



Selinsgrove Area School District's – Distance Learning Guidelines

Dear Students/Families:

The Selinsgrove Area School District Administration feels this correspondence is necessary in order to revisit the procedures and purposes behind the Distance Learning Educational Option. In the interest of ensuring the highest quality educational experience for all students, the following adjustments to distance learning are being implemented. These changes or reminders are based on data connected to student engagement, attendance, and overall academic achievement among students in grades K – 12.

The Distance Learning option was implemented for COVID-19 related purposes only. These include: virus and risk mitigation for families who desire and continuity of education in the event a student/staff member is symptomatic, tests positive for COVID-19, needs to quarantine due to exposure or contact tracing, or a school closure. While many students are doing well within the Distance Learning Educational Option, we are also becoming aware of an increased quantity of students who are not actively engaged in the academic content to be learned or are not using the distance learning option for its intended purposes. Here are a few reminders and adjustments for how we intend to work toward enhancing student achievement:

- **Attendance:**

- Daily Attendance/Sapphire: Distance Learners must log in and mark themselves as present by 9:30 each school day. Should there be a technical difficulty, the student/family should reach out to the student's building-level office via telephone to inform them of their presence and the technical difficulty they are experiencing.
- A Need for Student Work Verification: Logging in to Sapphire by 9:30 and identifying yourself as a student is not enough to be considered present for the school day. In order to consistently be marked present as a distance learner, there needs to be evidence of time on task while demonstrating work completed when applicable. This enhancement to our oversight will provide those students who are in need of additional extrinsic motivation, the positive push to achieve. Those students who have been demonstrating success in the distance learning model should not be hampered by this decision because they have already been demonstrating on-task learning behavior. If a student is intending to learn from a distance, they and their family have an increase in responsibility to be on task.

- **Blended Learning:** Blended Learning (part-time in-person and part-time distance learner) has not been a direct goal of our Flexible Instructional Model from the beginning of our back to school planning. We have allowed this flexibility, primarily at the secondary level (Grades 6-12) because it enables students who are naturally more independent to not be in school at all times, which mitigates health risks due to less people being in each learning venue. At the K-5 Level, the appropriateness of blended learning is less evident. While there are certainly benefits, the concerns and complications which arise from blended learning at the K-5 level far outweigh the benefits. Some of those general concerns include:

- Students are less independent (Parental and Teacher involvement is a necessary foundational support).
- Students benefit from a routine in an enhanced manner when they are in their K-5 years.
- Teachers at the K-5 level are more responsible for the learning culture surrounding a student because they instruct multiple content areas.

- Teachers will be inadvertently expected to create plans for not two, but three learning models. The in-person instruction at the K-5 level is not easily replicated to distance learning.
- Statistically, students who partake in blended learning are less likely to succeed when compared to their in-person fellow students.

*A desired blended learning designation must be approved by both the teacher/counselor and building administrator. Blended learning requests at the K-5 level will be thoroughly evaluated and are likely to not be approved.

*Blended learning (K-12) is not a “back and forth” decision to be made by the student/family. Those students who are partaking in the blended learning component must have a set schedule for in-person and distance learning. Otherwise, it becomes unmanageable.

- **Educational Trips:** Educational Trips and their respective protocols are still in effect. If students/families would like to go on an educational trip, they will follow the same process previously established within their respective school. If a student is already designated as a distance learner and would like to continue to actively learn during their educational trip, they are certainly permitted to do so. If a student is an in-person learner and they already are actively engaged in distance learning content, they will be permitted to continue to learn from a distance while on an educational trip, should choose to do so. For students who are partaking in in-person instruction and distance learning is not consistently a part of their learning, the work to be completed/reviewed during an educational trip will mimic traditional expectations.
- **Reacting to Symptoms of Illness:** One advantage of our flexible instructional model is the smooth transition from in-person to distance, should it become necessary. If your child is exhibiting symptoms of illness, we are asking that they partake in learning from a distance for the day, but only if it is the family’s desire to do so. Sick days still exist but if you are unsure if your child should come to school because they are exhibiting symptoms of illness, please keep them home in conjunction with our symptom screening tool guidance. ([COVID-19 Symptom Screening Tool](#))
- **Instructional and Learning Day**
 - Engagement/Time on Task: The expectation is for distance learners to be available for learning during the hours of the traditional school day. This enables teachers to be able to help guide student learning in a timely manner, while also being manageable from an operational standpoint. We understand that there are times when parents or guardians need to assist students in the evening due to work schedules. With that being said, families should expect assistance the following day when teachers are back at school. As a reminder, the daily one-hour delay is factored into the SASD total compilation of instructional time for the 2020-2021 school year. This continues to be a time when students are expected to complete learning activities and/or work with teachers virtually. Teachers may request a meeting to ensure student learning is on track for success with the expectation that the distance learning student/family work to make that meeting productive and increase the likelihood of student progress.

As we come to the conclusion of the first marking period, we would like to thank everyone for their contributions to a positive beginning to the 2020-2021 school year. This includes: students who have demonstrated a strong work ethic and adherence to unique expectations, families for being supportive of the non-traditional expectations which are associated with this school year, and teachers/administrators for working beyond the call to create an academic learning environment which strives to put student needs first.

~ The Selinsgrove Area School District Administrative Team in Conjunction with Feedback from our School District Community of Educators and Families