty will utilize digital and experiential learning away from campus.

At the core of ISO's approach to distance learning is the belief we should emphasize both **consistency** and **adaptation**. This means we need to think differently about our priorities when responding to challenging circumstances, and we should embrace new opportunities for students to learn in authentic, meaningful ways.

Communication Channels & Technology Tools

Here are the main communication channels and technology tools we use during distance learning events.

Channel	Audience	Description & Access
PlusPortals Email & School Email	Faculty, Students, & Parents	PlusPortals is used for all official communications and announcements. Faculty will also use email (@iso.bf) to communicate, although some may primarily use other platforms to interact with their students. The tools for this channel are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PlusPortals: School communication portal for teachers, parents, and administration to monitor, communicate, and follow up regarding student academic achievement.• Gmail: Online email platform used for internal and external communications to ISO staff, faculty, and students. Always confirm authenticity by checking that the email ends with @iso.bf.
PlusPortals Learning Management Systems (LMS) Google Suite	Faculty, Students, & Parents	Systems that enable teachers and students to interact, present materials, organize classes, control assignments, and monitor attendance, among other functions. The tools for this channel are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PlusPortals: School communication portal, attendance, and electronic gradebook where parents and students can monitor student assessments.• Google Classroom: Teaching and learning platform that enables online classrooms. Teachers can create and share content in addition to grading and providing feedback on assignments, which links to PlusPortals.• Google Drive: Folder platform where ES teachers can post folders of assignments and work. Students/Parents may also upload work to their respective Google Folders.
School Website	Faculty, Students, & Parents	ISO will maintain general and updated information for the public at www.iso.bf

Main Technology Tools:

Tool	Audience	Description & Access
Google Suite	Faculty & Students	<p>As a Google School, ISO uses a wide range of tools in the G Suite for Education package. Here are the most common tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Docs: Online word processor platform can be used to write, edit, and share documents by single or multiple users.● Sheets: Online spreadsheet platform can be used to write, edit, and share spreadsheets by single or multiple users.● Slides: Online presentation editing platform can be used to write, edit, and share presentations by single or multiple users.● Forms: Online survey platform used for creating and analyzing polls by single or multiple users.● Drive: Online file sharing platform can be used to share online documents (from G Suite Applications) or other types of files (e.g., images, spreadsheets, files).● Meet: Video conferencing tool.● Classroom: An online learning portal for students to access and turn in work for their respective classes.

Supplemental Technology Tools

Supplemental technology tools will be used at the discretion of the teacher pertaining to their subject matter. These resources may include, and are not limited to: the ISO Library, Seesaw, Screencastify, Flipgrid, Khan Academy, JSTOR, Scholastic, and other select resources.

Guidelines for ISO Teachers

The guidelines provided below are designed to assist teachers in developing their distance learning experiences.

With permission from Global Online Academy:

1. Know your students' technological capabilities and what support is available to them

It is important to know what kind of online learning work is possible for students to do while away from school, and to develop fair and reasonable accommodations for those students who may not be able to complete all work online. The US administration and Elementary homeroom teachers will assess technological limitations. This is a time to utilize tools that students are familiar with rather than introducing new technological platforms.

2. How to best utilize the school's online learning platform

Just as students know they can find you in your classroom or your office, they should know where to find you and your coursework online. You can use PlusPortals or Google Suite to provide links to essential content, the best way(s) to reach you, and a calendar or pacing guide for coursework. What is important is that students do not have to struggle to find what they need to know; all information should be located on one of the primary online learning platforms.*

*ISO's primary online learning platforms are:

- **PlusPortals**
- **Google Suite**

3. Communicate often, clearly, and consistently

During distance learning, communication with students is essential. Teachers are expected to use the same space and format to provide students with consistency. This is what students will be expecting. Keep your communications focused, clear, and simple with actionable tasks and items students need to know.

