

LEYDEN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 212
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LEYDEN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 212 TO PARTICIPATE IN THE E-LEARNING DAY PILOT

Leyden High School District 212 is one of three Illinois school districts that will participate in the E-Learning Day Pilot program that allows districts to provide electronic instruction for students should schools be closed because of inclement weather or other emergency school closings.

In addition to District 212, the Illinois State Board of Education recently selected West Chicago High School District and the Gurnee Elementary District to participate in the three-year pilot program that will begin in January, 2016.

“We believe an e-learning day is a better option than adding a day at the end of the school year,” says Nick Polyak, District 212 superintendent. “Traditional snow days become lost educational time for seniors who don’t return after graduation, and for our AP students who have to take their exams on the nationally set test days. As for students as a whole, we believe e-learning days reinforce the fact that teaching and learning are not confined to 48 minute class periods or physical classrooms.”

For the past four years, District 212 students have been issued a Chromebook for use in school and at home. It is this access and connectivity to the Internet that makes the e-school day program viable. “For our students who don’t have Internet access at home, the district is providing a solution through the Sprint ConnectEd grant. We have district-owned WiFi hotspots we are providing to students, and Sprint is providing four years of free Internet access,” Polyak says.

During an e-learning day, students check into each class via a Google generated form and teachers submit attendance records electronically.

Teachers' lessons are available online, and students have complete access to information and resources, as well as the capability to submit their work electronically.

“One of the best pieces of advice we have received from other states is to make sure we do not overwhelm students with work on that day,” Polyak says. “The work should be relevant, meaningful and manageable, but we don’t expect students to complete 48 minutes of classwork and 30 minutes of homework for each class on an e-learning day,” he says.

E-learning days are gaining national attention, as many nearby states such as Indiana, Minnesota and Michigan have been using e-learning days for the past few years. Because this program is new to Illinois, the participating districts are allowing for teacher flexibility and autonomy, knowing there will be questions and concerns. “After all, this is a pilot. We expect to improve upon the process as we move forward,” Polyak notes.

An e-learning day is essentially a virtual “snow” day so there will be other considerations such as childcare responsibilities, shoveling the driveway, and of course, making a snowman. “Our e-learning days are purposely set-up as an asynchronous experience to provide flexibility for students and staff,” he adds.

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