TUSCALOOSA COUNTY
School System

TCSS Virtual Learning Program
through ACCESS Virtual Learning
(Updated March 21, 2023)

Mission

Our mission is to educate and empower all students to be college and career ready graduates – prepared to make positive contributions to our global society.

Beliefs

✓ High expectations are necessary to achieve goals and expand opportunities for all.

✓ Education is a shared responsibility that positively impacts the quality of life.

✓ Equity, fairness, accountability, and fiscal responsibility are foundations of our decision-making.

✓ Safe, well-equipped, student-centered schools support student success.

✓ Diversity and individual learning needs are respected, included, and valued.

Through the TCSS Virtual Learning Program, the Tuscaloosa County School System provides students the option to complete courses by way of an online, virtual platform. ACCESS courses, which align with the State of Alabama courses of study, offer students the benefits of time, flexibility and program customization.

Students who utilize the virtual program also assume increased responsibility in personal time management, organization, self-direction, and personal discipline to complete course and school requirements.

What do I need to be successful as a full-time online learner through the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program?

✓ On-line courses require more commitment and self-discipline than classroom courses because you must take responsibility for doing the assigned work, getting assignments completed and submitted on time, and being prepared for tests and quizzes.

✓ You will need to pace yourself, rather than relying on feedback from the teacher or other students. It is easy to put off your on-line course when you are not required to be in a classroom each week.

✓ If you are a self-starter, possess self-discipline, and can work independently on a task until it is complete, then you will be a successful on-line student. The ideal virtual learner is able to answer these questions positively:
  ❑ Am I self-motivated?
  ❑ Can I work well independently?
  ❑ Do I manage my time well?
  ❑ Can I establish and stick to a regular weekly schedule for class work/assignments?
  ❑ Am I computer and web literate?

REQUIREMENTS – EXPECTATIONS – GUIDELINES

What are the minimum requirements to remain enrolled as a full-time online student in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program?

✓ Students must reside within the Tuscaloosa County School zones and be enrolled in the high school of their zone.

✓ Students who apply to the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program must be on cohort with their peers. A student's cohort is established in the year he/she begins grade 9. A student "on cohort" is making successful progress towards graduation in four years.

✓ If criteria are met for students to be eligible for special education or 504 services, designated individuals from the local schools will schedule meetings prior to orientation. The IEP and 504 teams must make the recommendation for students to be enrolled in the TCSS Virtual Learning Program.

✓ For the 2023-2024 school year, students must complete the online application between April 3, 2023 and April 28, 2023.
Please note: Students who fail to complete the online application in the specified timeframe will not be considered for admission to the TCSS Virtual Learning Program.

✓ On the application, students will provide the following:
Student Information
o Student Name
o Student Email (TCSS email preferred)
o Student Address (Must reside within the jurisdiction of the Tuscaloosa County School System.)
o Zoned School
o Grade for the 2023-2024 School Year

Parent/Guardian Information
o Parent/Guardian Name
o Parent/Guardian Email
o Parent/Guardian Phone Number

Confirm the Time and Date for the Required Student/Parent Information Session
o May 11, 2023 – 6:00 p.m. – Hillcrest High School Theater
o May 15, 2023 – 6:00 p.m. – Holt High School Multimedia Room
o May 16, 2023 – 6:00 p.m. – Tuscaloosa County High Multimedia Room

Confirm the Time and Date for the Required Student/Parent Orientation Session
o Friday, July 28, 8:30-10:30 a.m.. The required orientation session will be held in the Community Room of the TCSS Central Office located at 1118 Greensboro Avenue, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401.

Electronic Signatures

✓ Students applying for admission after the application window has closed will be denied admission unless extenuating circumstances are approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

✓ All TCSS students will begin the 2023-2024 school year on Wednesday, August 9, 2023. Students accepted to the TCSS Virtual Learning Program will receive dates and expectations at the mandatory orientation session.

✓ After August 9, 2023, students will have 5 school days to determine whether or not they wish to continue as a full-time virtual student. (A final decision must be made by August 15,2023.)

✓ After August 15, 2023, students will remain a full-time virtual student for the duration of the 2023-2024 school year (or until early exit requirements are met for seniors). At that time, course schedules are established and courses may not be dropped.

✓ All students who are denied enrollment to the 2023-2024 Virtual Learning Program will be encouraged to enroll in at least one ACCESS course to better prepare themselves to be a full-time virtual learner in 2024-2025.