4. Give synchronous class meetings

When it comes to student engagement and learning, relationships online matter as much as, if not more than, in person. Students will be required to gather for synchronous learning times via Google Meet no less than once a week. If students are across multiple time zones, and you are unable to find a satisfactory time to meet with everyone, you can connect with them at different times or record the meeting to help support all students' learning. You are also required to offer

Distance Learning Plan

daily Office Hours for students to connect with you individually. Post your availability prominently in your online learning platform.

5. Create opportunities for asynchronous connection

When school is physically closed and students are spread across multiple time zones, **it is still possible to connect students to one another asynchronously.** Teachers may use discussion forums or tools like [Flipgrid](#) or [Padlet](#) to allow for student responses and dialogue during a set time period. It is important to note that students might not all be online at the same exact time. Post a prompt based on a reading or playlist previously assigned, and give students a set timeframe to post and respond to each other. For group projects, students can leverage tools like Google Chat, Google Meet, and Google Drive to collaborate together.

6. Think creatively and strategically about assessment

Assessment is one of the most challenging aspects for teachers new to online learning. An effective way to check for understanding online is to use individual formative assessments. One example is [EdPuzzle](#), where you can create short interactive quizzes for students based on online video content you create or curate. We encourage teachers to imagine more project-based summative assessments where students individually or collaboratively complete writing assignments, design infographics, make presentations via video, or complete oral assessments via video chat.

7. Be intentional and explicit about timing and pacing

Design concise, organized weekly plans for your students with clear deadlines and explanations of coursework. Simple tables designed in a document work perfectly for this. Be mindful of volume and pacing. If you and your students are new to online learning, you will all need extra time to learn how to find things and do them well. **More is not always better; it is sometimes just more.** Give students more time to do fewer, richer assignments rather than try to assign and collect work at every opportunity.

8. Ask students and families for feedback

A common question from teachers moving online is, “How will I know how my students are doing?” In traditional classrooms, teachers are constantly paying attention to students and responding to implicit needs about the learning environment, often passively or subconsciously. In an online setting, it is important to intentionally design channels to receive that same type of feedback. Beyond observing their contributions to online discussions and how/when they are turning in assignments, proactively seek their insights about online learning. Two simple questions to start: “What is working for you in this mode of learning? What is not working?” Leverage a Google Form or another survey tool, or simply send an email and invite responses. Listen to what students say and make tweaks to your planning as needed. **Integrate feedback as part of your own learning process.**

9. Create opportunities for personalization

Just as we differentiate for learners in the classroom, we should also create multiple learning pathways in online spaces. Online learning gives students the opportunity to learn at different paces, resources such as [Khan Academy](#) and [Raz-Kids](#) offer leveled individualized content.

10. Recognize the importance of student support

Student support in online spaces looks different than in a physical school building. Make sure students are “showing up” and engaging in the learning process. Create moments throughout a week when students “check-in,” either by turning in work, meeting with you/others, or contributing to online discussion. Especially if school is closed during a difficult time, recognize this may be a traumatic time for students or colleagues. Reach out to students individually, check in with the students' other teachers, collaborate with administrators on students of concern, and keep parents in the communications loop.

11. Keep parents informed

Consider how you typically communicate with parents. Try to maintain the same routines if possible. Use the channels or vehicles that you typically use for parent communication. Recognize parents are trying to support their children and may need advice for helping them manage online learning. After all, if students are new to managing their own learning or doing online learning, parents may feel they need their own tools to support children. Keep the communication simple, with clear, actionable ways parents can support their children.

12. Reflect on your role as a teacher in virtual spaces

It is important to help students connect to a sense of purpose, express autonomy, and work towards mastery even in online spaces. Help students locate their intrinsic motivation and keep interest alive in your course. Consider your own role as a facilitator of learning rather than a holder of knowledge.

13. Connect with colleagues and share strategies that work

Be intentional about staying connected to colleagues, not just to communicate information, but to support each other. Share with each other specific strategies that are working. Use the same tools you use to work with students to teach colleagues how you are structuring or designing learning experiences. When the school does (and it will) reopen, all teachers will need to meet and reflect on the school's online learning plans to readjust when there is another physical school closure. While not ideal, creating well laid out plans will help ISO and our students' handle, if necessary, subsequent closures.

