

Student Handbook



CESA 10 Distance Learning Online Services
in partnership with
Digital Districts Online



**Guidelines and Information for K12 Students
taking Online Courses**

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Welcome . . .

We welcome you as an Online Student!

We welcome you as a student taking courses through CESA 10 Online Services and Digital Districts Online (DDO). We are eager to help you at any time so feel free to get in touch with us when you need an answer. This handbook has been designed to provide you with answers to many of the questions or concerns you may have and summarizes the important policies that govern online courses. Please refer to this handbook, in combination with additional information found at www.cesa10.k12.wi.us. And remember, you are not alone. You are part of a “virtual community” of students and staff and we are here to help.

You will be using policies and forms adapted from those of Digital Districts Online. DDO has given permission to adapt these documents to fit CESA 10 distance learning consortium schools.

You may be asking yourself, “So, what did I get myself into?” But don’t worry. We are here to provide you with the support you need. On the other hand, any student who thinks that taking a course online will be “easy” will be surprised. An online course is different, not necessarily easier or harder, and the added factors of self-motivation and discipline may cause additional challenges.

Making Assumptions

First of all, we are making a few assumptions:

1. You have earned the CESA 10 and DDO “Virtual Driver’s License.”
2. You accept your responsibilities as an online student and have read and signed the CESA 10 and DDO Student Contract.
3. Your parent(s) or guardian has granted permission to take an online course and the CESA 10 and DDO Parent Permission Form has been signed and given to your Local Teacher.
4. You have worked with a Local Facilitator (LF) in your school district that has requested a course for you and has arranged for the hardware, software and required materials you will need to get started.
5. You have completed Parts 1 and 2 of the DDO Student Orientation, “Becoming a Successful Online Student” and “Your Mission Begins: How to Be a Successful Online Student.”

If these assumptions are wrong, you will need to contact your Local Facilitator in order to get started. Otherwise, we are off and running and here are the steps to get started:

Steps to Get Started:

- **Step 1:** Make sure you have received the required course materials and login/password information. Write down the course web site, login information, and email on the last page of this Handbook.
- **Step 2:** Clarify with your local teacher the location(s) and hours that you will be able and expected to work on your course.
- **Step 3:** Verify the date you will need to complete the course
- **Step 4:** Gather the pertinent information listed on the inside cover of this Handbook. Create a file folder where you can store the Handbook, course information, notes, and printouts.
- **Step 5:** Log on to your course and make sure everything is working technically.
 - If you are having computer problems, write down any error messages that appear before you ask for help. Identifying the specifics of the problem will help your local facilitator or tech support resolve the problem.
- **Step 6:** Print out a schedule of the course assignments and tests and set a timeline for completing them. This will help you keep on track and set realistic goals. If you find you need an extension in order to complete the course, talk with your local facilitator (LF), who will get in touch with DDO or the other course vendor to determine if this is possible in your district.
- **Step 7:** Complete the Course Orientation found in your online course.
- **Step 8:** Try to plan a consistent and minimum time you will work on the course each day.

Keep in mind that in DDO classes you have a **short trial period for the course**. If after you start a course you feel that online learning is not for you, talk to your local teacher or counselor. You may decide that the online course does not fit your learning needs. If you do not meet the course schedule in the first two weeks of the course, you may risk being dropped from the course. This trial period may not apply to other course vendors like Apex, UW Colleges or MATC.

To be successful in your course, you will need to work independently, stay on task and maintain a regular schedule of logging on and keeping up with the readings, course assignments, homework and other expectations. There is no way to ‘sit in the back’ and be silent in an online course! So good luck, and be sure to be in contact with your online and local teachers as soon as you run into any problems. Here is a summary of your responsibilities in an online class:

Daily

- Log in with your correct user name and password.
- Check your e-mail.
- Check course announcements.
- Check discussion groups for student and teacher postings.
- Access your course content and assignments.
- Begin working where you left off from in the previous course session.
- Make sure you do your own work!
- Use a notebook to take notes for assignments as well as make note of problems with the online course.
- Anticipate when you will have a quiz or test, allowing yourself enough time to complete it, without running the risk of submitting incomplete work. If time allows, check your answers before you submittal.
- Don't forget to log off.

Weekly

- Be in contact with your online instructor.
- Check your course grade book to see how you are progressing in the course.
- Discuss any questions that come up with your local facilitator and/or online teachers.
- E-mail your instructor about any problems you encounter with the course. Be constructive with your criticism.

Please read carefully. . . .

Important Information

Academic Integrity

CESA 10 and DDO expect a full commitment to academic integrity from each student. Academic integrity means:

- Your work on each assignment will be completely your own
- Your collaboration with another classmate on any assignment will be in accordance with your instructor
- You will not practice plagiarism of any form. Plagiarism is defined as follows:

Copying or using ideas or words from another online classmate, or an Internet or print source and presenting them as your own.

