

Definitions

eLearning Day: A school cancellation day which is made up via technology. “Blended learning” is a synonym to eLearning.

Flex Day: SACS is one of twelve districts allowed to have Flex Days by the Indiana Department of Education. Flex Days are four pre-planned days posted on the yearly calendar where grades 6-12 students attend school at home using technology while teachers receive professional development in the morning and are available from 12:00PM - 3:00PM using technology. These days are more flexible and may allow students to use technology on campus if needed. Check with the school office and the school website for school access information. Many times assignments will be posted the night before a Flex Day.

Make-up Days: Days listed on the school calendar which are available as school days if needed. If SACS does not use them, they become vacation days.

LMS: Learning Management System: the computer program which students and teachers log into. This serves as the primary place where eLearning occurs. This currently is My Big Campus.

CMT: SACS technology office. 431-2480.

Formative Assessments: Designed to provide feedback to students. These assessments do not usually have a major impact on grades so students are free to experiment without fear of impacting their grades. These should help students improve performance. Think of formative assessments like practices for a sports team or fine arts performance.

Summative Assessments: Designed to show mastery of a subject. These are the major assignments where the majority of a student’s grade is determined. Formative assessment should be targeted to help students push themselves to achieve their best performance on these assessments. Think of summative assessments as the official game for a sports team or actual fine arts performance.

General

Why not use a traditional method of makeup?

The district’s eLearning days are an extension of our vision to provide students with learning opportunities beyond traditional classroom walls. This blended learning focus is a significant step toward the future of education in which our students are provided the skills and experiences they need to be successful in the jobs and careers of tomorrow. eLearning provides SACS students two advantages: it provides our students with blended learning experiences, and it maintains educational momentum.

How do students and parents find out if an eLearning day will be scheduled?

The best place is the district website. An eLearning Day will also be announced by area media, just as inclement weather days have always been announced. Announcements will also be posted on the district social media sites including Facebook and Twitter.

When do eLearning day assignments get posted?

Teachers are posting lessons, activities, and assignments on their LMS page by 9:00 AM the morning of the eLearning Day. There may be times when these are posted earlier.

How can students interact with teachers on an eLearning Day?

Teachers will be available from 9AM - 3PM via their LMS page, email, and the school is available via phone. School administrators are also available via phone and email.

What can be done if technology is not working on an eLearning Day?

If there seems to be a problem on the district side, please feel free to call your school office or CMT (431-2480). If the problem is widespread, we will communicate the problem and any solution we have via the web site and social media. If the problem is in your home, teachers will understand and work with students when they return to school.

Why does SACS offer eLearning Day make up for inclement weather?

eLearning days are held in place of cancellation days which would need to be made up later, often in June. When these make-up days are at the end of the year they do not reflect the learning that was needed at the time of the day off. SACS eLearning days allow students to continue to make educational progress. This is especially important when faced with high stakes tests (ISTEP+, AP, IREAD, etc.) which have fixed testing dates regardless of the number of cancellation days.

What work has SACS done to provide this eLearning opportunity?

SACS has been getting teachers ready to leverage technology in order to expand the classroom for the last five years. SACS has invested large amounts of time and money in staff development, lesson plan development, software vetting procedures, board policies, informational websites for parents, student digital citizenship training, relationship building with families, and technology infrastructure. The goal has been to improve our capability to deliver high quality instruction to our students in a manner that reflects what their future will look like.

What communication has been provided by the district to parents describing the program and how they are to support it and help implement it?

The district's eLearning initiative has been communicated in a variety of ways including emails of procedures and expectations, Twitter and Facebook announcements, and published information on district and school websites. There have been numerous meetings with parents and students including Parent/Teacher conferences and Back to School events. There are also informational videos and tutorials available on the website at this link:

<http://www.sacs.k12.in.us/Page/9126>

When would SACS use a make-up day instead of an eLearning Day?

SACS would make up cancellation days if the district experiences an event or events that cause school to be closed enough days in a short period of time when educational momentum is lost. That decision will be made by the Superintendent after consulting with principals and teachers. SACS will use the built-in snow makeup days on the calendar as school days if they are available or add days at the end of the year. If this becomes necessary, the decision to use a calendar make-up day would be published at least, but no later than, 7 calendar days prior to the make-up day.

