ON-LINE LEARNING

Policy: Any classes that TBA/FCSD offer must be taken in the classroom unless extenuating circumstances arise. On-line classes are offered as electives.

Eligibility: Like all other classes offered at TBA/FCSD, they are offered to any student grade 9-12 if it fits in their schedule and they have taken any prerequisites for the desired class. On-line courses that we will offer are listed in our course guidebook under on-line learning (see example).

General Guidelines: Most Freshman do not have the opportunity to take an on-line class due to mandatory classes filling up their schedules. There are occasions when a Freshman may take an on-line class but it is not likely.

First time on-line students generally need to take a ½ credit course as their first on-line elective. If they do well with on-line learning, then they may move on to take more on-line classes. If a student does not do well with an on-line class, they will not be offered more on-line classes in the future.

On-line electives are offered the same way other elective classes are offered: depending on the interest of the student, scheduling, etc.

Once an on-line class is started, the student is NOT permitted to drop the class regardless of how they are doing, whether they decide they do not like it, etc. Students must finish up the class and will receive the grade they earned. Students and parents are warned about this many times and a contract is signed stating they understand and agree with the policy.

On-line classes are paid for by TBA/FCSD the same way all college level courses, BOCES classes, etc. are paid for. At this time TBA/FCSD does not charge the students for taking the class.

Any on-line class that does not have a teacher of record attached to it must be listed as an independent study.
**Procedure:** Students who are interested in scheduling an on-line class do so with their Guidance Counselor during their scheduling meeting. Parents are welcome to attend scheduling meetings but are often not in attendance. At this time, the Guidance Counselor will go over the “NO Drop” policy, explain about how on-line learning works, how grading works, and answer any and all questions students and/or parents have about an on-line class. Sometimes this will include going to the CABOCES website to review the course with the student/parent. They are then told of two meetings that the student will need to complete prior to starting an on-line class.

Towards the end of the school year, CABOCES comes in to meet with all the students that are interested in taking an on-line class for the next school year. Students can ask questions about on-line learning or about individual classes.

A day or two before school starts in the Fall, we have a mandatory informational meeting with the students and their parents. The school discusses our policies and procedures, review the “NO Drop policy” again and explain how we have scheduled the class. Students and parents sign for an independent study if there is no teacher of record. CABOCES signs this as well and attaches the course outline to it for us. Students are reminded that they can and should work on the class outside of their scheduled period at school, as well as in school. CABOCES then reviews their policies and procedures, hands out paperwork to be completed and collects the registration forms for any student who has definitely decided to take a class. Having this completed prior to school allows CABOCES the time they need to register the students so they are able to start their classes the first day of school, with all their other classes. No student may begin an on-line class without attending this meeting with a parent.

**Scheduling:** On-line classes are typically scheduled into the student’s day just like any other class. This is generally a period every day or in some cases every other day. Once and a while for a special case, they might have it scheduled less, depending on their schedule and the circumstances. Classes are scheduled in the library computer lab where we have a monitor. Students are required to attend their class just like any other. Attendance is taken. Students are required to work on the class at this time. Students are encouraged to work on the class at home, after school or during vacations as
well. We make the computer lab available after school until 4:30 Monday through Thursdays as well.

When a student is finished with the class, they may be able to pick up a new class or they may be given a study hall during that period. Students are expected to finish their classes by the first week in June each year. There are a few classes that have shorter deadlines. CABOCES lets us know about this ahead of time and we make sure the students and parents are aware of this.

**Progress/Monitoring:** The Library Aide is the on-line class monitor and first “go-to” person for the students if they are having any difficulties with technology. She monitors their progress and encourages them to keep on pace. She also monitors that they are on their class site and not just “fooling around” as well as monitors any behavioral issues that might arise, and keeps attendance. She keeps a tracking sheet full of information on the students, the classes they are taking, their passwords, teacher emails, etc. She meets regularly with CABOCES to discuss any issues, progress, etc. She is the contact person for the on-line teachers. She also notifies the Guidance Office with any concerns for lack of student progress, behaviors, etc. (examples of her sheets are provided at presentation). The monitor has access to e-school for attendance. The Guidance office provides the monitor with a schedule for each student so she can assist BOCES with finding students when needed.

The Guidance office gets a bi-weekly (or so) outline of student progress from BOCES, showing each on-line student, class, grade percentage, course percentage and any other comments. The guidance office monitors any problems and meets with students who are not progressing. BOCES and the Guidance Counselor have excellent communication.

If a student is not progressing in the course, many ways to encourage better progress are tried (calling home, meeting with the student, changing the student from the library to the Guidance Office, keeping a student after school, and on rare occasions, having a student come in for full days of school during regents week to complete their class). Communication with students, parents, guidance and BOCES are key to a students’ success!

**Grading:** Grading for an on line class is much different than other classes. As an online course typically has one grade at the end of the course and this is their final grade. At TBA/FCSD we found that this has caused problems, therefore we have worked out an arrangement with BOCES for a different way
to grade. BOCES configures a grade for TBA/FCSD each quarter based on the grade they have for the work they have done, factors in where they are in their pacing chart, and other factors. Quarter grades are given each quarter, with the final grade being the final grade, regardless of what they had each quarter. For example, if a student didn’t do anything in Quarter 1, they would receive a “0” for the quarter (which is factored into their GPA), but if they finished the course the second semester and their grade was a 95, then not only would the second quarter be a 95 but their final would be a 95 as well. The quarter averages do not usually add up to the final average. This is done to help a student stay on track with the pacing chart they are given. This is turn has led students to complete their courses more successfully.

Choosing the Courses Offered: TBA/FCSD reviews what CABOCES offers for on-line courses and decides which courses will be offered to students. These courses are chosen based on what TBA/FCSD offers in house, the success rate of the courses, the communication between the on-line instructor with TBA/FCSD, and other factors. Students are not permitted to take an on-line course that is offered by a TBA/FCSD teacher in house, unless an unusual circumstance arises. Typically this would be for those students who have to complete a required course and we can not get it into their schedule any other way. Currently the only class this has occurred with is Health, and it has only occurred a few times over the several years TBA/FCSD have offered on-line learning.

Benefits: The benefits to on-line learning is to offer students electives that TBA/FCSD are unable to run, to eliminate the need for too many study hall periods, to get in a required or desired course that just can not be fit into a student’s schedule, to allow students a chance to explore careers they are considering that they can not get elsewhere, etc.

Past Problems & Steps Taken to Correct Them: In the past, TBA/FCSD has run into a few problems with on-line learning but has taken steps to alleviate the problems. Most notably were that some students were just not disciplined enough to stay on track with their pacing chart. This led to lower grades and sometimes not being able to finish the class. By scheduling the on-line class like any other class, students must attend and spend time working
on their class. By having three monitors (BOCES, the library aid, and Guidance Counselor), only 1-2 students a year fall behind and are quickly helped in getting back on track. For those reluctant students that still have not finished by the first week in June, getting the parents on board in making them stay after school or coming in during regents weeks, all students end up finishing their courses. By changing the grading policy, TBA/FCSD has experienced a much higher success rate in students staying on track as their GPA is either important to the student or at least to the parent. Knowing that they can not drop a course also helps with this. Giving lots of support where needed has increased student success as well. The most important aspect of success in an on-line learning course is communication between the instructor, BOCES, the monitor, the Guidance Office, students and parents. Like with any other class, communication is key to any student's success!

Contact at TBA/FCSD:

Cindi A Rhoades
Guidance Counselor

(716) 676-8054
crhoades@frkl.wnyric.org