- If an instructor confirms that a student has plagiarized work, the student will be subject to consequences determined by your Local School District and you may be removed from the course with a failing grade.

Attendance

While students may not be responsible for daily classroom participation as in a traditional classroom setting, there is still an important need to participate on a regular basis. You may also be assigned to small groups to work on collaborative projects. Your learning and the success of other students depend upon your participation.

Be aware of the guidelines and expectations set forth by your online teacher at the beginning of the course. Extended absence from an online class (failure to hand in assignments, post to discussion boards, communicate with instructors, etc.) will quickly cause problems with your grade as well as ability to finish the course in a timely manner.

If an unexpected situation such as illness should arise and there is an extended leave from the course, contact your Online Teacher and report the problem to your Local Facilitator. They will discuss alternatives with you regarding the next steps to take for course completion.

Assessment

As a condition of enrollment, all DDO students must accept the ability of the local district to require that students perform tasks or undergo additional assessments in addition to those of the online teacher. If a school wishes to require other graded assessments for coursework in a proctored or unproctored situation for any student or group of students, they may make arrangements to do so.

Copyright

DDO courses use copyrighted materials that have been licensed or developed by DDO. These materials are the property of the respective developer and are provided only for the use of DDO students. You may not distribute, publish, or reuse the materials, audio files, images or design of any of the curriculum. You are authorized to view, copy, and print documents contained within the portal and courses, subject to the agreement that:

- Your use is for the performance of coursework as required by the instructor teaching the course for which you are registered.
- All copyright or proprietary notices are displayed on all copies
- You will not reuse any material contained on the portal or courses, including the functionality of the courses delivery system
- You will not copy the course delivery system for any commercial or noncommercial purpose
- You will not copy any codes or graphics contained in the site, except those graphics used in courses, subject to the above terms.

Course Completion

Upon completion of your online course, e-mail your online teacher (and notify your local facilitator) that you have completed all requirements. The online teacher will verify by e-mail that all assignments have been completed and graded. The Local Facilitator and Online Teacher will work together to determine your credit earned and course grade.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure that all written assignments are properly submitted for grading. CESA 10 and DDO recommend that students keep electronic copies of all assignments in the event that there are technical difficulties with assignment submissions.

Credit and Grade Posting

The Local Facilitator (LF), in consultation with the Online Teacher (OT), will determine credit and grades for the course you are taking. Your LF will be responsible for posting your credit and grade to your transcript.

Discipline

All students enrolled in a CESA 10 or DDO course are subject to the rules and restrictions implemented by their home school district.

Harassment Reporting

If you feel you are being harassed in your CESA 10 or DDO course environment, it is important to report it immediately to your Local Facilitator (LF). Harassment comes in many forms, including Spam (unsolicited e-mails not pertaining to the course), threatening communications; offensive e-communications or any other kind of communication that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Be cautious about e-mail messages from anyone, particularly adults asking you for personal information, attempting to arrange meetings, or engaging in personal contact. Disclose to your local facilitator and online teachers any message you receive that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable. Never give out personal information -- including your full name (first names are best), home phone number, home address or other data -- anywhere on the Internet, including your e-mail.

Netiquette

A high sense of personal honor and integrity is expected for students taking online courses. All students and teachers participating in online courses are expected to conduct their communications in a professional, respectful manner as outlined in the student code of conduct in effect in the local school district. The use of proper Internet etiquette is expected at all times. Inappropriate language or behavior will result in disciplinary action and possible termination of your course. Procedures outlined in the local school district's Acceptable Use Policy will apply to all online courses.

Remember that e-mail is not private. Never say anything via e-mail that you wouldn't mind seeing on the school bulletin board or in the local newspaper.

Security

Security on any computer system is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users. If you feel you can identify a security problem in the school's computers, network or Internet connection, notify a system administrator.

Never snoop around in other people's files. Cases of suspected user file tampering will be dealt with through the loss of a student's ability to connect to the course for an extended or permanent period of time.

Think about the social consequences of any program you write. Never create harmful computer viruses. These actions are illegal and will be enforced. Any viruses detected as originating from a CESA 10 or DDO student will result in legal action against the student the immediate loss of credit in the course.

Protect your password. Keep it secret. Users are subject to all local, state and federal laws. Anything posted to the courses offered through DDO will be treated as public comments and are thus subject to criminal prosecution if they so warrant. DDO will cooperate fully with local, state or federal officials in any investigation related to any illegal activities conducted through Internet access

And Finally.....

Some Tips and Tricks

Tips for Discussion Board Posting

(This material is credited to: Michigan Virtual High School)

Constructive Criticism

It is human nature to disagree with people. However, it is important to remember that you need to respect your fellow classmates. In responding to something you disagree with, it is essential that you are specific in what you want to respond to.

