

Family Guidebook

Introduction

We are pleased to invite you to the dynamic learning environment at Branches Learning. This family handbook is designed to orient you to our educational framework and our joint responsibilities. We encourage you to carefully review each section and do not hesitate to contact us with any inquiries or issues.

Mission Statement

Branches Learning is rooted in accessible, engaging learning experiences that foster intellectual curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking through project-oriented learning. We are committed to expanding learning opportunities by partnering with schools, organizations, and families to provide equitable, flexible, and high-quality educational experiences for all students. Above all, Branches Learning is dedicated to championing student growth, confidence, and long-term success.

Student Learning Intentions and Core Values

In support of its mission, Branches Learning has established the following learning intentions and core values to guide instructional practices, measure student growth, and promote meaningful learning experiences across all programs:

- Enhance social-emotional learning and student well-being
- Think critically to develop problem-solving skills
- Communicate ideas clearly in speaking and writing
- Collaborate to build and demonstrate understanding through projects and academic work
- Develop a love for lifelong learning

Branches Learning believes students learn best through active engagement, collaboration, creativity, and authentic application of knowledge. Through project-oriented learning experiences, students strengthen academic skills while developing agency, communication, critical thinking, and real-world problem-solving abilities. These guiding principles shape curriculum design, instructional delivery, student support systems, and the overall culture of the organization.



Diversity Statement

We believe diversity enriches our learning environments, broadens perspectives, and fosters a sense of belonging for every community member. We are committed to creating an inclusive space where students, families, and staff from all backgrounds feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive. We proudly support students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and strive to provide the accommodations and support they need to succeed. With a special focus on leadership, Branches Learning ensures that each learner has the opportunity to grow and to shine academically.



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Section 1: Courses

At Branches Learning, we provide a comprehensive virtual learning environment for K-12 students. Our educational approach emphasizes problem-solving to cultivate lifelong learners and individuals who can initiate change. Our courses are multidisciplinary, blending project-oriented learning with social-emotional development.

1.1 What are Interdisciplinary Courses?

Rather than studying subjects in isolation, students make meaningful connections across disciplines. When possible, Branches Learning's teachers collaborate across disciplines to share ideas, coordinate instruction, and reinforce connections between subject areas.

- Delve deeply into subjects
- Draw comparisons and distinctions between different disciplines
- Simulate real-life scenarios
- Explore and resolve complex issues

By connecting learning in purposeful ways, interdisciplinary courses help students develop a deeper understanding of the content, better preparing them to apply their knowledge beyond the classroom.

1.2 What is Project-Oriented Learning?

This learning model involves students tackling real-life problems through projects that have personal significance. They pinpoint an issue, conduct thorough research, and formulate an evidence-based solution. Project-focused learning helps students to:

- Become adept at solving problems and working collaboratively
- Connect personally with their studies
- Enhance understanding and memory of the subjects
- Work independently and think critically

1.3 What is Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)?

This aspect of learning focuses on developing essential life skills, including self-awareness, self-management, understanding social cues, building relationships, and making responsible decisions. Benefits of social-emotional learning include:



- Higher chances of graduating from both high school and college
- More successful professional lives
- Building positive personal relationships
- Improved mental health management

1.4 Live Courses

Branches Learning hosts live sessions, covering all primary subjects and selected electives. For details on our offerings, please check the [Branches Learning website](#).

Section 2: TK-12 Tutoring

We are delighted to assist your child in reaching key objectives. Our tutoring team is dedicated to providing an individualized educational experience tailored to each student's unique needs. Live tutoring sessions are available in 30 to 60-minute durations. Click [here](#) to review our full Tutoring Policy.

2.1 Enrolling

Families interested in enrolling in this school-sponsored program can find enrollment instructions on our website. Once the student is registered and Blue Ridge has authorized the enrollment, Branches Learning will finalize the setup.

Students are allotted four hours of tutoring per month with one tutor (unless Branches Learning is otherwise instructed by Blue Ridge administration).

Families who would like extra tutoring sessions may submit a purchase order through Blue Ridge or pay directly online using a credit card.

2.2 Processes and Policies

- Only one enrollment per student is required for the entire school year. If your student's account is inactivated, email info@brancheslearning.org to reactivate it.
- Once Blue Ridge approves the request, we will pair your child with a tutor as swiftly as possible.
- Students are required to have a functional internet connection, a camera, and a microphone.
- The parent will receive a link to the tutor's calendar to book sessions, and the student will receive an invitation to a classroom where sessions will be held. They must accept the invitation before any sessions can happen.
- No code is needed to enter the classroom.
- Parents can request a change of tutor if there are scheduling conflicts.