Guidelines for ISO Parents

The transition to distance learning has proven to be challenging for families. We know parents 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 in partnership with their students' teachers. Some students will thrive with distance learning, while others may struggle. The guidelines provided below are intended to support parents with ways to help their children be successful within a distance learning environment. Distance learning is a change in format, and we look forward to your assistance facilitating learning so that our teachers may continue to teach, and students continue to learn, regardless of outside circumstances.

1. Establish routines and expectations

At school, your child is used to having set routines for lessons, classes, and lunch. One way to help your child at home is to create a set routine, **if possible**. Try to have your children begin their studies at 8:00 am, just as if they were on campus, while keeping normal bedtime routines for younger children. We strongly encourage families to set these routines as soon as distance learning is implemented, however we know that each family has its own unique situations.

2. Define a space for your child's study

Giving your children a dedicated space will help them stay organized, and reinforces that they are in "school-mode." Making sure the space is a quiet environment can help your child focus; music, television, pets, and other children can cause unnecessary distractions. Additionally, maintaining a clean distraction free workspace is important. Monitor that music, video, games, and social applications are not being used during study time. We recommend this workspace be a public/family space, not 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. ISO understands that this recommendation may not be feasible for all families, therefore the physical space should be a space which best supports student's learning.

3. Monitor communications from your child's teachers

Parents can easily monitor their child's progress using PlusPortals, and through digest emails sent from Google Classroom. Teachers will communicate with parents through email. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your child's ages, maturity, and their degree of independence. ISO wants parents to contact their child's teachers. We also encourage parents to have their children explain the Learning Management Systems (e.g., PlusPortals, Google Classroom, etc) that they are using in support of their learning.

4. Be sure to "check-in" with your child/children.

Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in. In the morning, ask:

- What are you learning today?

Distance Learning Plan

- What are your learning targets or goals?
- How will you spend your time?
- What resources or support do you need?

Parents, students, and teachers are collaborators and jointly responsible for the success of online learning. Parental check-ins are essential to support your child as they complete their assignments.

This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they have received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that is normal!), but they should nevertheless. As mentioned in tip #1, establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day.

5. Take an active role in helping your child process and own their learning

In the course of a regular school day at ISO, your child engages with other students or adults dozens, if not hundreds, of times. These social interactions are opportunities for processing, extending, and consolidating learning. Asking your child questions about their schoolwork is a great way to stay involved and during distance learning, it can be even more beneficial for your child's studies. Ask specific questions when you are asking your child about their assignments.

Here are some examples of specific questions:

1. What is one interesting thing you learned today in [math]?
2. Can you show me how you solved your most challenging activity today?
3. What do you need help with today?
4. What is one thing that you know today that you didn't know yesterday?
5. What are two things that other classmates asked in Google Classroom?

Studies show that students have a 42% growth in learning if they talk about or explain what they are learning with their parents. **Positive parent support is essential for student success.** So, do not worry if you do not understand all of the content in your child's lessons. Letting them explain it to you is an opportunity for your child to build confidence in what they have learned. They should feel free to do so in English or your home language.

6. Encourage physical activity and/or exercise

In school, your child has natural breaks between classes, that is why reminding them to take breaks between assignments is a great idea. We recommend five to fifteen minutes of off-screen breaks per hour, as well as a few "recess" breaks for younger students.

ISO's physical education teachers will recommend activities or exercises. Break-time is a perfect time to be physically active; encourage your child to stand up and stretch, take a walk outside, or play ball for 15 minutes. It can do wonders in maintaining academic focus. You may even want to consider planning extra time outdoors in the evenings.

7. Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry

One thing is for certain: ISO is updating this plan in response to unique circumstances. This can be a time of uncertainty for everyone and it is imperative for you to help your children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much normal routine as parents can provide.

