

Learning at TDChristian



January 10, 2022

By Anneke Gretton

We are back to remote learning temporarily, with the plan of returning to in person classes on Monday, January 17. We are so thankful for the hard work of our tech team, Eric and Bruce Vrieling, who are providing teachers with all the training and tools they need to teach well remotely. We are grateful to the learning commons team, Janice DeBoer, Ryan Neville, and Michelle Jaworski, who are supporting students. And of course, we are so blessed by our team of awesome teachers who think outside the box to find ways to provide connection, care, and rich learning opportunities in the online setting. The switch to remote learning isn't easy, but we are so thankful for our great team as we continue to move forward in learning for service in the light of God's Word.

Students, remote learning is a good time to hone your independent learning skills. These are skills that will be useful to you throughout your life in future education and any career you pursue. How do you stay focused with all the distractions available to you on your computer?

Here's a few strategies to help:

1. Set a routine and stick to it. Without the structure of a school day, it's easy to let time slip away. But if you tackle your work during your scheduled class times, you'll be able to stay on top of things.
2. If you can, set aside a space in your house (like your desk) which you only use for school work. If possible, don't mix your school work space with your video game space or Netflix space. That way, when you sit down at your desk, the space itself will be a cue to your brain that this is time to focus.
3. Take active breaks. In between classes, don't stay on your computer. Get up and grab a healthy snack. Go for a walk outside during lunch break.
4. Stay connected to your school community. FaceTime with your friends.

Know that even in the isolation this pandemic has caused, God is always with you. Psalm 145 is a great psalm, and I'll share verse 18 here: "The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." We can't wait to see you in person again soon.

December 6, 2021

By Anneke Gretton

Teachers at TDChristian are always learning and improving our teaching and assessment. During our fourth and final project day (Friday, December 3), staff worked on improving our rubrics for assessment. Rubrics are a helpful assessment tool for making learning expectations transparent and specific, and for promoting a growth mindset around learning and achievement.

During our December 3rd professional development, staff looked at some of the complex research on assessment – highlighting its value, but also its challenges. Four teachers presented four rubrics: a task-specific rubric, an exemplar-focused rubric, a one-point rubric, and a learning progression rubric. We learned about why and how these four teachers use their different rubric styles.

We concluded our rubric session with a Tuning Protocol: Each teacher brought a rubric they are currently using to a team of four colleagues. After presenting the assessment along with its rubric to their colleagues, teachers received feedback from colleagues on how to improve the rubric further. Just like the students at TDChristian, teachers never stop learning and fine-tuning our work!

November 22, 2021

By Anneke Gretton

We are just over one week into our second half of semester one, and this means that many students are getting to try new fields of study! One of the unique features of our academic program at TDChristian are our shared courses that connect students to expert teachers, who are passionate about both students and their subject specializations.

Grade 9 Block is a wonderful opportunity for students to discover their gifts in Music, Improv, Visual Art, STEM, and Communications Technology. At this mid-semester time, most of our Grade 9 students dive into a new field in arts and technology, taught by passionate professionals who are experts in their fields. A small group of Grade 9s who love video technology will continue in a semester-long special technology course called the Pulse, where they create TDChristian's very own TV show! Check out the latest episode on our school's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dM6nOWBwl6g>

A solid foundation in Mathematics is essential for students' future studies. Therefore, we schedule our Grade 9 Math course in two halves: Number, Algebra, Measurement, and Financial Literacy in semester 1, and Graphing, Data, and more Algebra in semester 2. This spreads our Grade 9 math course out over the full year, which increases students' retention and understanding of these foundational concepts.

Our Grade 9 and 10 Science courses also provide students the opportunity to connect with and learn from the talented teachers who will teach their Senior Science courses in Grade 11 and 12. Grade 9 and 10 Science students learn four strands: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Earth & Space Science from four teachers who specialize in their fields.

These unique course structures are only possible because of the culture of collaboration among TDChristian teachers. Our teachers regularly connect formally and informally to coordinate their courses and share resources. I'm so thankful for the generous and collaborative teaching culture we have at TDChristian!