- Parents can request a change of tutor if it seems beneficial for their student. However, to support continuity and learning, we typically limit such requests to one per student—unless the current tutor can no longer continue. Our goal is to establish stable and productive learning relationships between students and tutors.
- Tutors can request to transfer a student to a different tutor if it benefits the student or if there is a scheduling conflict.
- Tutoring spots are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.
- We strive to accommodate special requests regarding tutor assignments.
- If a tutor is absent and the student needs immediate assistance, please contact us at info@BranchesLearning.org to inquire about a substitute tutor.

Section 3: General Operations

3.1 Academic Calendar

Please refer to the Branches Learning website for the latest academic calendar.

3.2 Course Schedules

Live Courses: Branches Learning offers over 95 live classes that meet one to three times each week. To learn more about our courses and schedules, please visit the [Branches Learning website](#).

3.3 Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled live classes. If a student has two consecutive unexcused absences, Branches Learning will contact the family and the Homeschool Teacher (HST)/Teacher of Record (TOR).

If a student cannot attend class, the parent or guardian should inform the facilitator before class begins (teachers' email addresses are listed in the course syllabus and posted on our website under ["Meet the Team"](#)). Unauthorized absences will adversely affect grades. Recordings of live sessions are available upon request.

What counts as an excused absence?

Excused absences include the following and must be reported by an adult (parent, guardian, teacher, learning coach):

- Illness
- Appointments
- Family situations
- Other unavoidable conflicts

**Absences are to be reported the day they occur.*

3.4 Learning Management System (LMS)

Branches Learning employs a learning management system for all its courses. Each student has a personal account where they are registered for their classes. This system houses all assignments, submissions, and grades.

Students are invited to classrooms approximately one week before classes begin.

Invitations for each class are sent to the **student's school email address and must be accepted to gain access**. If an invitation is not received, contact Branches Learning at info@brancheslearning.org after checking the student's **spam folder**.

3.5 Course Materials

Where relevant, essential course materials are detailed under each course description on our website.

3.6 Assignments and Assessments

Because our instructional model does not include five days of live instruction each week, instructors assign grade-appropriate homework to reinforce learning, provide opportunities for practice and application, and support mastery of course objectives. Students are expected to complete all assignments within the established deadlines to receive full credit and maintain consistent academic progress.

3.7 Branches Learning Late Work Policy (Grades K–5)

We understand that in the elementary grades, parents and guardians play a significant role in supporting their child's online learning and may be the ones submitting assignments. To help families stay on track, **we follow these guidelines unless prior arrangements have been made with the teacher due to illness, family emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances**.

For full credit, work must be submitted within one week of being assigned (unless otherwise directed by the teacher). Late work will receive partial credit unless the teacher pre-approves a late submission.

Full/Partial Credit:

- Submitted within one full week of being assigned: Full credit
- Submitted within one week after the due date: Up to 90% credit
- Submitted within two weeks after the due date: Up to 80% credit
- Submitted within three weeks after the due date: Up to 70% credit, or at the teacher's discretion based on circumstances and grading timelines.
- Submitted later than three weeks past the due date: Grade is up to the teacher's discretion based on the assignment and circumstances

**Due dates are important because teachers must review student work promptly to monitor understanding.*

**Grading of late work may be delayed because the teacher's priority is to grade all students' current work.*

3.8 Branches Learning Late Work Policy (Grades 6–12)

Middle and high school students are expected to take increasing responsibility for managing their coursework, though unexpected circumstances can still arise. To support both accountability and flexibility, **we follow these guidelines unless prior arrangements have been made with the teacher due to illness, family emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances.**

Full/Partial Credit

- On time: Full credit
- Up to 3 days late: Up to 90% credit
- Up to 1 week late: Up to 80% credit
- More than 1 week late: Up to 70% credit, or at the teacher's discretion based on circumstances and grading timelines.

We encourage students to communicate with their teachers as soon as they anticipate a delay. Developing communication, self-advocacy, and time-management skills is essential to learning in middle and high school.

**Due dates are important because teachers must review student work promptly to monitor understanding.*

**Grading of late work may be delayed because the teacher's priority is to grade all students' current work.*

Section 4: Daily Operations

4.1 Log-In Procedures

Students must log into their classroom each day they have a live class. Login details are sent to the student's school email address. For security reasons, no alternative email can be used. If there is an issue with your student's email, contact your school's tech support.

4.2 Daily Schedule

The daily schedule varies for each student depending on their course enrollment. All live courses are scheduled between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. PST.

If you would like help designing a schedule for your student, please visit our website to see sample schedules.

4.3 Attendance

Students are required to attend Google Meets promptly and ensure their cameras and microphones are operational. Attendance and participation are part of every course grade.

4.4 Substitute Facilitators

In the event of a facilitator's absence, notifications will be posted in the LMS and sent via email. Typically, a substitute will conduct the class, or the regular facilitator will provide a recorded lesson.

