



Date: March 15, 2018

To: Minnesota Superintendents and Charter School Directors

From: Jeff Plaman, Online and Digital Learning Specialist, Office of Career and College Success

RE: Program plan for e-Learning days (Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.414)

The 2017 Legislature has amended the Length of School Year; Hours of Instruction (Minn. Stat. § 120A.41) to include the option of a school utilizing e-Learning days:

- Due to inclement weather.
- Up to **five days** in one school year.
- Counted as an instructional day and included as hours of instruction.

Plan

If the school board or charter school wishes to include the opportunity for e-Learning days, they must consult with their teachers (charter schools) or the teacher's representative (districts) and develop a plan for these days.

The plan must include:

- Accommodations for students without sufficient access to the Internet, hardware, or software in their homes.
- Accessible digital instruction for students with disabilities under chapter 125A and meet the needs of each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP)/504 plans.
- Notification to parents and students of the plan must occur at the beginning of the school year and, upon implementation of an e-Learning day, there must be at least two hours' notice prior to the normal school start time that students are to follow the e-Learning day plan.
- Access to teachers via telephone and online during normal school hours.

Questions and Answers

1. How are plans developed?

Plans must be developed by the district or charter school with cooperation from the teachers or their representative. Plans must be approved by the board in an open meeting and communicated with the families at the beginning of the school year. MDE staff can provide technical assistance to districts and charter schools as plans are developed. Contact mde.onlinelearning@state.mn.us.

2. Do all schools in the district have to be included in an e-Learning plan adopted by a district?

A district may specify schools and/or grade-levels to follow the e-Learning plan (i.e., High School only, or Middle School grade 7 and 8 only).

3. How will attendance for membership be verified?

Attendance must be taken by the teacher and records of attendance must be kept. Some ways attendance could be verified include:

- Logging in to class page(s) on the district's/school's learning management system (LMS).
- Email exchange/text exchange/phone call with teacher.
- Parent may verify attendance; a documentation process is developed and retained by the school as part of the student's attendance record.
- Activity in classes (pages accessed, discussion participation, formative assessments completed).
- Work submitted during the e-Learning day.

4. What are suitable accommodations for students without sufficient access?

All students must have similar learning experiences in terms of subject matter, task difficulty, and interaction with peers and their teacher(s). Tasks must be completed during the regular hours of the e-Learning day. Students without access cannot be required to make-up the work on another day. Students may use physical texts or books and may handwrite their work, but those resources would have to be available at home. Teachers must contact students by telephone to conference with students, assess and support their learning.

5. What are some examples of quality e-Learning?

Quality e-Learning experiences:

- Integrate as seamlessly as possible into the regular instruction that has been occurring. Avoid generic, out-of-context tasks. Tasks should be meaningful and important to students.
- Leverage digital tools students are using as part of their regular instruction (i.e., Schoology or other LMS, Google Docs, apps).
- Include formative assessment and feedback.
- Provide opportunities for peer interaction.
- Include active instruction by teachers, monitoring progress and providing feedback, facilitating, coaching, clarifying and adjusting the task, and suggesting next steps.
- Include the option for the class to meet synchronously via video chat like Google Hangouts, Skype, or FaceTime.

6. Can an e-Learning day be a homework catch-up day?

To be counted as an instructional day for students, teachers will engage in some form of instruction with their students. This can take on many forms (see above) but fundamentally, means that there will be some level of interaction, progress monitoring, and/or feedback between teachers and students.

7. Do students have to participate in e-Learning for all scheduled classes?

Students are expected to participate in e-Learning activities for all scheduled classes on the day the plan is implemented just as they would for a traditional, on-campus day. Attendance must be verified for each class. Students who do not participate in planned activities are considered absent for those class(es) and should be reported as absent just as if they were not present for an on-campus class.

8. Can families choose to opt out of e-Learning days?

Students whose family chooses to not participate in the e-Learning day are reported as absent. It is up to the school whether to consider this an excused absence under Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22, subdivision 12.

9. How should e-Learning days be reported in Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS)?

E-learning days would be reported as regular instructional days on the MARSS A School File. Students enrolled on an e-learning day would generate one day of membership. The length of the school day would be reported as the same length that was originally scheduled had the students attended at the school site. Other questions about MARSS reporting can be directed to MARSS@state.mn.us.