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

When ISO implements this Distance Learning Plan, the initial excitement of school being closed will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Social interaction is an important part of your child's well-being, and during distance learning, they may be experiencing less than normal. Please remind your child to reach out to their classmates and friends from school.

If you have an older child, keep in mind that they will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Please note that social media applications such as SnapChat, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok, or Facebook **are not official, school-sanctioned channels of communication.** ISO asks parents to monitor their child's use of social media. Remind your child to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values when interacting with others. A student's written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others.

Roles and Responsibilities During Distance Learning

Many stakeholders will contribute to the effective implementation of this Distance Learning Plan (DLP). The roles and responsibilities of school personnel, students, and parents are delineated below.

School Personnel

Team	Roles and Responsibilities
Director and Educational Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Create and distribute ISO's Distance Learning Plan (DLP).● Establish clear channels of communications between faculty, staff, families, and students in the event this DLP is activated.● Support faculty, staff, families, and students shifting to a distance learning environment.● Help teachers implement the DLP and ensure high quality learning experience for all students.● Provide time for teacher collaboration that will support consistent implementation of our distance learning plan.● Regularly solicit and analyze feedback from faculty, staff, families, and students and use results to make adjustments as necessary.
Technology Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide distance learning support to teachers.● Provide tools, models and examples for designing and implementing outstanding distance learning units and lessons.● Share and recommend techniques for providing feedback to students and designing new methods to assess student learning.● Support teachers in developing strategies to differentiate their instruction.
All Teachers and Teaching Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Collaborate with all members of the school, including specialists, to design distance learning experiences for your students.● Communicate frequently with your students and, as needed, with their parents.● Provide timely feedback to support your students' learning.

Distance Learning Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Utilize the guidelines for ISO teachers shared earlier in the DLP and how to implement them.
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Students

Team	Roles and Responsibilities
Elementary School Students	Elementary School Students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Follow daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences (e.g. 8:00 am start).● Complete work with best effort and submit it to your teacher.● Contact your teacher (or other ISO staff member) if you need help.
Upper School Students	Upper School Students are expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Follow daily routines for engaging in the learning experiences (e.g. 8:00 am start).● Regularly monitor online platforms (e.g. PlusPortals, Google Classroom, email) 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 require additional support.● Collaborate and support peers in their learning.● Proactively seek out and communicate with teachers at ISO as different needs arise.

Parents

Team	Roles and Responsibilities
Parents	Provide support for your children by adhering to the Guidelines for ISO's Parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Establish routines and expectations.● Define the physical and digital space for your child's study.● Monitor communications from your child's teachers.● Begin and end each day with a check-in.● Take an active role in helping your child process their learning.

Distance Learning Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Encourage physical activity and/or exercise.● Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry.● Keep your child social, but set rules around their social media interactions.
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Elementary School Course Expectations

Communication should be sent through, but not limited to, PlusPortals and/or Google Suite. Teachers send lessons, and parents/students document their participation.

Weekly messages are sent on Monday to keep with the ordinary daily schedule. This will help parents with a routine. Parents can check on what is expected for the week and plan accordingly. Teachers will try to minimize the number of emails sent throughout the day to avoid confusion.

Our teachers make themselves visible for their students. Teachers post videos of read alouds, videos of math lessons, and host live Google Meet sessions at least once per week. Teachers may use multimedia tools to explain new content and concepts to students, and will use the best format for their purpose.

Instructional Breakdown

It is important for Elementary teachers to contact the students no less than twice a week (for example: morning message, audio message, etc.). Each teacher prepares a video / instructions / samples, and uploads a lesson / video with clear instructions and due dates. Each teacher must establish fixed Office Hours to respond to student and parent inquiries during that time.

