



## Alternative Solutions to Weather Closures

Monday, Feb. 4

Dear D181 families and staff,

As you know, this year has brought exceptionally challenging weather conditions. Some of these days have resulted in the decision to close schools to ensure the safety of our students and staff.

Today, we want to address two topics of conversation: the possibility of instituting Delayed Start Days and/or eLearning Days in the 2019-20 school year as alternatives to missed attendance days. Both options would allow student attendance to be counted for the day and eliminate the need for make-up days.

**Delayed Start Days** allow schools to begin at a later time when weather and road conditions may be more manageable. For example, busses may pick up students two hours later than usual and the school day may be slightly extended. Delayed Start Days were not instituted for the 2018-19 school year as the contract with our bus company does not allow for late pickup without unanticipated additional costs. For the 2019-20 school year, we will examine the fees associated with including delayed starts in our contract and make a decision prior to the start of the school year.

**eLearning** is the option for students to utilize electronic technology to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. Teachers prepare classwork for students in advance, and in the instance of an emergency closing of schools, students receive the assignments electronically. In some instances, teachers are available for students to call with questions about the assignments.

While eLearning presents itself as a simple concept there are complexities that need to be taken into consideration. Because eLearning is in its earliest stages of adoption across the state, District 181 has elected to only research the possibility at this time and consult with other districts who have implemented eLearning this year. We are thoughtfully considering the following issues:

1. How do we ensure eLearning Days yield valuable and relevant work to students and coincide with subjects currently being studied at the time of an emergency closure?
2. Will eLearning Days provide beneficial educational opportunities for our special needs students?
3. What technology infrastructure is needed for parents and students to reach teachers by phone when teachers are offsite?
4. Will the State continue to endorse the eLearning option? A new bill that could eliminate this option was introduced in Springfield last week.

It is our primary goal to be collaborative and inclusive of students' needs without disrupting the quality of educational instruction and support District 181 students receive throughout the school year. We are excited about the trajectory of our District and want to thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Hector Garcia, Ph.D., Superintendent