



Snow Day: Extended Learning

Overview of Plan

Overview of Snow Day: Extended Learning Plan Pilot Proposal

Snow Day Extended Learning refers to a practice assigning work to students to make up days when school is canceled for reasons such as inclement weather. This practice has been implemented in several states (Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Ohio) and under different operational models. As a K - 12 district divided into elementary, middle, and high schools, we are looking to create a model that is flexible within the district, within schools, and even within grades to ensure that the instructional activities meet the DESE definition of structured learning time.

Each school year as the winter months settle in; schools do their best to prepare for unexpected school cancellations due to inclement weather. While many students might welcome a day off from school, cancellations pose unexpected interruptions to the teaching and learning process. Canceled school days are added to the end of the school calendar in June, which is not optimal for timely, focused learning experiences. North Middlesex has had an average of 6.1 canceled days a year for snow over the last decade. This not only interrupts the learning for students but adds days to the end of the school year when learning is not as structured as it is in the middle of the school year.

The Snow Day Extended Learning program provides the students of NMRSD with real-time, authentic learning opportunities to replace canceled school days. Teachers will provide curriculum-based learning that their students can complete in place of a canceled school day. Assignments may be short-term, unit-based or a long-term project equal to multiple days of learning.

Although we firmly believe that the highest form of learning takes place in a classroom with a qualified teacher, support staff or specialist, we also acknowledge that days made up at the end of the school calendar are not of the same quality as those that could be offered with extended learning opportunities. Students in the twenty-first century will likely have at least one online class in college, and many will be preparing for employment set in a work-from-home environment. The extended learning opportunities help build a foundation for this type of learning and work production for the students of North Middlesex.

A group of elementary, middle and high school staff, administrators, and parents from all three member towns have researched and reviewed districts in Massachusetts that have implemented a similar plan for canceled days and created a proposal for a pilot to begin starting January 16, 2017, upon the school committee's approval. Pending approval of the pilot all district employees will be provided a Roles and Responsibilities outline, examples of structured learning activities related to their grade level and discipline and will continue to complete their contracted work time using planning, teaching, support, and correcting of assignments intended for these days.

The pilot will include extended learning opportunities for up to five snow days that take place between January 16, 2017, and April 1, 2018. If five snow days are not needed then long-term assignments will be finished during regular school hours as the structured learning time teachers have determined best fits the grade level and discipline's curriculum.

After the completion of the pilot Snow Day Extended Learning, the proposal committee will survey families and staff to determine a recommendation for full implementation beginning in the 2018-2019 school year.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What is snow day extended learning?

NMRSD's mission is to develop an interactive and inclusive learning community dedicated to preparing students for productive citizenship in a global society.

Snow day extended learning allows students to complete structured learning time at home under the direction of their teachers. This structured learning time will still count towards the student's learning requirements outlined by the state of Massachusetts.

What is structured learning time?

Per the state of Massachusetts Structured Learning time shall mean time during which students are engaged in regularly scheduled instruction, learning activities, or learning assessments within the curriculum for study of the "core subjects" and "other subjects." In addition to classroom time where both teachers and students are present, structured learning time may include directed study, independent study, technology-assisted learning, and presentations by persons other than teachers, school-to-work programs, and statewide student performance assessments.

Why does NMRSD have an extended learning program?

Learning happens everywhere. The snow day extended learning program allows students to develop their foundational skills needed to plan and accomplish learning in different environments. By promoting independent, hands-on/experiential learning, students are setting the stage for lifelong learning.

What do teachers do on snow day extended learning days?

Teachers will have already spent considerable time and effort developing these assignments. They will work with students on completing these assignments when they return to school, are responsible for following up with students on incomplete assignments, and must assess each student's assignment to provide a grade. Also, teachers may be working on lesson plans, content research, professional development, or other items. Additional information on the roles and responsibilities, as well as sample assignments, can be found on the website.

How will students know what their extended learning assignment will be for the snow day?

Teachers will determine if they will assign a short-term, unit-based or long-term assignment and will give this out to students either at the beginning of winter, before the snow day or post or email no later than 9:00 am on an extended learning snow day.

Do all schools/students have the same lessons?

No. Each lesson will be teacher specific. They will assign their students' lesson, assignment or projects based on their grade level.

When do students have to turn in their extended learning assignments?

This decision will be determined by your student's teacher and will be communicated to your student. Projects/assignments will never be due the first day they come back to school. Some assignments will be short term, and due as early as a week after the snow day. Some assignments will be long-term projects, and due dates for these assignments will be provided to the student by the teacher or team of teachers.

How much support should parents give their children?

The details provided for students by their teachers to complete the assignments will allow them to do most if not all of the work independently. Lessons are developed so the parents will not need to provide any more support than they would typically.

What if a parent is not able to be home to support a young child with work completion? What if a student requires IEP or ELL support services to complete curriculum assignments?

One of the reasons that end products are not due on the day following a school cancellation day is so that we can ensure that students have the time and support services they may need to successfully complete their assignments.

If my child is scheduled for a Special (Art, PE, Foreign Language, Music) on that day will they have assignments?

Your child will have assignments given to them by their Specialist teacher, or it will be integrated into an assignment.

How much time should each assignment take?

The snow day extended learning program focuses on quality of learning, not quantity. Teachers will provide assignments which meet the DESE definition of structured learning time. Structured learning time will never exceed that of a typical class/subject.

What if I don't have a computer for my child to use?

The assignments will not require the sole use of a computer/internet. If your child does not have access to a computer, their assignment will be given on paper, or other arrangements for the use of district technology will be arranged.

What will happen to my student if he/she does not complete their extended learning assignments?

Students who do not complete an assignment by the due date and have not sought or accepted attempts to receive support from school personnel will be marked absent for the day/class.

Who can parents/students contact if they have a question about an assignment?

As always, your first line of support will be the classroom teacher, followed by the building-level administration. Email your student's teacher, and he/she will get back to you. Also, teachers will be available to work with students upon their return to school.