Section 5: Communications

5.1 Expectations for Communication

Refer to the [Branches Learning Responsibility List](#) to determine whether to contact Branches Learning staff or your assigned Homeschool Teacher (HST)/Teacher of Record (TOR).

5.2 Contact Information

- Office Hours: 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Pacific Time
- Phone Number: (888) 979-0114
- Email: info@BranchesLearning.org

Section 6: Student Conduct

We uphold a culture of respect, responsibility, integrity, and kindness, which forms the basis of our expectations for student behavior.

6.1 Respectful Communication

Students are required to engage in respectful, polite, and constructive communication with instructors and peers. Inappropriate communication may result in a warning or disciplinary action, including suspension or removal from the course.

6.2 Academic Honesty

Students must submit only their original work. Any form of plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty will result in disciplinary action, which may include a failing grade for the assignment or course. Students must, at all times, follow the [Branches Learning AI Use Policy](#).

6.3 Student Behavior and Consequences

- Students must actively participate in live sessions, complete assignments punctually, and take responsibility for their learning. Persistent disengagement, such as consistent non-participation or failure to submit assignments, may affect their progression in the program.
- Students must avoid disruptive behavior during live sessions and refrain from cyberbullying or violating others' privacy, as these will lead to immediate disciplinary action.
- Victims of bullying or other inappropriate behavior should immediately report the incident to their course facilitator or Homeschool Teacher (HST)/Teacher of Record (TOR) for resolution.
- Offensive language or gestures are prohibited.
- Students must use accurate login information for virtual classrooms. Impersonation will result in disciplinary action.
- Cameras must be on during class for attendance, participation, and security purposes.
- To support student safety and appropriate boundaries, students may not share personal contact information — including email addresses, phone numbers, social media handles, or messaging accounts — during any Branches Learning class, breakout room, or school-sponsored event (virtual or in person). Students who wish to collaborate outside of class must do so only with parent/guardian permission and outside of Branches Learning platforms.
- Non-compliance with behavior expectations will prompt intervention by Branches Learning facilitators and administration, potentially involving counseling and communication with relevant parties (parents/guardians, teachers, administrators). Serious violations might be escalated to the disciplinary committee, potentially leading to suspension or expulsion.

6.3.1 Student Conduct & Responsibility Policy

Branches Learning is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment. We will review, document, and address behavioral or academic concerns that occur during Branches Learning classes, including live

sessions, course platforms, assigned group work, and direct communication between students and staff within our program.

Concerns that occur outside of Branches Learning instructional time or platforms—such as personal communications, social media interactions, activities at a student's primary school, or events in other programs—are not under the supervision or authority of Branches Learning. Therefore, Branches Learning cannot investigate, mediate, or be held responsible for incidents that occur outside our classes. Families should report those concerns to the appropriate school, organization, or authority responsible for that setting.

When outside issues affect a student's ability to participate safely or productively in our classes, Branches Learning may collaborate with the family and/or the student's school to support the learning environment; however, responsibility for investigation and disciplinary action remains with the institution where the incident occurred.

6.4 Learning Tools and Settings

- **Equipment:** A computer or laptop is recommended for online learning; tablets are less suitable.
- **Learning Space:** Students must be in a distraction-free area. If disruptions occur, the student may need to use noise-canceling headphones or be removed from the class.
- **Supervision:** Parents and guardians are responsible for supervising their students to ensure compliance with policies.

Section 7: Technology

7.1 Hardware Requirements

Students must have the specified minimum hardware to participate in Branches Learning courses. This includes a computer or laptop with internet access, as well as a webcam, microphone, and speakers. Students may not use a mobile device (such as a smartphone) to access live classes and must participate using a computer or other approved device that supports all required classroom features.

7.2 Software Requirements

It is essential for students to keep their device operating systems updated to prevent issues with accessing course materials.

7.3 Digital Literacy

Grades K–3: Students should be able to log in to their devices and learning platforms with adult support as needed. They should be able to turn their camera and microphone on and off, use basic classroom tools (such as mute/unmute and chat when permitted), and have a charged device and reliable internet connection. An adult may wish to sit with the student, particularly at the beginning of the school year, to provide guidance and support as the student develops independence with these foundational technology skills. Adults are also needed to assist students in submitting assignments and to ensure work is completed and turned in on time.

Grades 4–12: Students should possess basic digital literacy skills before attending their first class. This includes using a keyboard, navigating learning platforms, turning their camera and microphone on and off, muting and unmuting, clicking links, and using basic functions such as copy and paste. Students are expected to independently access classes, participate appropriately in the virtual environment, and submit assignments by established deadlines. Families may provide support as needed, but students should work toward increasing independence with these technologies and organizational skills.

7.4 Tech Support

Students who need technology support can ask their teachers for tips, but tech support is provided by their school.

7.5 Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Students must, at all times, follow and adhere to the [Branches Learning AI Use Policy](#).

