

The page features a decorative graphic consisting of three blue circles of varying sizes, each composed of concentric circles in different shades of blue. These circles are arranged in a vertical line, with the largest at the top, a medium one in the middle, and the largest at the bottom. Two thin, light blue lines intersect at the top left and extend diagonally across the page, framing the circles.

West Branch Area School District

***West Branch Virtual Academy
Student/Parent Handbook 2022/23***



WEST BRANCH AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

516 ALLPORT CUTOFF
MORRISDALE, PA 16858

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Michelle Dutrow, Superintendent

Dear Virtual Academy Student:

Welcome to the West Branch Virtual Academy (WBVA)! We are excited that you have chosen this option in meeting your virtual learning needs. Our virtual academy allows you to complete all coursework required for graduation, or to supplement your regular school day with courses for enrichment or credit recovery. Virtual classes at West Branch are offered in partnership with Educere, an outstanding provider of virtual education curriculum. All courses offered through the virtual academy are in alignment with the West Branch Area School District's program of study and the Pennsylvania Department of Education's state standards for learning. In addition, all virtual academy students remain enrolled as West Branch students and as such, are eligible for participation in all student programs and activities, including graduation ceremonies.

The information contained in this packet is intended to help you make the most of the online learning environment and to ensure your success. Policies regarding computer usage, attendance, coordination meetings, exams, and enrollment periods require special attention on your part. Please review this handbook with your parent or guardian and return all required forms in a timely manner. Please note that in addition to the guidelines specified in this handbook, all WBVA students are held to the policies set forth by the WBMS/WBHS Student Handbooks.

Students who enroll in the West Branch Virtual Academy will begin the registration process by contacting their building principal. No student will be enrolled in WBVA without the consent and support of a parent or guardian.

Again, welcome to the virtual academy! Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns. We look forward to creating a successful partnership with you!

Sincerely,

DJ Caldwell
WBVA Program Coordinator

WBVA PROGRAM GOALS

The goals of the West Branch Virtual Academy are:

- To offer a non-traditional learning environment to the students of the West Branch Area School District that is compatible with the district's mission and vision statements.
- To provide students who desire a non-traditional learning environment with the educational opportunity to earn a West Branch Area High School diploma.
- To provide students who choose an online learning environment with a balanced educational experience including quality educational experiences, personal interactions with professional teachers, and the opportunity to participate fully in school programs and activities.
- To establish individualized learning plans for virtual academy students that are consistent with Pennsylvania Department of Education academic standards and West Branch Area High School graduation requirements.
- To provide students and their parents/guardians with a sense of ownership and responsibility for their education.
- To utilize accredited online learning providers to deliver quality academic instruction and assessment as a means of assessing students' mastery of all required content areas.

WBVA REGISTRATION & ENROLLMENT POLICY

Students who wish to enroll in the WBVA must initiate the registration process by having parents/guardians contact the building principal. Parents/Guardians must make this initial contact and be an active participant in the virtual learning experience, serving as a learning coach for the virtual academy student.

Students who enroll full-time in WBVA, as well as students who take enrichment courses through WBVA (as part of their regular class schedule, not to exceed eight credits) will not be charged tuition. Students who enroll in WBVA courses for the purpose of credit recovery will be charged tuition for all courses taken at the current rate offered by Educere.

The West Branch Virtual Academy will enroll students in accordance with the West Branch Area School District's school calendar, on a semester basis. Students will be permitted to enroll in WBVA courses at the beginning of each semester and are expected to complete all online courses by the end of designated end date. Any student wishing to enroll full-time or part-time in the virtual academy should notify the coordinator at least *one week* before the beginning of a new semester.

WBVA STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

Students who wish to be successful online learners must be organized, self-motivated, and willing to assume responsibility for academic success. In order to achieve success in WBVA courses, students are required to meet the expectations listed below. Failure to meet these expectations will result in removal from the WBVA:

- Complete a **minimum** of two (2) assignments for each day that school is in session in a given week. These two complete assignments allow the school district to mark the student as “present” in school for the day. NOTE that two assignments per day is NOT enough to complete courses on time, and serves only as a means of recording attendance. Please see the full WBVA Attendance Policy (page 5) for full details regarding attendance requirements.
- Sign-in to the school office, in accordance with district policies and procedures, for any visits to the school during regular school hours. In addition, WBVA students must adhere to the student dress code for any visits to the school (see *Student Handbooks*).
- Login to the Educere site **daily** to receive instructor communications, messages, and other important updates. Students are required to login each day that school is in session at West Branch (see school calendar).
- Maintain regular contact with teachers. Students MUST respond to email and phone communications from teachers and advisors.
- Make use of supports such as the “instant teacher” feature in the Educere program. Many supports are in place to help students succeed and should be utilized as needed.
- Complete and submit work independently. Policies and procedures targeting cheating and/or plagiarism as outlined in the *Student Handbooks* will be enforced for WBVA students. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing another’s work can be dismissed from WBVA.
- Complete all coursework within the specified enrollment time. Course extensions are not offered for coursework except in the case of medical emergencies.
- Request additional support from a West Branch teacher from the WBVA coordinator. Timely requests for help will help to ensure your academic success. Students should not wait until failing grades are earned to request additional assistance. Arrangements for support or tutoring from a faculty member must be made in advance by consulting with the academy coordinator. Students may not interrupt a teacher who is teaching a class for the purpose of receiving tutoring.

