Grade 5-9 Synchronous Courses

Description

Synchronous courses offer the same program of study as an online course, with the added benefit of weekly meetings with a teacher and working alongside a cohort of your peers. Synchronous courses provide overall structure for students, with the expectation that they will work to keep up with the schedule set by the teacher for assignments and assessments. The accountability of the weekly meeting is designed to support learning of challenging concepts and content, encourage student interaction and community building, and provide a natural place for students to ask questions and develop deeper understanding.

Benefits

Synchronous courses provide regular touchpoints where students meet with their teacher and classmates on a weekly basis. Regularly scheduled times set by the instructor allow students to connect with teachers to receive instruction, clarify assignments, and ask questions in a group setting. Synchronous course options allow students the opportunity to connect with their teachers and other students in a more typical classroom style, providing the chance for students to be known and feel more accountable for completing their work. Teachers may use weekly meetings to answer common questions, clarify assignments, discuss complex topics, and build community through interactive discussions and review activities.

How Synchronous Courses Function

- The teacher and students meet via Zoom at a regularly scheduled time every week.
- Weekly meetings create a rhythm and maintain a high level of contact.
- Students are expected to work through course assignments and assessments on their own time between weekly synchronous sessions.
- At the Grade 5-9 level, Zoom classes are 30 minutes in length and begin in the third week of September.
- Students are welcome to book office hours for 1:1 support from their teacher as needed.

> Take a look at this year's synchronous cohort schedule for specific days and times.

Student Responsibilities and Expectations

- Students commit to attend weekly meeting with teacher and other students in their synchronous cohort.
- Students commit to working independently on weekly lessons and assignments, according to the schedule set by the teacher.

- Students commit to staying on pace with the cohort, completing lesson activities and submitting assignments in a timely manner.
- Students commit to respectful and appropriate behaviour during weekly meetings. This includes both appropriate language and appropriate attire.
- Students are expected to participate in class discussions, breakout rooms, and community building activities with their cameras on, using the microphone and chatbox as invited by the teacher. Students do not have the option to simply “listen in” with their cameras off, as this makes it very difficult to foster a sense of class community.
- Students who feel uncomfortable engaging over Zoom may be better suited to an asynchronous learning format.
- Students who fall significantly behind schedule may be reassigned to an asynchronous course.

Teacher Responsibilities and Expectations

- The teacher will decide on a set class meeting day and time well in advance of the start of the school year to allow students to view synchronous course schedules as they enroll.
- The teacher will create a yearlong schedule that outlines the pace for lesson completion, assignment submissions, and assessment dates.
- The teacher will prepare for and host 30 minute weekly meetings with content and activities that are relevant to the course and/or lesson being addressed.
- The teacher will host with both audio and video functions on, so students can see their teacher.
- The teacher will mark assignments and assessments in a timely manner, providing relevant formative and summative assessment for students.
- The teacher will initiate contact with any students who have fallen behind or become inactive, to determine the best course of action going forward.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Does it cost any more to enroll in a synchronous course compared to an asynchronous course?
    - No, the cost to the student is the same for a synchronous course as it is for any other online course enrollment.
2. What if I have to miss a meeting for an appointment or other unforeseen conflict?
    - This should be communicated to your teacher. Students should arrange activities such as regular piano lessons or sports practices at a time that does not conflict with scheduled class meetings. It is understood that conflicts come up, but please communicate with your teacher well in advance.
3. Can my student take just one synchronized cohort for an online course or do they have to take all across their grade level?
    - Absolutely - they can take just one or multiple synchronous options! Figure out what works best for your child’s learning style, level of independence and degree of desired flexibility.
4. How does the course schedule work?

- The meeting times for each synchronous cohort will be posted in SOPHIE. Your K-9 support teacher can also let you know when specific classes are meeting. When planning the schedule, our team takes care to avoid overlap between class time for the different subjects across the same grade level. This allows students to take all synchronous offerings if they so choose.

5. How long are the synchronous classes?
    - At the Grade 5-9 level, Zoom classes are 30 minutes in length.
6. What happens if my student falls behind?
    - Just like in any classroom environment, things happen. Students are encouraged to keep attending the class and to work with their teacher to catch up. Teachers are prepared to support students when things don’t go as planned.
7. Are teachers available outside of the posted class times?
    - Absolutely. Teachers will have office hours times posted in their Moodle, or Brightspace.
8. Are students required to have cameras and audio on?
    - Yes, this is a basic expectation of a synchronous class. One of the goals of these classes is building community and students are expected to participate in this way.
9. Are the courses semester or linear pacing?
    - Courses are held over the school year in a linear fashion. Classes start in the third week of September and run until mid-June.
10. Do I have to attend the live meetings?
    - Yes! This is the main part of a synchronous class. Of course, there are absences that you cannot avoid, like sickness or appointments. Please communicate with your teacher. Synchronous class sessions are not recorded for later viewing.
11. Is there a minimum enrollment necessary in order to have a synchronous course happen? Also, is there a maximum number?
    - Building community is important to synchronous classes so we will require that a minimal number of students enroll. If we do not get the minimum number of students, the ones that are enrolled will automatically be moved to asynchronous. As far as a maximum number, we realize that an online Zoom class can reach a maximum practical size, so if this happens, we will open up a second weekly meeting time to accommodate more students.
12. What if I want to take a class that is only offered synchronously (e.g., French and Spanish 5-7) but I can't attend the weekly meetings?
    - Students enrolled in a synchronous class who cannot attend weekly meetings need to follow the weekly class schedule and submit activities to stay on pace. While non-attending students will, in essence, be asynchronous students, the due dates for assignments will be the same as for synchronous students.

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