

HCPS Synchronous Instruction Plan for Inclement Weather Days

School Year: 2025–2026

Overview:

HCPS may determine to use synchronous instruction during an inclement weather-related closure. Synchronous instruction means that students will log into Canvas and attend live, real-time classes via Microsoft Teams. HCPS will only use a synchronous instructional day when it can be announced during the school day prior to the closure so that schools, teachers, families, and students can prepare and take home their assigned HCPS device and any other necessary resources from the school building.

On synchronous inclement weather days, students will attend classes virtually following their school's regular 2-hour delayed schedule. Teachers will work their normal duty day hours, using 75 minutes of the initial two hours before students arrive virtually to finalize and publish lessons in Canvas with active Microsoft Teams links and 45 minutes of the initial two hours before students arrive for negotiated planning time.

Key Details:

- Students access synchronous instruction via Teams links posted in Canvas.
- Attendance is taken:
 - In homeroom for elementary students
 - In each class period for secondary students
 - Entered into Teacher Access Center (TAC)
- All assignments are due 10 school days after the synchronous inclement weather day.
- Content Supervisors, Teacher Specialists, and Instructional Coaches can provide support to teachers during the synchronous inclement weather day. Teachers can reach out to their appropriate Content Office, Specialist, or Coach via email or Teams. Supervisors, specialists, and coaches will maintain their regular duties to the greatest extent possible, adjusting as necessary to provide support.
- No formal observations of teachers will occur during synchronous instructional inclement weather days.

Expectations for Teachers:

Teachers will:

- Deliver instruction aligned to the existing curriculum, with appropriate virtual modifications.
- Use the district provided inclement weather tile on the home page of Canvas to link to Canvas Modules and Microsoft Teams.
- Use Canvas Modules and Microsoft Teams for instruction, collaboration, and student work submissions.

- Foster active student participation through strategies such as discussion prompts, breakout rooms, polls, or the use of HCPS-vetted instructional technology tools.
- Follow established pacing recommendations as closely as possible.
- To the greatest extent possible, ensure students have necessary curriculum materials and technology.

Instructional Delivery Tools

- Canvas will serve as the learning management system for organizing content and assignments.
- Microsoft Teams will be used for live, synchronous instruction.
- Attendance will be marked using TAC, with Canvas and Teams data used to verify student participation.
- Teachers will proactively communicate attendance or participation concerns to families and school administration.

Best Practices for Synchronous Instruction

Teachers are encouraged to utilize effective instructional strategies for virtual learning, including:

- **Balanced engagement:** Alternate between direct instruction and student interaction.
 - Use chat, breakout rooms, discussion boards, Microsoft 365 Forms, and other vetted HCPS instructional technology tools.
 - Allow processing and off-camera time.
- **Classroom culture:** Maintain strong teacher-student connections and clear communication norms.
- **Preparation:**
 - Review virtual learning expectations (e.g., digital citizenship, appropriate participation, assignment submission, etc.).
 - Explain how students can contact you.
 - Confirm students know where to find Teams links via Canvas.
 - Ensure all students have necessary devices and materials to take home if a closure with synchronous virtual instruction is called.
 - Share HCPS **Technology Supports site** with families.

Special Populations

- **Prekindergarten Students**
 - Students in both general education and special education classrooms will access their learning through activities and resources provided to families through Prekindergarten teachers. Books, manipulatives, activity ideas, and other resources will be disseminated in bags to Prekindergarten families ahead of possible inclement weather days.

- Prekindergarten general and special educators will offer a minimum of one-hour office hour sessions per class during the inclement weather closure to allow families to access coaching support for play-based learning activities as needed. Directions for accessing these office hours will be communicated to families via electronic means including email.
- Harford Academy Students
 - Activities and resources to support functional life skills instruction and practice will be provided to families ahead of any possible inclement weather closure day.
 - Harford Academy staff will design a schedule to offer a variety of parent coaching sessions throughout the virtual day. Families will be contacted by their child(ren)'s teacher about these sessions.
- STRIVE Students
 - Activities and resources to support functional communication will be provided to families for the inclement weather closure day.
 - STRIVE teachers will design a schedule to offer a variety of family coaching sessions throughout the virtual day. Families will be contacted by their child(ren)'s teacher about these sessions.
 - Students in the STRIVE Transition Class will participate in synchronous sessions with their assigned class.
- Students who Receive Related Services including Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Occupational Therapy
 - Related Service Providers will be working their normally scheduled hours and will be available for regular sessions. They will offer and conduct virtual, synchronous therapy sessions based on student availability. Families will be contacted by their child(ren)'s Related Service Provider(s) to schedule.
 - Related Service Providers will work with families to reschedule sessions for students who are unable to attend virtually.
- Swan Creek School Students
 - Swan Creek School will follow the two-hour delay schedule for students in the online program as well as the blended virtual program for any inclement weather day identified for synchronous, virtual instruction.

