Gower School District 62 - eLearning overview

According to Section 10‑20.56 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/10‑20.56], school districts may, after holding a public hearing and by formal resolution, utilize "eLearning days" in lieu of emergency days. The Board of Education in Gower School District adopted such a resolution on April 30, 2019. The district's eLearning program must also be verified by the regional office of education prior to implementation which was completed for the Gower eLearning plan by the DuPage County Regional Office of Education on May 17, 2019.

It is expected that the regional office of education for the school district will verify that local proposals for eLearning programs have met the requirements specified by School Code and that such proposals contain provisions designed to reasonably and practicably accomplish these specifications. The local eLearning plan developed in Gower, and subsequently adopted by the Board of Education and verified by the DuPage Regional Office of Education, provides for such specifications as follows and as previously reported as part of the Superintendent's Report to the Board on April 30, 2019: Supt Report Appendix D - eLearning Plan Update.

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1. *to ensure and verify at least 5 clock hours of instruction or school work, as required under Section 10-19.05, for each student participating in an e-learning day;*
   - Gower's eLearning schedule accounts for at least 5 clock hours:
     - 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. - Planning/preparation
     - 8:30 a.m. - Learning modules posted and period of availability, student engagement, instruction, supervision and support as needed begins
     - 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. - 5-hour block of student engagement, instruction, supervision, monitoring and support as needed
     - 1:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. - Duty Free
     - 2:00 p.m. - 3:20 p.m. - Verification/assessment of student work/engagement; planning/prep. (e-Learning)
     - 3:20 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. - Planning/preparation, professional responsibilities

2. *to ensure access from home or other appropriate remote facility for all students participating, including computers, the Internet, and other forms of electronic communication that must be utilized in the proposed program;*
   - Per Recommendation for eLearning Days, 12-18-18: Our commitment to being a FutureReady school district was made clear through Board action in Sept. 2014 as well as through the implementation of our i3 Learning Initiative designed in 2013 which continue to impact our Teaching and Learning model to this day. It is clear that our district has the infrastructure and professional capacity in place to support the adoption of eLearning days in place of traditional emergency days. A recent Home Connectivity Survey indicates that 98.4% of our students have access to reliable internet service at home based on a current return or direct contact rate of 100% at GM and 98.8% of our students have access to reliable internet service at home based on a current return or direct contact rate of 85% at GW. Measured in single digits at each school campuses, school staff will work with individual families to accommodate as needed (e.g. Loaner WiFi 'Hot Spot', Access to Reduced Rate Programs, Direct Financial Assistance, etc.).

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3. *to ensure that non-electronic materials are made available for students participating in the program who do not have access to the required technology or to participating teachers or students who are prevented from accessing the required technology;*
   ○ It is important to emphasize that the 'e' in an eLearning Day represents 'engagement' more so than 'electronic' given the (state) guidance around building a definition of 'an instructional day'
   ○ Per the eLearning FAQ:
      ■ If my child has a question about an assignment, what do we do?
         ● Teachers and specialists will be available for support from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm
      ■ Parents/students can email their teacher/specialist, do a virtual chat with their teacher, post a discussion question in Schoology, or call and leave a voicemail
         ● Teachers can retrieve school voicemails remotely.
      ■ What If there is a power outage within the community on the emergency day?
         ● The District would likely adjust the due date for the eLearning Modules if needed and adjust attendance accordingly.

4. *to ensure appropriate learning opportunities for students with special needs;*
   ○ Individual student needs are addressed at the teacher-design level of the eLearning Modules utilized for an eLearning day, as they are through lesson plan design in any regular student attendance day, and customized according to, in this case, an Individualized Education Programs (IEP) in place for students with special needs.
   ○ Related certified service providers and/or specialists are available for student support, individualized or otherwise, according to the same schedule as teachers

5. *to monitor and verify each student's electronic participation;*
   ○ Per the eLearning FAQ:
      ■ How will I (or my child) verify that the learning activities or assignments are complete?
         ● Since the work is due at 9:00 pm on the emergency day, teachers will be checking in the work on the next day to determine participation and verify attendance
         ● If an extended due date is required, please contact the teacher directly to discuss the circumstances
      ■ How is attendance recorded?
         ● Completion of 3 of the 3 eLearning Modules will be recorded as a full day
         ● Completion of 1 or 2 of the 3 eLearning Modules will be recorded as a half day
         ● Completion of 0 of the 3 eLearning Modules will be recorded as an absence