✓ Seniors must be prepared to finish their courses prior to the conclusion of the spring semester to be eligible to participate in the graduation ceremony.

✓ Students must maintain consistent and reliable high-speed Internet service. While our TCSS Connect initiative does grant each TCSS student access to an iPad, you should also have easy access to a computer that is connected to the internet, be able to store information on your hard drive or a storage device, and have a printer. Many of the ACCESS programs do not operate correctly on an iPad. You will have access to the Office 365 programs (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc) through your TCSS student account.

✓ Students must maintain a passing grade (60 or above) for all courses taken during the academic year. NOTE: Extracurricular eligibility requires a numerical composite average of 70.

✓ Students must maintain appropriate course progression as measured by the completion of weekly assignments, quizzes, and/or tests as outlined in the course pacing guidelines. Students who fall an entire unit behind have accrued an equivalent of 10 unexcused absences; therefore, a referral will be made to the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program.

✓ Students must check their TCSS email (created and assigned by TCSS) and their ACCESS inbox (created through the ACCESS Schoology account) daily and manage their communications.

✓ Students must adhere to the policies and procedures set forth in the 2023-2024 Parent-Student Information Guide and to the Academic Integrity Contract.

✓ Students must remain in good standing as a student of the Tuscaloosa County School System.

✓ Students with discipline infractions resulting in a Class III offense will be immediately referred to the Department of Students Services for disciplinary action.

✓ Students must be very comfortable using a computer before taking online courses.

✓ Currently enrolled TCSS Virtual Learning Program students who desire to continue in the program the following academic year will participate in an end-of-year conference to determine eligibility.

What are the academic requirements of a full-time online student enrolled in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program?

✓ Students enrolled in the Tuscaloosa County School System are promoted based on credits earned. (Policy 5.26)
    Grade classification is based on the following guidelines:

        Grade 9 .... 0 – 4 credits
        Grade 10.. 5 – 11 credits
        Grade 11.. 12 – 18 credits
        Grade 12.. 19 – 24 credits
        GRADUATION REQUIREMENT .... 24 credits

✓ To ensure that adequate progress towards graduation is maintained, students are required to take a minimum of eight courses/credits per academic year with at least four of those courses being core courses (English, math, science and social studies). Exceptions can be considered for students completing Dual Enrollment coursework.

✓ ACCESS Virtual Learning offers coursework at the standard and AP levels. Advanced and Honors level coursework is not available. Students who participate in the TCSS Virtual Learning Program may be ineligible to receive the Diploma with Academic Distinction due to ACCESS course offerings.

✓ Courses must be selected from the approved ACCESS Virtual Learning offerings.
    http://accessdl.state.al.us/courses
    NOTE: All ACCESS Virtual Learning core courses meet Alabama Course of Study standards. The ALSDE has received approval from the NCAA for 52 ACCESS courses. These courses may be viewed by going to the Courses Tab above and following the directions.

✓ All module tests/exams must be supervised by the Virtual Learning Program facilitator on testing days. All students will be required to report to the TCSS Central Office on Tuesdays to complete tests and exams..

✓ Students must maintain a passing grade (60 or above) for **all** courses taken during the academic year.

✓ Students must maintain appropriate course progression as measured by the completion of weekly assignments, quizzes, and/or tests as outlined in the course pacing guidelines. Students who fall an entire unit behind have accrued an equivalent of 10 unexcused absences; therefore, a referral will be made to the Early Warning Truancy Prevention Program.

✓ Parents/guardians must have login information for their student's ACCESS Schoology account.

What type of bell schedule is used by the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program?

✓ The bell schedule followed by students enrolled in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program will match the schedule assigned at the home school. High Schools in the Tuscaloosa County School System operate on the four-by-four block schedule.

✓ An exception may be made to traditional block schedule if the student wants to participate in High School Early Exit/Early Graduation. Further information regarding High School Early Exit/Early Graduation may be found in the Parent-Student Information Guide and in the High School Course Catalog. Rising seniors interested in this option must make an appointment with their high school counselor as soon as possible to complete necessary paperwork.

What are the communication guidelines for full-time online students enrolled in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program?

✓ Students and their parents/guardians must schedule at least one face-to-face meeting per year with the Virtual Learning Program Advising Team to discuss course planning, registration, and progress towards meeting graduation requirements.

✓ All students are required to check their TCSS and ACCESS Schoology messages daily.

