

Frequently Asked Questions About The Blizzard Bag Proposal

1. Is every day school is cancelled an Alternative Learning Day?

In this first year of implementing and testing the program, only a maximum of five days will be designated as “Blizzard Bag Days”

Additionally, blizzard bags/alternative learning days will only be used when school is cancelled due to hazardous weather conditions, inability of the bus company to provide buses, damage to school buildings, an outbreak/epidemic requiring some level of quarantine, emergencies that create unsafe roads or that make it unsafe to use the buildings.

2. Do all students have the same lessons?

As with a regular learning day, students will have lessons that vary by teacher, grade level, and subject area. Also, based upon specific needs, students within a class may have lessons that incorporate modifications based upon student needs.

3. What if I don't have internet access?

All alternative learning day lessons will be able to completed without internet access based upon what each teacher provides for resources. Also some work may be done during the alternative learning day and some may be completed upon the return to school.

4. What if lessons are not completed?

Lessons are expected to be completed with 5 school days of returning to school unless specific modifications are in place to accommodate specific student needs.

Exceptions for a 5 day extension may be made on an individual basis based upon assignments not completed due to a misunderstanding of the material or assignment.

Any assignments not completed under the timelines will be considered as a zero and that day and/or subject will be considered an unexcused absence.

5. What to teachers do on alternative learning days?

Teachers may choose to set a time period to be available to students, may be working on lesson plans, content research, professional development, collaborative online meetings/discussions or other items. It's important to remember that teachers will have already spend consider time and effort on developing these assignments, will work with students on completing these assignments when they return to school, are responsible on following up with students on uncompleted assignments, and must assess each student's assignment to provide a grade.

6. What if I have a question about an assignment?

It is likely that teachers will review the assignment before the alternative learning day, some teachers will provide time to available to students on the alternative learning day, and all teachers will be able to work with students upon their return to school.

7. Why is GRSD developing and piloting an alternative learning day/blizzard bag program?

GRSD staff already understand that learning happens everywhere and at anytime and have been striving to incorporate blended learning, flipped instruction, and online education into daily activities. Alternative learning day assignments should help promote independent hands-on/experiential learning and help prepare for lifelong learning. By using external resources and technology, students will be developing the skills needed for future success in both the workplace and higher education.

In addition, the GRSD serves 6 towns covering a large and diverse geographic area and often has to cancel school due to weather related road conditions in only one or two towns. By implementing an alternative learning day we can allow students to continue learning on a regular schedule and under varying circumstances.

8. Will parents have to help their children complete assignments?

While we hope that parents will have the opportunity to support their children in completing assignments, lessons are developed so that parents/guardians won't need to provide any more support than they would with homework.

9. What obstacles may hinder the implementation?

The lack of consistent and ubiquitous broadband/internet access throughout the district towns. This requires extra preparation by teachers to ensure that lessons can be done both online and via pencil and paper.

The fact that not all families have equal access to electronic devices and internet, again requiring that all alternative learning day lessons be available in multiple formats.

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