Section 8: High School

8.1 Course Offerings

For a detailed list of high school course offerings at Branches Learning, please visit our website.

8.2 College Readiness

High schools in California may self-certify Branches Learning A-G courses to meet the University of California and California State University admission requirements. If you have questions about this topic, please contact your HST/TOR or school administration.

8.3 High School Diplomas and Transcripts

As an accredited Supplementary Education Program (SEP), Branches Learning works closely with high schools to provide rigorous, standards-based courses. We report midterm and semester grades directly to the student's high school, which remains the diploma and transcript-issuing institution.

8.4 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

Courses with this designation are listed in the high school course catalog. Branches Learning provides certificates of completion upon request.

Section 9: Parents and Academic Coaches

9.1 Guidance

Students are expected to complete assignments outside of classroom hours. Our teachers prepare students as thoroughly as possible, but additional support from parents or guardians may be necessary to complete these tasks.

9.2 Grading Policy

Teachers update grades weekly, and grade reports are sent to parents, HSTs/Teacher of Record (TOR), and students. Reports include a list of graded, pending, and missing assignments, as well as a cumulative grade. Parents/HSTs/TOR can also view student grades by having the student log in to their LMS account.

9.3 Work Sample Policy

Parents are responsible for providing work samples to their HST/TO. During monthly meetings with the HST/TOR, students can log in to their accounts and share their work. Parents can also provide hard-copy samples of work.

9.4 Tips

We advise establishing a regular homework schedule to help manage time effectively. Create a quiet, well-lit study area free from distractions. Encourage short breaks to maintain concentration; allow for independent work to foster self-reliance and critical thinking. Celebrate achievements to motivate students. Remember, homework is a chance to develop essential life skills such as time management and problem-solving.

9.5 Communication

- Parents and HSTs/TOR will receive weekly class summaries, which include assignments, missing work, and announcements.
- Meetings with course facilitators may be arranged occasionally; however, your primary contact remains the Homeschool Teacher (HST)/Teacher of Record (TOR).
- Please avoid discussing personal issues during live courses, as our staff focuses on the class as a whole.
- Parents need to send copies of student IEP's or 504 plans before classes begin so teachers can prepare. Send them to iep@brancheslearning.org.

9.6 Online Safety

Discuss the importance of online privacy with your child. Students should not share personal information, such as phone numbers, login details, or social media accounts. Learn more about our Safety Policy [here](#).

Section 10: Policies

10.1 Enrollment and Withdrawal Policies

10.1.1 Enrollment Policy

Enrollment for courses starts early in July. Late enrollments are accepted through September. Please consult our academic calendar for exact dates.

10.1.2 Withdrawal Policy

Withdrawals must be processed through the student's school organization. Contact your Homeschool Teacher (HST)/Teacher of Record (TOR) for assistance, and they will work with Branches Learning.

10.1.3 Refund Policy

Refunds are available if requested within two weeks of the course start date and must include all relevant details. Refunds are prorated, with full refunds available if courses are dropped before the start date.

Full-year course refunds are not available after the two-week policy per our agreement with Blue Ridge.

10.2 Camera Policy

Cameras must be on during live classes to enhance learning, foster a sense of community, and ensure safety. Camera waivers require approval from the Branches Learning team members and the student's HST/Teacher of Record or school administrator.

Camera Etiquette: The dress code for virtual classes should mirror that of physical classrooms.

10.3 Learning Environment Policy

Students must attend classes in a quiet environment, as background noise from televisions, conversations, or other sources disrupts the learning experience for everyone. If disruptive settings persist, the Branch's administration will meet with the family to address the issue.

10.4 Privacy Policy

All students' personal data is confidential and only accessible to Branches Learning staff. Course recordings are not shared outside of the student's immediate educational circle.

Section 11: Individualized Education Program (IEP) and 504 Plan Policy

11.1 IEP and 504 Plan Policy

Branches Learning is committed to providing equitable access to learning and supporting students with IEPs and 504 Plans in partnership with families and educational teams. We strive to create inclusive learning environments where students receive appropriate accommodations and supports within the scope of our program.

Families are responsible for sharing IEP/504 documents upon enrollment and updated documents during the school year. Information is reviewed to determine appropriate supports and is shared only with relevant staff.

11.1.1 Examples of Reasonable Accommodations & Support

- Extended time
- Modified or shortened assignments
- Adjusted presentation of materials
- Additional instructional scaffolds



11.1.2 Important Note

Because Branches Learning is a live, interactive program, students who cannot regularly attend live classes may benefit from a different educational setting. Absences related to documented needs may be excused when reported promptly (within 7 days).

11.1.3 Service Limitations

Branches Learning provides accommodations within its program capacity but does not conduct special education evaluations or provide related services such as speech therapy.

11.1.4 Commitment

We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where all students are supported and valued.