✓ All parents/guardians are required to provide the high school with a working email address that is to be checked daily as well as with a working phone number

✓ The Virtual Learning Program facilitator will maintain frequent email communication with students and their parents/guardians.

✓ ACCESS teachers maintain up-to-date assignment grades in the student's learning platform, but comprehensive grades must be viewed in PowerSchool.

Why do students and parents/guardians have to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the Virtual Learning Program Advising Team before classes are scheduled?

✓   The primary reason is to have an engaged discussion about the academic progress, goals and career path.

✓   During this meeting, the Virtual Learning Program Advising Team will help you make good academic decisions so you will be on the right track to graduate in a timely manner.

✓   In addition to discussing your academic progress, you can explore your four-year plan, career interest inventory, and resources to help you succeed.

All students taking courses through ACCESS Virtual Learning are required to complete an orientation module prior to beginning course work.

FEES:

✓   **TCSS Virtual Learning Program Fee August through May: $25.00** This fee may be paid at the student's high school after August 9, 2023.

✓   **TCSS Virtual Learning Program AP Course Fee: $25.00 plus Exam Fee plus required AP textbooks (if they differ from the adopted TCSS textbooks)**

REGISTRATION:

✓   Online registration through INFOSNAP is required for all TCSS students – whether on-campus or in the Virtual Learning Program.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CONTRACT

Academic integrity ensures students possess the responsibility to acquire skills honestly in the classroom that aids them in college and the workforce. Academic integrity also guarantees students a quality learning experience in which work is evaluated fairly and hard work is recognized and valued. Students in the Tuscaloosa County School System are expected to submit original work and give credit to other peoples' ideas.

Maintaining academic integrity involves:
✓ Creating and expressing your own ideas in course work;
✓ Acknowledging all sources of information;
✓ Completing assignments independently or acknowledging collaboration;
✓ Accurately reporting results when conducting your own research or with respect to labs;
✓ Honesty during examinations.

The Academic Integrity Contract of the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program combines the existing Academic Integrity policy of ACCESS Virtual Learning and additional requirements from the Tuscaloosa County School System.

Students enrolled in courses offered through ACCESS Virtual Learning must sign a commitment form attesting to academic integrity regarding each of the following topics:
✓ All work must be completed only by the student.
✓ Any collaboration among students must be pre-approved by the teacher.
✓ Plagiarism will not be allowed in any form. This will include copying or using the ideas or words of others and presenting them as one's own.
✓ Students will not allow others to copy their work.
✓ Content from the internet will not be misused or misrepresented.

If a student fails to abide by these policies, the student will be removed from the course(s) with a failing grade and will be subject to other consequences as determined by ACCESS and local school administrators.

All ACCESS Virtual Learning teachers utilize a variety of technologies to check student work for authenticity. If an instructor confirms that a student has plagiarized work in any manner, the student will be subject to consequences determined by ACCESS Virtual Learning administrative staff, the virtual learning teacher, and the Tuscaloosa County School System Academic Integrity Committee, and will be subject to removal from the course(s) with a failing grade.

Students enrolled in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program must take all examinations as required by the ACCESS Virtual Learning teacher and by the Alabama State Department of Education. Students must take these in an environment proctored by a Tuscaloosa County School System employee.

Students are responsible for the following:
✓ Completing unit tests and course examinations in the proctored environment without the use of study aids or computer help unless so allowed by the online teacher.
✓ Provide reliable transportation to and from the testing site(s) designated by the Tuscaloosa County School System. (Typically the Zoned High School)
✓ Verify the proctor records the student's test title, assigning teacher, test date, start and end time.
✓ Advanced Placement courses are taught at the college level. Completion of Advanced Placement courses and satisfactory performance on the related AP exams may enable students to receive advanced credit and/or placement upon entering college. Students enrolled in any AP course must take the AP exam to earn AP weighted credit. AP Exam fees are payable to the local school. S

Scores earned on tests or exams not taken at an approved Tuscaloosa County School System testing site without a proctor are subject to invalidation and review by the Tuscaloosa County School System Academic Integrity Committee. Additionally, in accordance with ACCESS Virtual Learning policy, the student may be removed from the course(s) with a failing grade and may be subject to dismissal from the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program.

Student:_____Date: _____

Parent:_____Date: _____

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

What are the enrollment requirements for extracurricular activities?