Schoolwide Communication & Practice

- Families will receive prior communication from the HCPS Communications Office regarding the closure and if it is a virtual instruction day. Individual schools will also provide messages to their families about virtual learning procedures.
- Each school must hold a practice **by October 15, 2025**. That practice should include:
 - All students taking home their devices at dismissal of the pre-determined day.

- All students completing one simple asynchronous Canvas assignment for each class that is linked from the Inclement Weather tile on each Canvas home page. Assignments could include a single question that requires students to verify if they were successful in opening the course module.
- Schools and teachers will follow up this practice with support to families and students who were not able to access Canvas successfully.
- The practice does not include any synchronous instruction.
- Please note that this practice is not a closure or an adjustment to any school hours. It is a practice run of sending devices home, logging onto Canvas, and completing a very brief asynchronous assignment via Canvas so schools can identify any places where families and/or students may need support in the event of an actual closure.
- Teachers new to virtual learning may want to use the practice run as an opportunity to practice logging into Teams and Canvas from home to troubleshoot any potential challenges.

Synchronous Inclement Weather FAQ for Students and Families

What does “synchronous learning” mean on a snow day?

Students will log into Canvas and attend live classes via Microsoft Teams, following the school’s 2-hour delayed schedule.

How do students access their courses?

- Each course homepage in Canvas will include a consistent district wide inclement weather tile that will link to Teams access and the module housing the learning materials.
- Helpful guides:
 - *Canvas Quick Start Guide – Elementary*
 - *Canvas Quick Start Guide – Middle & High*
 - *Accessing DreamBox & Clever*

When are assignments due?

All work must be submitted within 10 school days of the inclement weather day. Teachers will provide grades and/or feedback on the work. Students may opt to turn in completed work in a non-technology platform if appropriate.

What if we can’t access the internet or Canvas?

- If possible, email the teacher to report the issue.
- If an email is not possible during the closure, contact the teacher once school reopens by email, phone, or in-person.
- Have the student follow up in person with the teacher when schools reopen.
- Students who were not able to access the internet may still be marked present for the school day if they are able to complete the assignments within the 10-day window.

What if my child forgets their Chromebook/laptop?

- They can meet with their teacher(s) and complete assignments when they return. If possible, email the teacher the day of the closure. If email is not possible during the closure, notify the teacher when schools reopen.
- Students may use a personal device if available to access Canvas.

Synchronous Inclement Weather FAQ for Instructional Staff

What is expected of teachers on a synchronous inclement weather day?

- Begin your work at your normal start time.
- Use the two-hour delay window for planning and ensuring Canvas/Teams materials are ready.
- Teach synchronously according to your school's 2-hour delayed schedule.
- Follow the 2-hour delayed schedule for the specific day that the inclement weather virtual synchronous instruction day is replacing. For example, if a closure is on a day that would have been a middle school block period and advisory day, that schedule would still be followed.
- Continue regular duties such as responding to students/families, attending IEP meetings, grading, and entering grades into TAC.
- If unavailable to work, submit an absence in **SmartFind Express**.

What is expected of instructional support staff on a synchronous inclement weather day?

- Support staff including Educational Support Professionals and Inclusion Helpers should maintain their regular duties and schedule as much as possible. This may include joining their assigned student's class with them throughout the day to support, supporting a teacher's lesson by facilitating break-out rooms or pulling a small group into a breakout room for additional practice, etc.
- Other staff supporting instruction such as Reading Specialists, Math and Literacy Specialists, Career Navigators and School Counselors should maintain their regular duties and schedule as much as possible.

What if I do not have internet service at my location?

- Teachers should prepare asynchronous instructional plans in the event that their internet service is unavailable during a closure. These plans should be published in Canvas with clear directions for families and students.
- Teachers will not be required to use leave if they are unable to attend work virtually during the synchronous inclement weather day due to internet issues.
- Teachers should report their internet issue at the start of their duty day to their appropriate school administrator.

What if I need to take an absence on this day?

- As much as possible, communicate your need to take an absence via Smart Find Express and directly with your school administrator as far ahead of time as possible.
- Utilize asynchronous plans and publish them on Canvas with clear directions for students and families.

How can I support students having trouble with login/access?

All teachers and media staff can reset student passwords remotely using **Student Account Manager (SAM)**.

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