November 8, 2021

By Anneke Gretton

Just like our students, our staff are always learning! Professional development is important to us at TDChristian, and we use regular Project Days throughout the year to make space for Professional Development.

Our staff recently participated in the Edvance Annual Gathering on October 28th. We learned from Dr. David Smith on the theme of Education as Hospitality. The theme of hospitality – God as a banquet host, Christ welcoming the stranger – is woven throughout scripture. In our PD time, we considered how Christian Education can be an act of hospitality to students. We learned about teaching practices that help students of all backgrounds feel welcome in our classes.

On October 29th, our staff participated in school-wide professional development on the theme of Mental Wellness. We learned from our school therapist, Andrew Peterkin, about how to recognize struggles with mental illness in students and ourselves, and how to find support. We also learned practices that we can use in our classrooms for students and for ourselves to promote mental wellness. We wrapped up our professional development by participating in a wellness activity.

We are looking forward to our next project day, November 10th, when we will be focusing on items from the strategic plan and celebrating staff milestones.

October 25, 2021

By Anneke Gretton

Our second Project Day is coming up on Thursday, October 28! This Thursday, students will be working from home on a project designed to deepen their learning in their period 2 class.

Why do we have Project Days?

Project Days are a great chance for students to dive into an interesting and challenging topic to enrich their learning. At TDChristian, we strive to create projects that highlight students' voice and empower students to make choices about how to focus and share their learning.

Project Days also provide space for our staff to participate in professional development activities. This week, teachers will be learning about Education as Hospitality from Dr. David Smith at the Edvance Annual Gathering on Thursday, October 28. On Friday, October 29, the TDChristian staff will be working with our school therapist, Andrew Peterkin, to further our understanding of how to support students and each other with regards to mental health.

Every semester, there will be four Project Days – one for each of the four class periods. The next two Project Days will be on Wednesday, November 10 (for your Period 3 class) and Friday, December 3 (for your Period 4 class).

Enjoy learning on your Project Day this Thursday!

October 12, 2021

By Anneke Gretton

We are excited to host you in person at TDChristian for Learning Dialogues this week! Students and their parents will meet with teachers in several classrooms and the Presentation Center this Thursday, October 14 from 3:00 – 8:00pm. We encourage students to attend Learning Dialogues with their parents.

If you haven't scheduled your learning dialogues yet, you can do so up until Thursday, October 14th at noon. Here's what to do:

1. Go to schoolinterviews.ca
2. Click on the "Make a Booking" link near the top right
3. Enter the code j95zg
4. Follow the instructions: for each child, you may book up to eight Learning Dialogues, though four is the normal number for most students.

Learning Dialogues are a wonderful opportunity to work as a team – teachers, parents, and students – to make a plan for students' learning and growth at TDChristian. We are really looking forward to meeting with you this Thursday!

Sept 14, 2021

By Anneke Gretton

Thank you for welcoming me to the TDChristian community! My role as Vice Principal of Learning includes leading our professional development plan and visioning new directions for learning at TDChristian in collaboration with our awesome staff.

We are thrilled to return to in-person learning at TDChristian this year! We reimagined the daily schedule for 2021-22 with these goals in mind:

- To enable deeper student learning
- To encourage flourishing in all aspects of life: spiritual, social, academic, athletic, and more
- To empower teachers to do their best work
- To facilitate safety in a sustainable way with respect to COVID-19

Our new daily schedule includes three club periods per week to encourage students to build friendships while pursuing their passions with like-minded peers and teachers.

Research-based teaching tools like the flipped classroom and other techniques apply a blended model of teaching: balancing frequent in-person learning with asynchronous learning. We've incorporated asynchronous learning into our schedule (averaging 10 minutes per weekday per class) to complement the rich learning that happens in class at TDChristian. Students will be supported by their teachers to excel in both their asynchronous and in-person learning activities.

You can find the details of our new schedule in the Family & Student Handbook. You are also welcome and encouraged to connect with me if you have any questions. I look forward to getting to know you this year!