Internet Access

Is the district assuming (or requiring) that the home of each family in SACS have a computer and high-speed network access?

No. There is no requirement for each home to have a computer or high speed internet. All students in grades 3-12 students have a device provided by SACS and students in grades k-2 will have iPads available to them beginning in the 2015-16 school year. Recent surveys indicate the majority of homes in SACS do have a device and less than 5% of our students do not have internet access.

What should families without home internet access do?

Students should check with their teachers and the school office to see what provisions can be set up in advance. This will be dealt with in a case-by-case manner. Wireless access points and equipment have been installed in several daycares and apartment complexes. If weather permits safe travel, students are encouraged to use public buildings that have equipment and wi-fi access. Depending upon weather and/or other situations, computer labs at schools may be made available to students during the school day and evenings: those times would be found on individual school web pages. Teachers may provide extra time and will extend homework timelines in special circumstances so that students can complete their work using equipment and internet access at school.

What happens if the computer or internet access is not functioning?

It is important for students to know that technical problems can occur. Each school has a computer specialist working on eLearning days. Their number one priority is to help those with technical issues. In these rare cases, teachers are flexible and students have been informed they will have additional time to complete assigned work. Students and parents are encouraged to contact their school to seek technical help. District technology support (CMT: 431-2480) is also available for technical help.

Can a student use a family computer rather than the SACS computer?

Yes. Access to a family computer is not necessary but is certainly an option on eLearning and Flex days. When students are at school they are required to use the device provided by SACS.

Security

Are there security precautions to ensure that no one but officially designated school district personnel can access or determine identities and other personal information of the participating families or students?

Yes. All assignments and work include integration with the district's LMS (Learning Management System) and other secure networks within the SACS domain. SACS educators follow the rules set forth in the SACS AUP (Acceptable Use Policy). This board policy (6216) is available for review on the SACS District website. A shortened version is available here:

<http://sacs.schoolwires.net/Page/9323>

All online activities are protected by usernames and passwords and SSL connections in the event wireless is being used. In addition, Student Privacy Pledge (studentprivacypledge.org), is an entity of the federal government which protects students, parents, teachers, and staff against misuse of their data. Most of the online software SACS uses, including our LMS called My Big Campus, is a resource that has taken measures to ensure student privacy. In some cases teachers may be using Web 2.0 tools as they also use in school. Please see the web 2.0 policy as stated in district AUP here:

<http://sacs.schoolwires.net/Page/9152>

and a list of the programs SACS has vetted for use here:

<http://www.sacs.k12.in.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=8980>

Is adult supervision needed for e-learning experience?

No. Parent supervision of their children is a family decision and SACS honors the family and guidelines it sets in their home. Similar to traditional homework, SACS eLearning assignments are designed to be completed by the student with little or no parent involvement required unless specifically stated by teacher. Some material in the homework may be new, but accessing the homework and using the technology should be something students are used to doing independently. Students experiencing problems or frustrations should be encouraged to contact their teacher. SACS encourages parents to use this as an opportunity to learn more about their child's daily school activities.

Instruction

Does e-Learning dovetail with the curriculum and each teacher's lesson plan?

Yes. Often times this is referred to as a Blended Instructional Approach. SACS eLearning assignments are designed to be a logical continuation of learning experiences used in the classroom, and should help to maintain important educational momentum.

Do students with identified special learning needs have an alternative means to access their education on eLearning days?

Yes. Supports, services and accommodations for students with an Individual Education Program (IEP), Individual Learning Plan (ILP) or a Section 504 Plan are reviewed, discussed

and agreed upon at the student's case conference committee meeting, a Section 504 meeting or a Strategies for Student Success/general education plan.

Has each teacher been asked to prepare the appropriate lessons in advance for each day--presumably any day could be a "snow day"-- for online delivery?

No. Because we don't know when a "snow day" will occur, it isn't logical to have assignments created in advance. Teachers can watch the forecast and begin tentative plans, but actually creating a lesson which is a logical continuation of learning experiences which merges with yesterday and tomorrow dictates waiting to build lessons the night before or the day of the snow day. It is this practice that allows SACS to adhere to a true atmosphere of Blended Learning. It is also for this reason that assignments are not posted until 9 AM. With that being said, there may be some lessons, activities and/or software programs that students routinely access to practice basic foundational literacy skills, keyboarding, number fluency, technology literacy or digital citizenship. These are the same practice activities that may occur during a regular school day.

