



OJAI VALLEY SCHOOL

SINCE 1911

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Parents, Guardians, and Friends:

Thank you for choosing Ojai Valley School. Your commitment and sacrifice to join this community is one of the most important decisions you can make for your child, and it's our job to make sure you get the most from that experience. Over the course of the last few months, we have reinvented school for the online platform, and we truly believe that we can deliver the best parts of the OVS experience through the tools available to us. While some public health restrictions affect some of our traditions, we pledge to recover those traditions and maintain their value to student development. This is a time when innovators shine, and we will work together to make this experience great for our children.

### **SECTION I: What's different this year?**

While we are proud of our response to remote learning last year, we also learned a great deal and found many areas of improvement. Communication with students, faculty, and parents informed many of our targeted improvements and defined the role we all play in making 2020/21 the best year it can be. We look forward to collaborating with families and helping our students flex their independence muscles in the remote learning platform. Below are some target areas for improvement.

#### **Scheduling and Class Sizes**

While it was acceptable last year for us to offer co-curricular classes in a voluntary format, we know we can do better. The Arts, Music, Woodshop, Athletics, and Equestrian are all essential contributors to raising well-rounded students who thrive in the modern world. This year, we have committed to the full breadth of our program from the first day of school. All course work will be honored, and all teachers will teach in a live format whenever possible. This allows students to experience the excitement of a new instructor, shift gears away from academics, and enjoy an enriching co-curricular activity. We also have committed to keeping classes in small cohort groups in preparation for returning to school. This allows the students more time to speak, ask questions, begin independent work or homework, and alleviate the stress of a short, busy day.

#### **Tutoring and Work Time**

Building on the success of last year, we learned that self-advocacy and tutoring requests presented differently. Students who normally attended tutoring or advocated for themselves well in person struggled to do so remotely. To this end, we have increased the availability of tutoring time and work time during the day. This allows students to begin work, ask questions, and seek extra help in a scheduled period. Encouraging your child to attend these office hours or work periods will support their independence and take the pressure off parents to review content taught in class. While we appreciate parent support, please put the responsibility of instruction on us whenever possible.

## **Content Delivery Mimics Brick and Mortar School**

This year we have chosen tools that will allow instruction to feel and look similar to the traditional school experience. To this end, most teachers will be teaching from their classrooms with the aid of an interactive camera. This will allow teachers to lecture from the board, hold in-class discussions, and prioritize synchronous content delivery. While we will still utilize asynchronous tools when appropriate, our goal is to make students feel like they are in their classroom learning among friends.

## **Social-emotional Learning and Character Development**

Social-emotional learning and character development have been cornerstones of the OVS program since its inception in 1911. The need for well balanced emotional intelligence and activities that build strong character are more prominent than ever. We understand this and have responded programmatically. Our teachers have been reading about running a Responsive Classroom over the summer. Each day will begin with a responsive classroom meeting. The teachers will discuss the challenges of the week, and the students will have a voice in guiding lessons that directly address the issues they are facing. Starting the day with this meeting prioritizes emotional and social connection and helps students attend to the feelings that may otherwise interfere with essential learning. These meetings will surely be a reason to log in to class on-time, and we anticipate it will be a favorite part of the day for our students.

## **SECTION II: Parent/Guardian Support and Philosophical Concerns**

If there is one universal truth all schools came to this past year, it's that the support of parents and the partnership between teachers and families is essential to the success of online learning. Here are some tips for supporting your children during remote learning.

Parents and teachers need to take a courageous leadership role and foster a positive mindset in the face of online learning. It's safe to say that all of us would prefer an in-person learning environment for our children. Many educators and parents regret openly expressing their love loss for online learning. This attitude got us through the end of the year, but it will not serve us well in the new school year. Attitude follows leadership, and all adults in the community need to develop a positive attitude toward online learning. While there are some things lost, there are also many new opportunities to build independence, master communication tools, develop individual passions, and become more resilient. If we express these values to students and hold a firm yet compassionate line of expectations, students will follow our lead, and it will give them the strength and confidence to thrive.

When looking at these challenges and opportunities, it's important to remember that nothing is perfect and kids are adaptation specialists. It is appropriate and healthy to set clear expectations of students to wake up on time and prepare for school. Showers, breakfast, and other morning routines that mimic brick and mortar school will help kids take online learning as seriously as they do regular school. All students can try their best to pay attention, focus on the lessons, minimize distractions, and ask for help when they don't understand a concept. The efforts we make to encourage self-advocacy and support independence will help our students succeed.

Another challenge for our community is understanding the role of small failures and

incomplete work at school. Many parents across the nation felt pressure to make sure their child did everything perfectly. This is a great deal of pressure, but it may not be serving the students or teachers well. In traditional learning environments, the incomplete assignment or the inability to accomplish a task is essential feedback for both teacher and student. It's important and extremely challenging to support a child in submitting what they can, regardless of whether it is correct or not. Hovering over our students and trying to enforce perfection will lead to greater anxiety and strain the parent/child relationship. The best support we can give them is helping them learn the age-appropriate tools, keeping a positive attitude, embracing minor failures, and encouraging self-advocacy.

Screen time is also a major concern. For years, OVS has fostered a view that screen time should be limited and that there is more value in activities outside of the virtual arena. While we will fully embrace that philosophy in the future, for now, we must embrace educational screen time and make a distinction between active learning/engagement and passive absorption of media. While students will be in virtual meetings much of the day, that time will be value added. Students will do independent work with the teacher present for support, and we will recreate the feeling of being in class as much as possible.

