

Section: I Instructional Program

Policy Code: IAC. Virtual Learning Days

In the event of unplanned/unforeseen circumstances, the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSD) may opt to utilize designated school-wide or district -wide virtual learning days throughout the year. Unforeseen circumstances include, but are not limited to, extreme weather, pandemics, illness, damage to a school, a water crisis, etc. The SOCSD may also allow individual students to utilize virtual learning on an as-needed basis in accordance with district policy and the SOCSD Return to School Guide. The SOCSD will ensure that all virtual learning days include the minimum 330 minutes of actual teaching (synchronous and asynchronous) as required by Mississippi law.

Teachers shall provide actual instruction to students during each virtual learning day and may not utilize asynchronous learning only. Lesson plans shall include daily synchronous/interactive instruction and dialogue and shall accurately denote synchronous or asynchronous portions as applicable. The SOCSD will ensure that students who access instruction virtually have instruction provided and access to the assigned teachers including any special services teachers/provided during the schedule time for each course of the 180 days. Virtual learners shall receive the equivalent amount of synchronous and asynchronous instruction as in-person students. All virtual learning will be held to the same standard as in-person learning.

All virtual students will be required to participate in the required statewide end-of course assessment on campus. Virtual learning days cannot be used for the purpose of allowing students to remain off campus to provide additional planning time, professional development opportunities, testing or to attend athletic events. Virtual learning may not be used to circumvent disciplinary practices, including but not limited to, suspensions and/or expulsions.

At all times during virtual learning, all teachers, staff, and students will comply with student privacy and other requirements set out in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Inclement Weather Days

SOCSD shall provide sufficient notice (before the close of the prior school day) to staff and students for any weather related or other unforeseen virtual days. When instances occur, such as widespread power outages, that make virtual learning impractical, SOCSD shall either make up any missed days to ensure that teacher-led instruction occur or use the days as weather days as allowed under Mississippi law and in accordance with district policy.

Virtual Learning Days Notification

The SOCSD will ensure students, parents, and staff are notified in advance of any virtual learning days so that students and staff are familiar with equipment, online platforms, and district-wide policies regarding student-issued devices. The SOCSD will identify students who do not have access to internet services and shall implement measures to provide access to

instruction. Alternate plans will be used ONLY for those students who cannot access reliable internet.

Students with Disabilities

Every pupil of the SOCSO will have equal educational opportunities regardless of race, color, creed, sex, disability, religion, or marital status. The SOCSO will provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with a disability who need special education, and as appropriate, related services as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2007 (IDEA), Mississippi statutes, and the Mississippi Department of Education Policies. A free appropriate public education will be provided to students with disabilities who are enrolled in the SOCSO and who are residing within the jurisdiction of the district. These services will be provided at no cost to the parent, will meet the standards of the Mississippi State Board of Education, and will stand in conformity with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Ongoing communication will be maintained at all times with families, teachers, and related service providers.

Extenuating Student Health Condition Virtual Learning

If a student has a rare and serious extenuating health condition that prevents the student from attending school face to face, there may be a consideration for alternative services, such as planned virtual participation. Participation in planned virtual learning will be considered by a district level committee and must be approved by the superintendent or his designee/s.

For students with IEPs and qualifying extenuating health conditions, SOCSO employees, with the students IEP committee will make decisions regarding virtual learning based upon what is best for each individual student. A process for conducting meetings pertaining to the evaluation and eligibility of students with disabilities along with a process of monitoring and documenting student progress and services delivered will be used by the district.

Participation Requirement

In order to participate in virtual learning, parents and students (if age appropriate) shall sign a commitment that acknowledges receipt, acceptance of, and commitment to this policy pertaining to virtual learning. Students must meet the requirements below and the SOCSO reserves the right to revoke any student's virtual learning permission if he/she fails to meet any of the listed requirements. That student will be required to return to traditional, face-to-face instruction immediately.

In order to participate in virtual learning, a student must:

1. Complete SOCSO documentation required prior to the district level committee review of the request, meet the defined criteria, and be accepted to participate in the planned virtual learning;
2. Comply with the SOCSO student code of conduct and discipline policies;
3. Maintain attendance at all classes outside of any excused absences;
4. Complete assignments as given by their teachers;
5. Have access to a reliable internet connection;

6. Abide by any other responsibilities approved by the SOCSD School Board or Superintendent;
7. Participate in the required statewide end of course assessments on campus;
8. Attend virtual learning as required for in-person classes;
9. Be physically present on campus, if a course requires a virtual student to be on campus (e.g., to give a speech or present a project) in order to meet that requirement.
10. Use a district issued device in order to complete school work.

Any use of district issued devices shall be in conformity with SOCSD school board policy. A student may be subject to discipline if he/she violates the provisions of this or any other district policy.

LEGAL REF: MS CODE 37-13-67, SBE POLICY CHAPTER 7, CHAPTER 9 Rule 9.2 and 9.3, and Chapter 56 Rule 56.2

CROSS REF: AE – School Year

EBBD – Emergency Closings

IDDF – Special Education Programs

JAA – Equal Education Opportunities

JCA – Student Conduct