Are designated break times included in the schedule?

No. eLearning days are practical opportunities for students to practice the skill of time management. Students determine when they will start work on eLearning days. This also means that students determine when breaks are taken and whether to work in an uninterrupted stream or to break the learning experiences up during the day. This idea is an important concept as SACS strives to personalize student learning. "Brain break" activities that include movement and music are included at the elementary level to encourage taking breaks and refocusing.

How much time is the student is expected to work online during the eLearning Day?

No minimum or maximum amount of time is expected. Student "work load" is determined by grade level, the lesson plans for that day, the types of courses students are taking, and the amount of time needed to complete the learning experiences. Teachers strive to mimic the same workload, taking into account passing periods and transition time a student would experience in a regular school day.

Is eLearning really effective for students?

Absolutely. The educational landscape has significantly shifted in the past 10 years. We do not want to limit our children to the world that was, but wish to expand their learning to the world they are growing up in. Research indicates eLearning through a blended means is appropriate and effective at all ages and provides students a pathway to college, career readiness, and lifelong learning. Here are links to some articles:

[Blended Learning: A Wise Giver's Guide to Supporting Tech-Assisted Teaching](#)

[Online Learning: Myths, Reality, and Practice](#)

[Planning and Designing for K12 Next Generation Learning](#)

[The Rise of K12 Blended Learning](#)

[A Summary of Research on the Effectiveness of K-12 Online Learning](#)

How are the instructional materials chosen and who prepares them?

Just as in the classroom, instructional materials are selected and created by SACS teachers. SACS teachers have access to a wealth of digital resources provided to them in planning for eLearning instruction. Although each teacher is expected to prepare eLearning experiences for his/her class, many eLearning experiences are collaboratively created by teams or departments of teachers and are not necessarily the work of a single teacher. This mirrors the traditional school day as well. Teachers have always been designers of their lessons and continue to do the same through eLearning.

Teacher and Student Accountability

How is eLearning monitored and verified?

Students can be monitored through a login verification in the district's LMS. Final accountability for students and their mastery of instructional goals relies on assessment of work, as it always has been. As in the traditional classroom, teachers assess the student work and will know if students have met the instructional goals for the day. The most important attribute involving progression of learning is determined through formative and summative assessment. The actual amount of time online is less important than the work produced and/or created by the student to demonstrate learning and mastery of learning targets.

What metrics are being collected on progress or success of the program?

High school students have been involved in surveys and a panel discussion with staff members about their eLearning experiences. In addition, our entire school community can access the annual Speak Up Survey. <http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/> Parent meetings also provide an opportunity for feedback and insights regarding the district's eLearning success. Some teachers have even asked for direct feedback from the parents and students in their classrooms as a means of ensuring the success of eLearning days. The informal feedback gathered by administrators and teachers from students and parents is actually the most important gauge of success. Parents have indicated eLearning has given them the opportunity to take a closer look at what their children are learning in the classroom. Others indicate eLearning days are giving their students the experience of working with technology and how to use it to create and produce work.

Does the administration report these results to the Department of Education and to the School Board?

Results and/or any other requested documentation is shared directly with the IDOE and the SACS School Board. Both objective data and anecdotal comments are included as part of this communication process.

What mechanisms are in place to authenticate the lessons and ensure the online delivery meets the instructional goals for that day?

Administrators are using the teacher evaluation process on eLearning days to evaluate lesson plans and the delivery of the lessons. Some areas that are being documented are differentiation

of instruction, accessibility of learning, ease of directions and purposeful planning. Additionally, teachers' use of formative and summative assessment to measure student learning as it relates to content standards is included in this process, just as we would on any other day in the traditional classroom setting. District administration has the capability and does monitor the frequency of teacher interactions with students on the district's LMS and email. SACS administration has complete confidence that teachers are available to answer questions from families and students on eLearning days. Students report teachers are accessible and data demonstrates teachers are answering student queries for help well into the night on eLearning days. All these evaluations are being recorded in each teacher's online evaluation software account.