### **SECTION III: Activities to Prepare for School**

#### **Setting up a Classroom Space (All Families)**

Setting up an effective learning space is paramount to the success of your student. It is also a fun activity to prepare for school. Learning spaces should be free from distraction, well-lit, and in an area with good wifi connectivity. While many students will assume their bedroom is the best place to stage their learning area, we suggest a more common area that allows you to peek in occasionally. Bedrooms are private areas and it is better for a child's mindset to keep their sleeping area and work area separate when possible. It may also be good to initiate a separate learning space for PE class. We will have the kids up and moving. This can be done indoors or in an outdoor space with good wifi. We will request images of each student's learning environment to showcase at all-school assembly early in the year. Encourage your child to make their home classroom dynamic and a reflection of their passions. This is a great way to encourage leadership, ownership, and to get your child excited for school. We can't wait to see every student's custom-designed classroom.

#### **Picking up School Supplies at OVS (All Families)**

Prior to the start of the school year, we will have a pickup day where families can come gather school supplies necessary to remote learning. You will also receive your schedule and any remaining technology credentials that day. This will be a quick, socially distanced pickup and you should not need to get out of your car. Our target date is Friday, August 28 from 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. We ask that all local families come to campus that day for pickup.

### **SECTION IV: Logistics by Division**

#### **Primary Students**

In Pre-K and Kindergarten, we are lucky to have the opportunity to provide in-person instruction here on our beautiful campus. Students will participate in all of the classes that define the OVS experience. We have created outdoor classroom spaces and have plenty of room to spread out and learn safely. Summer camp taught us that even the youngest children

can embrace the requirement of mask-wearing, take hand washing protocols seriously, and understand their role in keeping everyone healthy. While the school day is augmented to support the fact that most of the school is learning remotely, we are excited to give our youngest learners the opportunity to be on campus. Box lunches will be served daily.

### **Primary Aftercare (PK and K only)**

Due to the challenge of keeping students in small cohort groups, aftercare will look very different this year. While in the past we have offered aftercare to every family and took pride in having students begging to stay at school longer, we need to make some changes for the safety of the students and faculty. To this end, it is important that we ask all families to consider their need for aftercare. While we are committed to helping families get back to normal, we ask that parents only utilize aftercare when it is essential to their employment obligations. If we all embrace the community spirit and utilize aftercare only when necessary, we can better support our families who need aftercare to continue working. We promise we will reopen aftercare for all as soon as we can. You will receive an aftercare signup form to indicate your needs so we can appropriately staff each cohort. Aftercare will begin at 2:00 p.m. and end at 4:00 p.m.

[Sample Pre-K Schedule](#)

[Sample K Schedule](#)

### **Elementary Students**

In first-grade through fifth-grade, students will begin each day by logging into the Seesaw student application. Last year, there was some confusion between the parent app and the student app. We have streamlined the process and everything will be fed through the Student app in Seesaw. Each day will begin with a virtual meeting and the meeting will remain open all day. This helps students become more independent and they will not need to track times or re-join virtual meetings multiple times a day. When it's time for a co-curricular class, the teacher will join the student meeting, and they will attend all of their courses as if they were at school. We will also have times when students complete independent work while logged in to their meeting. This allows them to ask questions and seek help as well as feel connected to peers. The best way to support your student is to spend the first few days helping them navigate the tools on their own. Much of the first weeks of school will be devoted to helping students develop independence in Seesaw and Virtual meetings. Students will need a computer with good wifi connectivity and a built-in camera to attend meetings. iPads and other mobile devices work as well, but when possible a full computer/laptop with keyboard may provide a better experience. We also highly recommend a decent set of headphones or earbuds. We will be providing guided lessons to help families and students familiarize themselves with these tools. There will be snack and lunch times in the schedule, and we encourage all families to adhere to those times.

[Sample Schedule Grades 1-3](#)

[Sample Schedule Grades 4 and 5](#)

### **Middle School**

In 6th through 8th grade, students will be provided with a Chromebook that will function

as their primary learning device. All necessary software and plugins are preinstalled and the machine is ready to go. We have updated the installation of our Learning Management System, Moodle, and this will be the main source for all content delivery and assignment submission. We also recommend obtaining headphones or earbuds. Each day in middle school will start with a virtual advisory meeting. The advisor is your students personal mentor and guide through the opportunities and challenges of their grade level. These meetings will build culture, form social connections, and provide time for Social Emotional Learning and Character Development activities. Students will follow their schedules and utilize Moodle to join virtual meetings for each course. Content will be delivered through lecture, discussion and a variety of digital tools that aim to recreate the classroom experience. Tutoring and independent work time is scheduled each day and teachers are available for questions throughout these periods. We are working hard to maintain all aspects of our program including leadership opportunities. There will be snack and lunch times in the schedule, and we encourage all families to adhere to those times.

[Sample Schedule Grades 6-8](#)

## **SECTION V: Conclusion**

While there are many things that will be different about the start of this school year, we hope you are as excited as we are to get back to learning and growing together. OVS is committed to the best course of action in helping your child succeed in their formative years. We will continually monitor local recommendations and be poised to return to in person learning as soon as that possibility is made a reality. Until that time, we will continue to innovate, further develop programs that express our core values, and face the challenges of the new year with joy and a mindset towards finding opportunities that maximize our learning. Thank you for your commitment to our community. I know we will navigate the coming weeks and months with grace, balance, and poise. We can't wait to see you Friday, August 28 from 9:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m. for our equipment pickup and drop off day.

### **Important Dates:**

- August 28 - 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Equipment pickup (more information to come)
- August 31- Check-in Day. Residents move in and Day students have a quick tech check-in with advisory/homeroom teachers. (more information to come)
- September 1 - First Day of School - 8:00 a.m.

Important Resources:

[Road Map to Reopening](#)  
[Student Handbook](#)  
[Remote Learning Pledge](#)

Sincerely,

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