



From the Cabinet

By FPS Associate Superintendent Dr. Robert Grosz

Virtual Academy Option in the Fargo Public Schools

Fargo Public Schools (FPS) is 100% committed to our mission to *educate and empower all students to succeed*. We are committed to providing the safest education environment possible for our students and staff. To that end, Fargo Public Schools administration developed the [FPS Smart Restart Plan](#) for students and staff for the 2020-2021 school year, working with local, city, and state health officials, and utilizing recommendations from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to create the structure for the plan.

One portion of the plan is a Virtual Academy option. The FPS Virtual Academy is provided as an alternative education option to families with students in K-12 during the 2020-21 school year, as detailed in the [FPS Smart Restart Plan](#). As the school year has progressed, the Virtual Academy has evolved. This article is to highlight that evolution.

FPS Virtual Academy for Grades K-5, Option 1 (Instructor-Led):

At the beginning of the year, Elementary students had the option to choose to attend the FPS Virtual Academy for the fall semester or the full year. Students who choose this option participate in 3 courses online in synchronous (scheduled) video conference sessions and complete asynchronous (unscheduled) activities. The Virtual Academy is staffed with FPS teachers. Support services such as special education and English Learner services are provided in a distance learning environment.

Virtual Academy Option 2 (Parent-Led/Calvert Learning):

As the school year progressed, the number of elementary school students/families who wished to be part of the Fargo Public Schools Elementary School Virtual Academy reached a maximum student to teacher ratio. For this reason, a second modified Elementary Virtual Academy was developed.

How is Elementary Virtual Academy Option 2 different from Elementary Virtual Academy Option 1?

- Virtual Academy Option 2 students and families receive logins to [Calvert Learning](#) and were assigned a licensed teacher from this company instead of a Fargo Public Schools teacher.
- The assigned teacher offers optional live lessons and responds to requests for assistance and conferences with each student once every two weeks.
- Students complete learning activities and assignments on their own and/or with parent support.
- The Calvert curriculum is an engaging, digital experience and has an option for printed materials that reinforce learning.
- Parents attend a required training session to learn how to navigate the system and connect with the teacher (1 hour).

Calvert's curriculum includes:

- Grades K-1



Cabinet Column, cont.

- Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Health, and PE
- Grades 2-5
 - Math, English Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Art, and PE Electives

FPS Virtual Academy for Middle School (1):

At the beginning of the year, middle school students had the option to choose to attend the FPS Middle School Virtual Academy for the fall semester or the full year. The Virtual Academy is staffed with FPS teachers. Support services such as special education and English Learner services are provided in a distance learning environment. Students who choose this option participate in four courses online in synchronous (scheduled) video conference sessions and complete asynchronous (unscheduled) activities.

- English Language Arts
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies

Middle School Virtual Academy (1) students follow the Fargo Public Schools distance learning expectations as outlined in the distance learning agreement.

Synchronous - All students are expected to be logged into the classroom Zoom session.

Asynchronous - Some students may be logged in while others are working independently.

Independent - Students will be working independently to complete assignments.

Courses: English Language Arts / Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies

Study Hall / Small Group Intervention (synchronous/asynchronous)

FPS Virtual Academy for Middle School (2):

As the school year progressed, the number of middle school students/families who wished to be part of the Fargo Public Schools Middle School Virtual Academy reached the maximum student to teacher ratio. For this reason, a second modified Middle School Virtual Academy (2) was developed. The Middle School Virtual Academy (2) offers an asynchronous virtual academy experience for any new request from students/families to join the Middle School Virtual Academy. By providing this opportunity, the student to teacher ratio in our synchronous virtual academy will not increase as more students/families take advantage of a virtual academy. In addition, students/families will continue to have a virtual academy option.

How is Virtual Academy 2 different from Virtual Academy 1?

- Edmentum coursework is utilized
 - Students work on their lessons in an asynchronous mode (students complete lessons on their own)
- Teachers do not conduct daily synchronous Zoom sessions
- Virtual academy teachers:
 - Help the student(s) login to Edmentum course(s)



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- Communicate with students and families
- Provide synchronous connection at least once weekly
 - Schedule 30 minutes per week for each student
- Provide feedback and grade lessons
- Post progress and grades for the student in PowerSchool
 - Provide communication with students' homeschools

Courses: English Language Arts / Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies

FPS Virtual Academy for High School

At the beginning of the year, high school students had the option to choose to attend the FPS Virtual Academy for the fall semester or the full year.

Fargo Public Schools pays for up to six [North Dakota Center for Distance Education](#) courses that will be included on the student's high school transcript. Students consult with their school counselors to register for classes following their plan of study. As the school year progressed, additional students contacted their building principal and counselors to enroll in the FPS Virtual Academy for High School.

Additional information can be found on the FAQ for [FPS Virtual Academy website](#).

Moving Forward and Second Semester

The Fargo Public Schools Virtual Academy continues to be an option for families with students in K-12. For more information about the FPS Virtual Academy, please contact the building principal at your student's school.

Families who are currently part of the Elementary and Middle School Virtual Academies will receive an email asking about their families' wishes for second semester (remain in the virtual academy or return to face to face instruction). Families who are currently part of the High School Virtual Academy should contact their school counselor if they wish to continue in the virtual academy for second semester and enroll in new NDCDE course. New families wishing to begin in the FPS Virtual Academy at the beginning of second semester (January 19th) should contact their building principal by December 21.