WBVA ATTENDANCE POLICY

Whether in a traditional classroom or the online learning environment, attendance is an important predictor of a student's academic success. The non-traditional format of online learning requires unique guidelines and policies. Please note the following policies regarding attendance for WBVA students:

- Attendance weeks will run from *Monday through Sunday* of each week. Therefore, students will have seven days, including weekends, to complete required assignments for a given week.
- Attendance will be documented according to assignment completion with two (2) complete assignments equaling one (1) day of school attendance. NOTE: Two assignments per day is a MINIMUM expectation for attendance purposes only and *does not ensure on-time completion of a course*. It is up to the student to ensure that s/he is on pace in all classes. This will mean completing more than the minimum number of required assignments in a given week.
- Students and parents/guardians will be notified of attendance compliance on the first school day of each week. Typically, this will be Monday. Parents/Guardians will then have three (3) days to submit an excuse to Mrs. Kim Eboch in the Attendance Office at keboch@westbranch.org.
- All WBVA students are expected to log on to the Educere site every day that school is in session at West Branch (see attached school calendar).
- All excuses will be coded as illegal or unexcused until an excuse is submitted to the attendance office.
- After 10 illegal, unexcused, *or* excused absences, only medical excuses will be accepted. All policies and procedures regarding attendance violations as outlined in the *Student Handbooks* (including truancy referral) will be enforced.
- Accumulation of 10 illegal or unexcused absences will result in dismissal from WBVA.
- Computer and/or internet accessibility problems are *unexcused absences*. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to ensure the availability of a working computer and reliable internet access.
- Technical issues preventing a student from completing work should be reported to the WBVA Coordinator *immediately* for resolution.
- Online courses are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Students may log in and complete lessons at any time during a 24 hour period to document attendance. Students may also complete assignments on holidays and weekends.

WBVA GRADING POLICY

All WBVA online courses are graded on a semester basis. Students are expected to complete all courses within the confines of the WBASD school calendar.

- Any assignments not completed by the end of the semester will receive a grade of zero.
- WBVA grades will be averaged with previous grades from any institution to determine final grades for courses.
- It is the **responsibility of the student and parent to monitor academic progress** throughout the school year. Progress can be checked daily by logging into the Educere site and visiting the student's home page.
- Regular progress toward graduation requirements is expected of all WBVA students. Continuation in the full-time WBVA program will be evaluated on a yearly basis. Repeated failure of courses can result in being dismissed from the academy.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

All WBVA students are expected to demonstrate regular academic progress toward graduation. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from the academy. WBVA students will be held to the same policies for promotion and retention as traditional West Branch students. The policy is provided here:

- 1st - 8th Grade: Students will be retained for failure of two major subjects *or* one major subject and two minor subjects.
- 9th – 12th grade students are required to earn specified credits on an annual basis. In order to be eligible for promotion to the next grade level or graduation, students must attain the following number of credits:
 - 9th to 10th Grade: 6 credits
 - 10th to 11th Grade: 12 credits
 - 11th to 12th Grade: 18 credits
 - 25 credits are required for high school graduation. See the WBHS Student Handbook for further details regarding graduation requirements.

WBVA STUDENT HEALTH RECORDS POLICY

Students enrolled in the WBVA are required to undergo regular health screenings, receive or update immunizations, and maintain a school health record in accordance with the regulations set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Education. Every student, in every grade, must undergo a height, weight, Body Mass Index (BMI), and vision screening for each year enrolled in public school. These screenings are provided free of cost by the WBASD Health Office staff. Arrangements for yearly screenings can be made through the academy coordinator. In addition, the following health services are required by grade level:

- 6th Grade: Medical Exam and Scoliosis Screening
- 7th Grade: Hearing Test, Scoliosis Screening, and Dental Exam
- 11th Grade: Medical Exam and Hearing Test

These services can also be provided by WBASD Health Office staff at no cost, or the student can choose to have the services provided by his/her regular physician or dentist. If the student chooses to see a private provider for these services, written documentation of the screening results must be provided to the Health Office (forms can be obtained from the academy coordinator or the Health Office). Should a WBVA student fall out of compliance with regulations, he or she will be notified by the Health Office. Failure to comply with required screenings can result in dismissal from the academy.