Example: I thought what you said about Ahab's obsession in Moby Dick was good; however, I don't think he was crazy...

Notice how the example cites the post, and then focuses the criticism on a particular point within the post that is being responded to. In your online course environment, your classmates won't necessarily be able to reference the post you are responding to as they read your post, so you will need to help them out by making it clear yourself. Respecting your classmates is of the utmost importance when working online because your posts are the only way you get to interact with your classmates.

Posting Discussions

In a traditional classroom you are able to talk to your group members after class, or you might be given time during the class to discuss our work. However, online classes aren't conducted face to face so your communications will be through e-mail most of the time. This means that it is essential that you are communicating regularly with your group for assignments. If you are going to be out of town, are sick, or are unable to communicate with your group for any reason, you need to make them aware of this situation as soon as possible.

Example: Keith is going on vacation but he needs to be a participant in his online group project. So Keith does the responsible thing and makes arrangements with his group members prior to leaving, and he finds a way to participate from his vacation destination.

Keith is a good example of responsible group member because he has identified that there will be a lapse in his ability to participate when he leaves for vacation. He has notified his group members so that they can inform him of what they need. And Keith has tried to make arrangements so that he can participate when he is away from home. These are things that you need to take responsibility for when you are taking an online course.

Preparation for Discussion

This is really related to constructive criticism and active group participation. In the online discussions, thoughtful responses will make your posts easier to read and will also help your classmates respond to them. While some online classes may not require your participation in discussion, the majority will. This means that you will be required to make posts based on assignments, and on the information you have read.

Poor Example: I thought the article was bad.

Good Example: I thought this article was bad because the author did not address why photosynthesis is vital to the life cycle of the fern.

In the poor example, the student obviously didn't like the article, but there is no explanation of why. This would force other students and the instructor to request clarification, which would only waste time. In the good example, the student makes it clear why the article was disappointing and perhaps the instructor could even respond to this post. The ability to discuss and post clearly is an essential skill online.

Things to Avoid At All Costs

- Intentionally insulting someone
- Sending Spam
- Making offensive remarks
- Making inappropriate comments

Study Tips

- **Keep up with the daily and weekly responsibilities** outlined in the Student Responsibilities document. (See Appendix 3)
- Maintain **consistent communication** with your online and local teachers.
- **Compare your weekly accomplishments to your assignment timeline.** If you are falling behind, e-mail or speak to your local teacher about developing better strategies that will help you meet your deadlines.
- Spend **five to ten hours per week** on the course to meet your schedule and complete the course requirements.
- Make a **to-do list** of assignments. Break assignments down into smaller, more manageable parts. Your list will be easier to use if it has small chunks of assignments, not big ones.

- **Print out course materials** if you find it easier to read from printed materials.
- **Take notes** on the important points of the course material. Writing can help you understand the material and stay more engaged in learning.
- **Stay organized.** Print important documents and keep your notes and important information in a file folder.
- **Ask your teacher for guidance** and suggestions if you have questions or difficulties. If you are still confused about how to use the course tools or navigate through the material, revisit the Course Orientation. If you are still unclear about how to get around in the course and complete your work, ask your teacher where to go and what to do.

Motivation

One of the keys to completing your online course is to find ways to motivate yourself and continue to give yourself positive encouragement.

- **Take time to think about why you are taking the course.** Write down how completing the course will help you achieve your goals, such as completing credits for graduation.
- **Identify the source of your frustrations.** Try to think through problems yourself. If you need help, talk to your local teacher or e-mail your online teacher about the problems or frustrations you are facing. Ask them for suggestions or strategies that will help you.
- **Establish a study routine** and stick to it. It will be much easier to keep up with the course requirements. It is difficult to stay motivated if you fall too far behind.
- **Pace yourself.** Give yourself breaks when you need to.
- Give yourself **positive messages** about how well you are doing. Acknowledge your accomplishments and reward yourself as you complete major assignments.

Managing Your Time

In an online course, **time management is critical** to success because most activities can be accomplished asynchronously—you don't have to be online at the same time as your instructor or other students. The advantage of learning “anytime, anywhere” also makes it easier to put off logging on and participating in class. As with any traditional course, you risk earning a lower grade if you fall behind.

One of the best ways to manage your time in an online class is to **plan out your day** and see where the online course best fits in. You may have an actual class period during the school day to work on your online course, but you may have to find the time to work on your online classes at home (even if you have time during a scheduled class, you'll probably still have online homework.)

With traditional classes it is easy to get into student study groups and work together. In an online environment, this requires a different kind of approach. Luckily, with the Internet, every lecture, discussion and communication is archived online for you to review. This gives you an advantage because you can look back through everything that was ever said or written in class leading up to the test.