

Welcome to Texas Virtual School

Whew...your students are now registered in their online classes. This is a very labor-intensive effort, but one which has to be done very carefully to ensure a transparent effort for you and your students.

Texas Virtual School is now entering its seventh year of operation. We have learned much about K-12 virtual learning and I want to share my observations with you...along with suggestions for the upcoming semester. We want you and your students to have a positive online experience.

Without active interchange, students **will stagnate** and **lose momentum** in their online studies. In my observations of students' success, four measures stand out:

1. **The most successful students are those who are the best oriented before they begin their first online courses.**
2. **The most successful students are those who have a school Liaison who is interested and active in their students' online experiences.**
3. **The most successful students are those who have the most active interested instructor who communicates often with both the student and Liaison.**
4. **The most successful students are those who take a linear, prescriptive approach to their studies.**

When all four are in position...**success occurs**. With this in mind, Texas Virtual School now has three trainings identified: **Student Orientation**, **Liaisonics/Counselor**, and **Web Instructors Certification**. We also have an introductory mini-course for interested parents: **Parents Online**. In addition, we now have **supporting instructional** materials for most of our Core and Spanish courses.

Student Security...according to the **Children's Internet Protection Act**, we cannot relay personal information over public Internet or through public email. As a result, I have established alternative ways of communicating and transporting this information. **Please be very cognizant of this and use these established venues. Do NOT use public email** to transmit any student grades or progress reports. I have set up a password protected Blackboard account (TVS Reporting-Fall 2007) to provide you a safe and private way of receiving grades. You and your students' teachers are enrolled in this account. Through the **Grade Submissions** document exchange you will receive these private reports. After your students grades or progress reports have been submitted, you will receive notification so you can retrieve these. This also provides TVS a record of all reports being sent and a backup for you. **Keep your own backup of all grades and reports you are sent.** Servers do crash. You will see this account when you enter the Blackboard interface. It is listed as a **"Course You Are Taking."** To enter, go to the following URL: <http://tvs.esc4.net>. Your USERNAME and PASSWORD was given to you by the TVS administrator. We advise you change your password, to do this open Personal Information with the Tools link.

Emails...your students are to use **Blackboard's "messaging" tool when communicating with their teachers.**

Cheating...this is a touchy subject but one that requires discussion. It has been discovered some students have cheated (class.com/Aventa) by accessing quizzes, then exiting after viewing, and **asking their teachers to reset the tests.** I have asked all my teachers **instead of resetting** quizzes...to fax you a written test to be taken in a proctored environment. **The only time a quiz should be reset (class.com/Aventa) is when you notify the teacher there is a technical problem.** We are now requiring all tests be passworded. You will receive test passwords in the TVS Reporting site. TVS also encourages its teachers to use multiple methods of evaluation. I ask them to do the following:

- Require **daily attendance** (penalize when not present)
- Require **discussion board postings** (penalize when not posted)
- Require written, **reflective journals** (penalize when not turned in on time)
- Give extra points for doing **extra "fun" work** or completing work ahead of time. I love the idea of asking a question in an announcement (germane to the topic of study) and giving points for sending in the answer.
- Find a way to use **portfolio method** of grading when possible.
- Require a **written final exam** taken under proctored conditions.

Time Management...many students have difficulty in keeping to a schedule. It is important for your students to have a **weekly or biweekly tasks list and keep to it.** Time Lines are very important. Discuss with your students the importance of course timelines and **sticking to them.** I want these courses to be completed in a timely manner, unless there is an excellent reason these have to be extended.

Extensions are fine as long as all parties agree (TVS is one of those parties). Students many times get the wrong impression that an online course is easier than its traditional counterpart. This type of course requires dedication to task and good time management skills. Teachers are facilitators and **your students must take charge of their own learning.**

Supporting Materials...timelines and checklists are now provided in our supporting instructional materials for most CORE and Spanish classes. These materials are located in the Workbook area of each online course. Please locate and print this material for your students. It is advised this be kept in a binder and referred to daily.

Communicating...it is very important that you are consistent in your communication with your students' teachers. TVS advocates active, generative learning. **Please communicate often with your students and their teachers.** We expect you to respond to questions from your students' online teachers within 24 hours.

We want this to be an exciting journey for all and a very successful semester for our students, teachers, and you, our wonderful Liaisons. You are the **BEST!!!** Remember I am here for you and will help you in any way that I can.

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