GOWER eLEARNING DAY
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Last updated November 16, 2021

I am new to the district and just heard about eLearning. What can I do to learn more?

- We have a dedicated eLearning webpage to help parents and members of the community learn more about this program: This link can be used to take you directly to that page which can be found under the Parent Info tab on any of our school sites.
- Many of the answers included in this FAQ can be found on our webpage and we encourage parents to review this valuable resource ahead of time.
- An important point for those 'new to this' is to keep in mind that eLearning Days are used in lieu of an Emergency Day that would otherwise be required for make-up. Typically, make-up days take place at the end of the school year or by adding a school day elsewhere on the calendar - neither of these choices are popular (attendance is usually low on make-ups days) nor do they result in productive learning days for our students
  - eLearning Days allow for some continuity of instruction during a day that may otherwise be lost to inclement weather or for some other unforeseen emergency.
  - Gower School District was the first public school district in Illinois to adopt a formal eLearning program after the state legislature allowed for such a practice and has been a leader in this space; helping many districts approve a program of their own.
    - Our FutureReady approach and commitment resulted in early adoption of eLearning and was instrumental in allowing for continuity of instruction throughout the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic that closed schools in March of 2020 and kept many of them closed throughout the 2020-21 school year.
    - Gower Teachers and classrooms remained open throughout this challenging period in education and our previous experience with eLearning played a role in our response.

Why do we do a 'practice eLearning Day' during the week of Thanksgiving?

- Like anything, practice is a useful approach to 'getting it right'. eLearning Days are used in lieu of an Emergency Day - which we do not always see coming - so we want to be sure we are prepared for such an event. Similar to fire drills and other forms of practice, we see a practice eLearning Day as an important step that we can take to ensure readiness for a smooth transition to a remote environment.
- In cooperation with our Teachers and staff, our Calendar Committee has placed a high value on a practice eLearning Day by dedicating one of our four Teacher Institute days to this strategy. Teachers and staff need practice too! It is possible for an eLearning Day to be called at any time of the school year, but Thanksgiving week offers an ideal time to practice eLearning given that most Emergency Days in our region are winter-weather related.

Children at their Best!

When can I expect the decision to call an eLearning Day to be made? This is not easy for parents.

- Your child's safety is our top priority and is the most important factor in our decision-making process regarding emergency school closings or an eLearning Day in place of an Emergency Day It is our practice to make the most informed decision when considering the use of an "emergency day" and it is our preference to notify parents no later than 6:00 a.m. on the morning of a school closure. We acknowledge the potential for inconveniences related to child care and individual work schedules that such a notification schedule may cause, but do want to ensure that we are making the most-informed decision in each case. If there is a forecast of severe weather for our area, we encourage parents to prepare for child care options ahead of time in the event that a school closure does occur. If the decision to "close school" is made the night before - based on the degree of certainty and severity of forecasts available - the preferred time for notification is closer to 6:00 p.m., but typically would not be made after 8:00 p.m. as we do understand the impact such a decision has on families.
- Our posted 'Open Letter to the Gower Community' regarding the decision to call an Emergency Day predates the adoption of eLearning in our district, but does offer some valuable insight for parents to have a better understanding of the decision.

How does my child (or I) find out about the assignments or activities for the eLearning Day?

- Gower Middle students will access assignments or eLearning Modules through Schoology as of 8:30 am.
  - Checking in with the child's Advisory Teacher is an option for answering any questions about access to assignments/activities and for general support and assistance as needed.
  - Teachers have the discretion to send or include a link for a virtual meeting for additional support if/as needed.
- Gower West students in Early Childhood through 1st grade will be contacted by the teacher through email, the webpage, or a digital tool such as SeeSaw or an optional virtual meeting by 8:30 am. to help get our youngest learners started and engaged for the day.
  - We understand that our youngest learners need the most help and assistance. We will work with our families as needed to assist. Remember, 'engagement' is the key on an e-Learning Day.
- Gower West students in 2nd-4th grade will utilize Google Classroom or an optional virtual meeting by 8:30 am for eLearning Day assignments and activities.

How much time does my child need to spend in order to get credit for the eLearning Day?

- The time spent will vary based on the grade level and the following represent an estimate for student engagement. If your child completes the assignments in less time, that may be perfectly fine. However, we do not expect the time spent to exceed the following:

- For Early Childhood and Kindergarten students will be engaged for 45 min
- For Grades 1-2, students will be engaged for 60 minutes
- For Grades 3-4, students will be engaged for 90 minutes
- For Grades 5-8, students will be engaged for approximately 120 minutes (45 min for ELA/Social Studies, 45 min for Math/Science, and 30 min for PE/Specials)
- NOTE: If your child needs an extension for any number of related issues during an eLearning Day (connectivity, power outage, other difficulties) please contact the Teacher directly as our staff are looking to ensure that we have some level of engagement and can certainly accommodate an extended timeline as needed.