6. *to address the extent to which student participation is within the student's control as to the time, pace, and means of learning;*
   ○ It is important to emphasize that the 'e' in an eLearning Day represents 'engagement' more so than 'electronic' given the (state) guidance around building a definition of 'an instructional day'
   ○ Individual student needs are addressed at the teacher-design level of the eLearning Modules utilized for an eLearning day, as they are through lesson plan design in any regular student attendance day

7. *to provide effective notice to students and their parents or guardians of the use of particular days for e-learning;*
   ○ Per the eLearning Plan Update, 2-19-19
      ■ e-Learning Days held in lieu Emergency School Closure Days were announced via e-blast, robocall, website publication, and Emergency Closing Center postings and this strategy will continue to be used moving forward

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8. *to provide staff and students with adequate training for e-learning days' participation;*
   - Per Recommendation for eLearning Days, 12-18-18:
     - Gower School District officials contacted the co-presidents of the Gower Educators Association (GEA; Teacher Union) on Nov. 27 to begin the discussion provided the potential for a change to our current practice. With a clear consensus to investigate further, and ongoing communication and agreement, the GEA and Gower Admin Team met on Dec. 10 to build a framework for 'E-Learning Days' in Gower to share with staff and collect their feedback at the previously scheduled building-level staff meetings on Dec. 11. The District Superintendent joined each of the school Principals at their respective staff meetings to present the framework.
     - The Calendar Committee has recommended approval of the 2019-20 School Calendar which includes a Teacher Institute Day dedicated to eLearning practice/training

9. *to ensure an opportunity for any collective bargaining negotiations with representatives of the school district's employees that would be legally required, and including all classifications of school district employees who are represented by collective bargaining agreements and who would be affected in the event of an e-learning day;*
   - The Board and GEA have built a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure appropriate use of eLearning Days in accordance with the current Collective Bargaining Agreement

10. *to review and revise the program as implemented to address difficulties confronted; and*
    - The eLearning Plan Update, 2-19-19 illustrates a commitment to continuous improvement as it relates to the eLearning Plan
    - An anonymous eLearning Feedback Form has been added to the district's eLearning webpage

11. *To ensure that the protocol regarding general expectations and responsibilities of the program is communicated to teachers, staff, and students at least 30 days prior to utilizing an e-learning day.*
    - By building around the expected approval process and accompanying legislative statute ahead of time, Gower School District is well-positioned to have a fully approved plan in place for the start of the 2019-20 school year. This will allow for notification through start-of-year processes and training (e.g. Teacher Institute, Staff Handbooks, Parent and Student Handbooks, Open House, Curriculum Night, etc.)

12. *The school board's approval of a district's initial e-learning program and renewal of the e-learning program shall be for a term of 3 years. The State Board of Education may adopt rules consistent with the provision of this Section.*
    - Noted by Gower School District Officials and the Board of Education

13. *Transition plan back to on-site learning*
    - As part of the COVID19 public health crisis and the subsequent development of Remote Learning Days by the IL State Board of Education, local school districts with verified eLearning plans were encouraged to continue the use of those plans and adjust as needed. One required adjustment was to plan for a transition back to on-site learning after such a long period of remote instruction.
    - Gower School District is prepared to return after a period of eLearning to in-person instruction in accordance with local safety and public health official guidance and recommendations.
    - After a period of five (5) or more consecutive eLearning days, Gower School District will schedule a minimum of one (1) half-day of school to allow students and faculty an opportunity to transition back to a regular in-person and full-day school schedule with a maximum of two (2) half days.

- ○ Our Mental Health and Student Support Staff continue to remain focused on student wellness throughout any period of eLearning and will monitor individual student needs for appropriate reintegration and suggest interventions as needed.
- ○ Our instructional staff will deploy appropriate academic screenings and benchmark assessments for students to ensure 'just-right' teaching and learning programs