



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

BRIAN J. WHISTON
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

October 26, 2017

Instruction Cancellations (Snow Days) Overview

According to Section 101 of the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1701), districts are required to offer at least 1,098 hours of instruction each school year. In addition, districts must also provide a minimum of 180 days of instruction.

If a district needs to cancel an instructional day, Michigan law allows the districts to count up to six days (and the equivalent hours) of "forgiven" time toward the day and hour requirements, if instruction is not provided because of conditions not within the control of school authorities, such as severe storms, fires, epidemics, utility power unavailability, water or sewer failure, or health conditions as defined by the city, county, or state health authorities. The common term for this type of cancellation among Michigan school districts is "snow day."

Up to an additional three days (and the equivalent hours) may be granted with the approval of the State Superintendent once the six days of forgiven time originally granted to the district have been exhausted due to cancellations not within the control of school authorities. These additional forgiven days are granted through a waiver that is commonly referred to as a "snow-day waiver."

Prior to 2015-16, with the State Superintendent's approval, a district could be granted up to an additional six days or equivalent hours of snow-day waivers, but only for cancellations occurring after April 1 of the school year. Section 101 of the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1701) has been amended to remove the April 1 limitation. Additional forgiven time granted by the State Superintendent may now be used for cancelled instructional time that occurred at any point during the school year.

Since Michigan is a "local control state" for school districts, deciding when to close schools due to bad weather is a decision local district superintendents must make – sometimes on a daily basis in the winter.

Any classroom time a district or school loses beyond the allowable forgiven time must be rescheduled in order to receive its full amount of State School Aid funds unless the district is able to satisfy these requirements without rescheduling instruction. In past years, some districts have chosen to recoup this classroom time by adding additional minutes on to the remaining school days, in order to reach the required 1,098-hour minimum.

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov/mde • 517-373-3324

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While it is anticipated that districts will close from time to time for reasons beyond the administration's control, such as bad weather, the department encourages districts not to add hours of missed instruction time to the end of the school day, and to instead make up the canceled instructional time by adding days of instruction. Adding a few minutes on at the end of each remaining day will not result in added learning by the students, which should be the goal of school.