- **Assignments:**
 - Students will have mandatory assignments and additional, optional assignments.
 - Mandatory assignments will have established due dates, and work should be submitted on or before the due date.
 - Parents will have the option to complete work digitally online or print and scan/photograph completed work.
- **Lower Elementary Distance Learning Tubs:**
 - At the discretion of the teacher, Elementary students in grades PreK to Grade 1 may be provided with a tub of take home distance learning materials. Sample materials may include manipulatives, everyday classroom materials, and non technology based materials for students to complete work. We understand the potential struggles for our younger learners, and want to make the distance learning transition as comfortable as possible for families.
- **Google Meet:**
 - Increasing independence, length of chat as they get older and format of the chat. Each student gets to share something they have learned or done that week.

Upper School Course Expectations

Instructional Breakdown

It is important for teachers to contact the students no less than twice a week (for example: morning message, audio message, etc.), including gathering for synchronous learning times via Google Meet no less than once a week. Each teacher prepares a video / instructions / samples, and uploads a lesson / video with clear instructions and due dates.

1. Follow course content and curriculum requirements while taking into consideration that all of the standards/content will be prioritized. Follow course content with a priority on skill development and standards necessary for success in the next grade level or university coursework. All content will not be taught, the most essential content will take priority.
2. Utilize established educational technologies (PlusPortals, Google Suite), including creating a Google Classroom (synched to PlusPortals) if one does not already exist.
3. Send classroom communication and post weekly assignments by 10:00 am Monday. Avoid posting updates at different times of day.
4. Work will be assigned with a minimum of three days for completion.
5. Check that all online resources are available and accurate.
6. Monitor assignment submissions and communicate with students frequently to give them personalized feedback on their learning using clear and concise language.
7. Establish daily Office Hours for students and parents to connect with you individually. Provide feedback to student inquiries within two school days.
8. Contact students and parents who appear to be struggling or are unresponsive. In the case of unresponsive students, after two unsuccessful attempts, contact the parents. If the parents are unresponsive after two attempts, contact the Upper School Principal for assistance. The Principal or Upper School Admin Assistant will attempt to contact the parents. Document contact for students at risk of receiving grades below 65.
9. Make use of a variety of activities for students (i.e., group and individual projects, online skills practice, discussion board posts/responses; and a variety of products and assessment types to demonstrate student learning).
10. Use more assignments that are individual in nature and minimize worksheets which are easily copied.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- 1. In the distance learning schedule will we cover all the material that we normally would if we were at school?**

No. All online distance learning models have learning limitations due to a lack of one on one contact with the teacher in a classroom. However, the essential components that need to be learned in order to move to the next grade/course or college will be learned.

- 2. What will we do during a week if there is a holiday or PD day when students do not need to go/attend school?**

We will adjust the schedule for the week.

- 3. Could assessments be taken during the class period time?**

Yes. Assessments are at the discretion of the teacher and may be held in a variety of formats.

- 4. What happens if a student does not complete work on time?**

Penalties for late work are up to the individual teacher. The schedule has more than enough time for the student to successfully complete the work, at a minimum of three days between assignments and due date. For assessments not completed via distance learning, students should communicate with their teachers. If communication is not sufficient, students may be referred to the Upper School Principal, and after repeated incompletions, may receive an “I” for “Insufficient evidence to formulate a grade”. An “I” will be included in the student’s final grade and the student may not receive credit for the course. For further information, please refer to the ISO Assessment Policy.

- 5. In case the school is closed, what will happen with any fees (lunch, transportation, athletics, after school activities, and tuition fees) that have been paid in advance?**

ISO will continue to provide an educational experience for all students, regardless of format. When the school transitions to distance learning, our teachers and staff continue working to provide the best possible education for your child. To that end, ISO will not change the process of refunding tuition or future payments due. As the situation continues to change, considerations may be made for changes in other fees, such as transportation and activities, and ISO may choose to refund overpaid fees in these cases.

Distance Learning Plan

6. Will there be reduced tuition fees for students if the school is required to transition to distance learning?

ISO strives to maintain a great educational environment for all students, regardless of format. Given that the costs of providing enriching online learning are the same, we will not consider a change for tuition fees.