WBVA STANDARDIZED TESTING

All students are required, by law, to participate in PSSA testing in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. In addition, all students enrolled in Algebra IB, Biology, or English 10 are required to participate in the Keystone Exam at the end of the appropriate course. WBVA students and their parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that they report to the school for testing on designated day. The WBVA coordinator will supply students with a testing calendar as needed.

Please Note: WBVA students are welcome to participate in various standardized tests administered throughout the year, including the ASVAB, PSAT, and SAT. Please discuss these options with the academy coordinator if you are interested in participating.

WBVA SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

The West Branch Area School District provides a special education program in accordance with federal and state regulations and guidelines to ensure the provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to all school-age children in need of such services.

Special education services are available to students who have been identified by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, based on the recommendations of a multi-disciplinary evaluation. Special education services are provided in accordance to the primary educational needs of the child. Support is provided for those who needed assistance with the acquisition of academic skills. Related services are available to the child to enhance participation or access to an educational program. Examples of related services include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, etc. Special education services are provided to all WBVA students who qualify under Chapter 14 regulations. For further assistance with special education services, please contact the academy coordinator or the district Supervisor of Special Education.

WBVA EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

WBVA students are permitted and encouraged to participate fully in all WBMS/WBHS activities, including athletics, music programs, school-sponsored clubs, and other school activities. School activities include, but are not limited to: Prom, Graduation ceremonies, school dances, and school sponsored trips. All students who participate in extra-curricular activities are held to the same standards for academic performance and behavior as WBMS/WBHS students (see *Student Handbooks* for details).

ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

WBVA students enjoy full participation rights in all WBMS/WBHS athletic teams. For the purposes of academic athletic eligibility, the following policy will be strictly adhered to:

- Students must not be failing more than two WBVA courses for the semester.
 - Failing can be defined by *either* of the following:
 - A failing current grade in any currently enrolled course.
 - Failure to stay on pace in two or more courses. Students are expected to be on pace in all online courses in order to be determined athletically eligible. Falling behind pace in a course is the same as being absent from school from an attendance perspective and will result in non-participation.

WBVA STUDENT/PARENT ENROLLMENT & AGREEMENT

The West Branch Area School District is pleased to provide you with the opportunity to enroll in the West Branch Virtual Academy (WBVA). To complete your enrollment in the academy, please bring this form to your initial meeting with the academy coordinator and sign it at the conclusion of the meeting.

With your signature, you indicate that you have read and understand the policies and procedures outlined in the WBVA Student Handbook and agree to comply with stated procedures. These policies include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ WBVA Attendance Policy
- ✓ WBVA Student Expectations
- ✓ WBVA Grading Policy

In addition, you agree to follow the guidelines specified in the West Branch Student Handbooks. Failure to comply with the guidelines of either the WBVA Student Handbook or the West Branch Student Handbooks can result in dismissal from the virtual academy or disciplinary consequences.

The student and parent assume full responsibility for the decision to enroll in the WBVA and are prepared for the significant time commitment required to be successful in the online learning environment. Should the student desire to leave the academy, return to West Branch High School will preferably occur at the beginning of a semester and at the discretion of the building principal and academy coordinator. Additionally, grades earned while enrolled in the WBVA will become part of the student's permanent academic record.

I have read and understand the policies and procedures outlined in the West Branch Virtual Academy Student Handbook. I officially enroll in the WBVA and am prepared to invest the time and attention necessary to be successful in the academy. I agree to all policies specified in the WBVA handbook related to attendance, enrollment, and the grading policy.

Student Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

WBVA Coordinator Signature

Date

TIPS FOR ONLINE LEARNERS

The following tips are designed to help you make a successful transition to the online learning environment:

- Schedule the same time every day to work on your course assignments. Treat your “school time” as a regular, required appointment in your day. In general, students need to plan about 5 hours of study time per week for each full credit course.
- Work at a regular pace each week. Try not to get behind as work will only “pile up,” requiring you to invest additional hours the next week. This creates a cycle that is difficult to break.
- Check your progress DAILY.
- Make sure that your subject teacher and the WBVA coordinator have a current email address and your parent’s/guardian’s email address for communication purposes.
- Create a work space designated for school work and an organizational system to track assignments.
- Make a list of questions you want to ask before you contact your subject teacher.
- Make use of helpful features that are already embedded in online courses. For examples, retakes of quizzes and tests are typically permitted at least once. Don’t settle for a failing or low grade!
- Ask for help as soon as you recognize the need! You are in the unique position as a WBVA student to have both your subject teachers at Educere *and* teachers at WB as helpful resources – use them!

