A Family Guide to Canvas

You may have heard your child will be using something called "Canvas" in in Alachua County's Digital Academy this fall. And you may have thought, do I need to go to a fabric store?!

Thank goodness, the answer is no, you do not! Canvas is the name of the website the school district is using for online teaching this fall. This short Guide was written by parents who use Canvas in their jobs at the University of Florida, and who have kids in Alachua County schools. We know Canvas is a powerful tool that teachers can use in all kinds of ways. We wrote this Guide to give other parents a little information about Canvas so you can have a sense of what your child is doing in front of the screen all day. The school district and your individual school may have additional suggestions for you if you want to learn more about Canvas.

1. **What is Canvas?**
   Canvas is a "Learning Management Software." Teachers use it to share information with students, and to store records of things like attendance and grades.

   It helps to think of Canvas like this: Imagine everything teachers write on the chalkboard or hand out in class. They might draw a diagram of cell mitosis, or pass out a worksheet of math problems, or give students copies of the Emancipation Proclamation to read. Now think about what students give to teachers. They might turn in that completed math worksheet, a lab notebook, or a report on how the Great Wall of China was built.

   This fall, teachers will use Canvas to share all these learning materials, and students will submit their completed work through it too. Teachers can see the work, write comments and grades on it, and put those grades in the gradebook, all through the same website.

2. **Why are the Schools Using Canvas?**
   As you can see, Canvas can replace almost every exchange that uses paper. Teachers can also share video materials through Canvas, and schedule and host virtual meetings with their classes, with individual students—and with parents! Because everything is contained in one website, it is simpler for teachers to use than tools like Google classroom.

   Canvas also has a tool for taking attendance. Since schools get federal funding based on attendance, this is very important. Finally, Canvas is very safe, and it is focused on learning. Only Alachua County Schools staff, teachers, and students can access the site. There is no "chat" or "hangout" function to distract students from class content.

3. **How Do I Get Canvas?**
   You do not need to buy anything to access Canvas. But you will need a computer connected to the internet or an app on your smartphone to connect to your child's classes. If your child is in the DIgital Academy, Canvas will be much easier for them to use if they access it with a desktop or laptop computer rather than a phone.
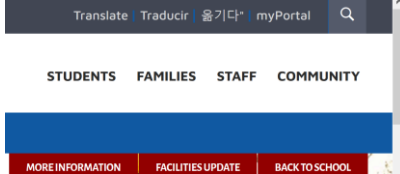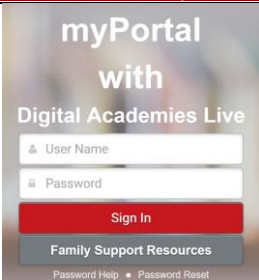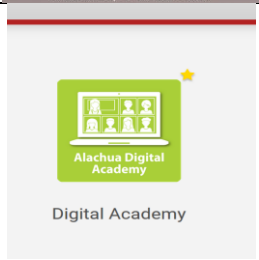
4. **I Thought Classes in the Digital Academy were Using a Tool Called Zoom?**
   Zoom is a teleconferencing service that allows people to transmit a video link to each other, similar to Facetime or Skype. Teachers will connect with Digital Academy students using the Zoom tool, which is nested inside the Canvas website for each class.

5. **How Should Parents Use Canvas?**
   In the first few weeks of school, you can sit with your child and look at the different Canvas sites for each class on their schedule. This will help both of you learn how the website works. You will see that Canvas has a "Calendar" feature that shows ALL the work that is assigned across your child's classes. Using this Calendar can help your family support the independent work that kids in the Digital Academy will be doing this fall. You may want to download the Canvas Parents app for your phone so you can keep track of due dates and reminders from teachers. The Canvas apps for parents and students are listed on this page: https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/1045977/pages/canvas-apps.

6. **How Will My Child Use Canvas Every Day at School?**

To get to Canvas, kids should go to the Alachua County Public Schools website (https://www.sbac.edu/). In the upper righthand corner of the page is a link for "My Portal."	
When they click on "My Portal," your child will be asked to sign in with their username and password. The username is assigned by the school. If you need to re-set it, go to this page: https://fl02219191.schoolwires.net/Page/3512	
After signing in, kids will be taken to a page with all the electronic resources the District offers. Click on the green icon for "Alachua Digital Academy."	
When they click on "Digital Academy," your child will be taken into the Canvas environment. They will have a different Canvas site for each class on their schedule. Inside that site will be course materials, assignments, and links for the class's Zoom meetings. Each school makes its own decisions about how kids will move from class to class within Canvas. You will learn more your school's plans in an email message from the school and at the virtual Campus Tour the week before classes start.	

7. **Will Grades be Published through Canvas?**

No. Grades will still be published using the Skyward portal. You can access it through this icon on the School District's webpage.	

8. **Who Do I Contact If…..**

My child is enrolled in the Digital Academy but when they click the link they get a "has no account" message.	Call the main office of their school.
My child needs help figuring out how to do things in Canvas.	Email your child's teacher. The first week of classes will focus on teaching kids how to use Canvas.
My child is enrolled in the Digital Academy but does not have access to the technology they need.	Email or call your school. The technologies needed for the Digital Academy are listed here: https://www.sbac.edu/Page/30058.

Every teacher, every school, and the whole Alachua County district is racing to get ready for the start of school. The district has published a short document that answers some basic questions about how to behave in the online classroom. You can find it here: https://www.sbac.edu/Page/30053. Individual schools will be sending emails and provide further guidance at the Campus Tours the week before school starts. More information will be available at each school's Open House early in the fall.

Right now the only thing we really know about this year is that it will be very different! The Parent Teacher Association at your child's school will be working hard to make that difference as positive as possible.