

Supporting middle school students in their independent learning

While some middle school students have established a solid and effective routine for completing their independent learning during this period of remote learning, others have needed more active and ongoing support.

In Module 6 of her “Skills Channel” on Canvas, SBS Director of the Academic Center Apple Gifford has outlined a wonderful system that students can use to help organize their independent learning in between classes. There’s a two-minute “Overview” video followed by a 12-minute “How To” video and a [link](#) to the schedule template itself. Parents may watch this with their students if they would like.

In working with Apple’s schedule, students can fill in and color code their individual classes in the top row. They can use the middle row to keep track of what homework they want to do on each given day. Students can use the estimated completion times provided by teachers in modules to know how long each specific assignment will take and write the total amount of time needed to complete the day’s work in the bottom row. If needed, they can also cut-and-paste homework from one day to another, adjusting total time for the day as needed, to keep the daily homework load balanced.

Students who might benefit from using one of these schedules can fill them out along with families and/or advisors. The best times to complete a given day’s work will be highly individual and best worked out by families. Middle school students do need frequent “brain and body breaks,” but some students might benefit from setting a timer to limit the total length of each break.

In addition to offering this scheduling support for students, we will be revising and adding additional detail to the “Overview” pages for modules beginning in December 2020. Apple and SBS Academic Dean Lauren Cunniffe have worked out the new plan. Henceforth, each Overview page will include:

- An “Overview” video of the teacher explaining the week
- Information on class meeting dates and times with links provided
- A list or chart headed “Activities and Assignments” with all the work for the week, including:
 - Each page listed by name and number
 - Orange highlighting for each assignment that involves turning something in
 - Total estimated time for each individual assignment
 - Due dates for each individual assignment
 - (optional) work taking place during synchronous class meetings
 - Total estimated work time for the week
- A suggested weekly schedule
- Information on how to contact the teacher and any pertinent links
- Information on when each week’s module for that class will be posted