✓ All students enrolled in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program who participate in extracurricular activities must follow all policies and procedures established by the Alabama State Department of Education and the Tuscaloosa County School System.

What are the physical education or extracurricular class requirements?

✓ The Alabama High School Athletic Association and the Tuscaloosa County School System recommend taking the class (such as athletic or band courses) affiliated with the extracurricular activity.

✓ If a high school requires an athlete to be enrolled in and participate in a weight training course to be able to participate on the team, the same requirement would apply for a student enrolled as a full-time virtual student. The full-time virtual student would be required to be enrolled in and participate in the same weight training course.

What are the expectations regarding the amount of time a full-time virtual student participates in practice?

✓ A student enrolled as a full-time virtual student in the Tuscaloosa County Virtual Learning Program must practice the same amount of time as a traditional student during a school day.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

What should students know?

✓ Ask your ACCESS instructor questions when you need information. That's why he or she is there!

✓ Students report to the TCSS testing site to have their tests proctored on the dates identified on the Assessment Schedule. These dates will be distributed during the July orientation session.

✓ Check your TCSS email and ACCESS/Schoology messages daily!

✓ Make sure your mailing address and phone number are current in PowerSchool. If not, you may not receive important mailings/phone calls from your high school, facilitator, and/or ACCESS instructor.

✓ Notify the high school immediately should you have a change in your phone number and/or address.

✓ Take these courses seriously; you have to stick with them to be successful.

✓ Work hard and enjoy the academic credit you are earning—on your own!

What should students expect if they are at-risk of failing a class?

✓ If you are failing a course at the end of the first nine weeks, you will be placed on Academic Probation and be required to complete and submit an Academic Success Plan to help you chart a course for success.

✓ Students must be enrolled in enough courses to earn eight credits. However, for participation in extracurricular activities, students entering grades 10 - 12 must, for the last two (2) terms/semesters of attendance and summer school, if applicable, have a passing grade and earn the appropriate number of credits in each of six (6) subjects that total six (6) credits, including four (4) credits from the four (4) core subjects composed of English, science, social studies, and mathematics with a numerical composite average of 70. As a result, students who do not meet the numerical composite average of 70 will be ineligible for participation in extracurricular activities (i.e. athletics, band, etc.)

✓ You may not repeat this course at another institution; you must repeat it with the Tuscaloosa County School System.

✓ Consider how you will improve your work for this class in the future:
   o Will you get tutoring?
   o Will you work on time management?
   o Will you seek help from the teacher during regularly scheduled office hours?

What is an Academic Success Plan?

✓   The Academic Success Plan is exactly that – a way for you to get back on track with your studies! Sometimes students have difficulties and fail a course, which means they will be put on academic probation.

✓   To help those students plan for future improvement, they must meet with their advisors to complete an Academic Success Plan.

✓   Students must do this in order to maintain their eligibility to be a full-time online student in 2023-2024.

✓   The Tuscaloosa County School System wants you to succeed! Work closely with your Virtual Learning Program Advising Team and you will be on your way to graduation.

TCSS Virtual Learning Program Office Use Only:

☐   Online Application Submitted during Application Window
☐   Academic Integrity Contract Signed and Returned during Required Orientation
☐   Orientation Attended
☐   Schedule Request Completed
☐   Approved
☐   Denied

Survey Question 1: Am I a good candidate for an ACCESS class?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
I am self-disciplined.						
I am self-motivated.						
I am able to stay on task without direct supervision.						
I like to figure things out without direct assistance.						
I prioritize my workload effectively.						
I can successfully work alone.						
I am good at assessing my own progress.						
I like working with computers and software programs.						
I enjoy the challenge of working with new technology.						
I am good at following instructions.						
I use email and can create messages with attached files.						
I can download and install programs from the Internet.						
I can search the Web.						
I can copy and paste from one program to another.						
I rarely procrastinate.						
I enjoy communicating in writing and reading the writing of others.						
I work with others to complete projects.						
I seek assistance when problems arise.						
I take an active role in the learning process.						

Survey Question 2: Do I have the technical skills needed?

	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent	N/A
I can use a Web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Google Chrome).						
I can use a standard word processor (for example, Microsoft Word)						
I can read, compose and send emails.						
I can send an email with an attachment.						
I understand and respect netiquette and email etiquette.						
I can manage computer files.						
I can find information on the Web by using search engines and bookmarking useful websites.						

Academic Success Plan

Step 1: Identify the obstacles you encountered last semester.