Are there any learning activities that are required or can my child complete whatever he/she would like to complete? Are some assignments 'Kindergarten-friendly' or don't require Technology?

- Each child is assigned 3 specific eLearning Modules that will be available at 8:30 am on the emergency day (1 of the modules has choice--see below)
- Students are required to complete those assigned 3 eLearning Modules to count for a participation grade and attendance
- Although we welcome lessons from teachers that capitalize on our i3 Learning model (with students in grades 3-8 having devices that consistently come home), not all lessons will be Technology-based.

What subject areas will be addressed during an eLearning Day?

For Gower Middle:
- One eLearning Module for ELA and Social Studies
- One eLearning Module Math and Science
- Pick one eLearning Module of their specials (including PE/Health) to complete (not Study Hall)

For Gower West:
- One eLearning Module for ELA and Social Studies
- One eLearning Module for Math and Science
- Pick one eLearning Module of the specials areas: Music, Art, P.E.

Are Teacher lessons prepared "the day of" or are they "pre-planned?"

- The expectation for teachers is that they have an e-Learning lesson prepared at all times for the first eLearning Day. These are generally pre-planned, general lessons as we simply do not know when an eLearning Day will be called in lieu of an Emergency Day. However, 8:00-8:30 a.m. on an eLearning Day is classified as "planning time," where teachers can make final adjustments to their prepared lessons that match current instruction and meet the demands of the classroom in accordance with our professional appraisal plans.
- Teachers will then be expected to create another lesson in preparation for a future eLearning day to always, in a sense, have a lesson "on deck" and ready to go. Again, the idea is to be prepared for an Emergency Day.

How will I (or my child) verify that the learning activities or assignments are complete?
- Parents may ask their child to show them the completed work prior to submitting it
- Since the work is due at 9:00 p.m. on the eLearning 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

If students are not able to complete the assignments by 9:00pm, what are the parameters for make-up work?
- Teachers will be checking in the work on the next day to determine participation and verify attendance. Remember, the 'e' is for 'engagement'. This means that our staff are working throughout the 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. time block to ensure that our students are connected, engaged, and receiving any support required. If your child needs an extension for any number of related issues during an eLearning Day (connectivity, power outage, other difficulties), please contact the teacher directly to discuss the circumstances.

Will grades on eLearning assignments be marked for completion only or will assignments be checked for accuracy and graded?
- Evaluating assignments for completion versus credit is at the teacher's discretion.

How is attendance recorded?
- Completion of 3 of the 3 eLearning Modules will be recorded as a full day of attendance
- Completion of 1 or 2 of the 3 eLearning Modules will be recorded as a half day of attendance
- Completion of 0 of the 3 eLearning Modules will be recorded as an absence

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/Google Classroom, or call and leave a voicemail
- Teachers can retrieve school voicemails remotely.

What If there is a power or internet outage within the community on the emergency day? What about students that do not have internet at home?
- If your child needs an extension for any number of related issues during an eLearning Day (connectivity, power outage, other difficulties) please contact the Teacher directly as our staff are looking to ensure that we have some level of engagement and can certainly accommodate an extended timeline as needed.
- Part of our work throughout the school year is to identify needs and provide support for our families. In the case of internet connectivity, the district has and will continue to make provisions for portable hotspots to be issued to families in need.
  - Additionally, our staff work with families to establish cost-effective and heavily subsidized options for more permanent connectivity solutions (e.g. Internet Essentials from Comcast)

Children at their Best!

If students have special needs or modified curriculum, how can eLearning address that? What about children who meet with a Speech & Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, etc?
- The Specialist or Case Manager is expected to reach-out, individually, to families of students on their case-load to share activities that coincide with related services.

If my child needs tech support on the eLearning Day, what can we do?
- Mrs. O'Boyle (voboyle@gower62.com) will be Tech Support for the Gower West eLearning Day from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm
- Mr. Neubert (kneubert@gower62.com) will be the Tech Support for the Gower Middle eLearning Day from 8:30 am to 1:30 pm
- Of course, our classroom teachers are able to help resolve many of the minor technical glitches that students might face.

How do I provide general feedback about the eLearning program or experience in Gower?
- Parents are welcome to reach out to either of our school offices to provide general feedback or use either of our dedicated email addresses in place to help identify and respond to this specific topic.
  - Gower West: eLearningGW@gower62.com
  - Gower Middle: eLearningGM@gower62.com
- Additionally, parents can utilize our eLearning Feedback Form which has been used since the adoption of our eLearning program in 2019 to help adjust and improve our practices and overall eLearning experience.

Children at their Best!