

Office of the Superintendent



Students First:
Inspire, Educate, Celebrate.

Glenn M. Maleyko, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Greetings Everyone:

There have been many discussions and questions regarding online homework and whether it counts. Not trying to sound like an attorney - or the grumpy teenager you may be stuck at home with for weeks on end - but the answer depends on how you define "count."

The confusion comes because for many years our district has offered several programs and classes that have actively been using on-line learning as a regular part of the class. So, to now hear that work being done on-line will not count is very unsettling. Most likely, if your child is enrolled in one of these programs or classes that has been doing on-line learning as a regular part of the class, when we return to our regular schedule the assignments done on-line will remain a part of a final grade as they have been in the past. Of course, it is always best to address any specific questions directly with your child's teacher.

Right now, thousands of students and hundreds of teachers are providing all types of on-line learning opportunities at all grade levels. Much of this distance learning is a new endeavor for both students and teachers. There has been a tremendous effort by our staff who have gone above and beyond to stay connected with their students. The photos, videos, e-mails, and texts have been pouring in sharing this incredible effort and thanking our teachers for all they are doing. However, the question remains, does it count for the state, for the district?

To paraphrase the Magic 8 Ball - "Reply hazy. Try again later." The Governor has said online learning can "count" as a grade or toward meeting graduation requirements. The Michigan Department of Education issued a statement that said online learning does not currently count toward meeting the instructional time required to avoid extending the school year. At some point, the Michigan Legislature will probably weigh in as well.

I have been talking directly with State Superintendent Rice and he has asked me to be part of a committee of superintendents from across the state. We have met virtually to provide him with direct feedback that will assist him and his team in developing recommendations that are reasonable and practical solutions for all districts in Michigan. He too understands that parents, students, and teachers are waiting for these answers but given the very fluid nature of this situation a final answer may still be a few weeks away.

At this time we don't know what the outcome will be, but perhaps one solution that could be considered under this extraordinary circumstance would be that online learning would count as long as districts showed some proof that students were learning. In that, or several other scenarios, showing students were learning online could be important for funding and scheduling in the District. Bottom line, if your teacher says it is due, then please complete the work.

Admittedly, the district has been hedging what it says about whether online learning counts because like everyone else, we need to wait and see how long the closure lasts and what direction we will get from the state. There is also a fine balance between what we know is common behavior and some very real legal concerns. On one side of the scale we know if we say it does not "count," then a lot of our students and parents just won't do it. After all, we are supposed to eat our vegetables, exercise and floss every day, but does everyone really do that? On the other side of the scale if we say it does count there could be legal ramifications. For those students who may not have access to the internet, a device at home to work on, or who may require specialized services making on-line work a "requirement" could be a violation of their civil rights and a legal issue for schools. The U.S. Department of Education has issued a statement indicating some flexibility in these laws so again, we must wait for final direction.

Rather than asking if all this work will count toward a grade or class time perhaps the more important question to be asking is does all this on-line learning count in helping to make your child a better student? Absolutely yes!

Any learning, reading, growing, exploring and critical thinking helps your child learn and learn how to learn. We know children lose knowledge over the summer break when many do not do anything academic for two months. How much more will students learn by adding another month off - another month when instead of moving forward - they may slide backward? If that happened, would students need to start next year at the same place they started this year? Those are questions we hope we don't have to ask when school reopens, so we are doing what we can to help students now. We know that parents want the best for their children, and all that parents do to ensure their children learn makes a big difference not only now, but for the future.

And for us, as a Dearborn Public Schools community, any learning counts. It counts whether it is a teacher in a classroom focused on required material or if a student is working more independently at home on enrichment activities. It counts because it impacts the future success of our students, which is the most important measure there is. Hopefully, that is the most important measure for our families as well.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glenn Maleyko". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenn M. Maleyko, Ph.D.

Superintendent