Using the matrix below, identify the three greatest obstacles you faced last semester and how they interfered with your academic success.

Obstacle	How did this obstacle interfere with your success? (Be specific.)
1.	
2.	
3.	

_____ I didn't login to my course.	_____ I am uncertain about my goals.
_____ I didn't take notes.	_____ I didn't pay attention.
_____ I had difficulty prioritizing between school work and social activities.	_____ I wasn't motivated enough.
_____ I didn't turn in assignments (or turned them in late).	_____ I wasn't sure I wanted to be an online student.
_____ I didn't study enough.	_____ I had personal problems or issues.
_____ I wasn't sure how to study effectively.	_____ I had health problems.
_____ I didn't manage my time well.	_____ I didn't get enough sleep.
_____ I watched too much TV.	_____ I had trouble balancing work and class.
_____ I spent too much time on the internet, social media or playing video games.	_____ I spent too much time texting.
_____ I became frustrated about my performance and just gave up.	_____ I wasn't organized enough.
_____ I had trouble adjusting to online learning.	_____ I missed a test.
_____ I had difficulty with the subject matter in one or more of my classes.	_____ I procrastinated too much.
	_____ I didn't keep up with the reading.
	_____ I had test anxiety.
	_____ I am uncertain about my goals.
	_____ I allowed use of alcohol or other drugs to interfere with my academics.

Step 2: Generate potential solutions for overcoming the obstacles you listed.

Using the matrix below, list the obstacles you faced last semester and three potential solutions for each obstacle.

Obstacle	Solution #1	Solution #2	Solution #3
1.			
2.			
3.			

_____ I will meet with my Virtual Learning Program Advising Team to discuss my schedule and develop a plan for success.

_____ I will develop a time management plan that works for me.

_____ I will follow the pacing guidelines.

_____ I will be prepared for my classes.

_____ I will set a study schedule for each class and follow it.

_____ I will make better choices regarding my health, sleeping and eating habits.

_____ I will attend tutoring sessions.

_____ Other solutions that will allow me to be successful. _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ I will ask my teacher(s) for help if I am having difficulty in a course.

_____ I will meet with a licensed counselor (LPC) outside of school.

_____ I will utilize the four-year plan in K-Navigator.

_____ I will stay focused while completing my work.

_____ I will study in a place that allows me to get my work done.

_____ I will get involved in fitness activities.

_____ I will make better choices regarding my use of alcohol and/or other drugs.

Step 3: Commit to workable and achievable solutions

Using the matrix below, list the three most achievable solutions you are willing to try, how these solutions may help you, and the sacrifices you will need to make to achieve your goals

	Solution	How will this solution help me?	What will this solution require of me in terms of time and effort?
1.			
2.			
3.			

Step 4: Develop your plan of action!

Write your most important goal down below. Using the solutions you generated, list the steps you will take to reach your goal and the date by which you will complete these steps. Use the **SMART** formula for achieving your goal.

S = Specific ....Make your goal as specific as possible.
    Example: I will have a 2.5 cumulative GPA by the end of the upcoming spring semester.

M = Measurable ....Be sure that your goal is measurable.
    Example: I will be able to calculate my GPA to determine if I have reached my GPA goal at the end of the year.

A = Attainable.. Set goals that you can achieve.
    Example: I have done the math and know that earning a 76 in Algebra II with Trig by the end of the year is possible.

R = Realistic...Set goals that are realistic.
    Example: I can realistically achieve a 2.5 cumulative GPA if I earn 5 Bs and 2 Cs this semester.

T = Timely ....Establish a timeline for reaching your goal.
    Example: I can achieve my goal by the end of the upcoming spring semester.

My TOP Goal: _____

Steps I will take to reach this goal:

1. _____ by _____, 20_____

2. _____ by _____, 20_____

3. _____ by _____, 20_____

Step 5: Remember that with effort and persistence, you can return to good academic standing!

Keep the following in mind:

1. **Be committed** to achieving academic success

2. **Understand** what academic probation means and what grades you will need to earn to return to good academic standing and to continue your status as a full-time online student

3. **Identify** the problems that led to your poor grades

4. **Consider** all of your options – including adjusting your course load, cutting back on extracurricular activities, repeating courses

5. **Know** the deadlines as well as other academic policies that pertain to you

6. **Let others assist you** and take advantage of the student support services

7. **Think positively and work hard! Never give up!**

Notes: