



**Baxter Academy**  
for Technology and Science

To: Maine State Charter Commission  
From: Michele LaForge, Head of School, Baxter Academy  
Date: September 23, 2016  
Re: Snow Day learning at Baxter

Dear Laurie Pendleton,

Thank you for allowing students at Baxter Academy for Technology and Science to participate in anytime/anywhere learning on 3 of the snow days during the 2015-2016 school year. As you know, Baxter students travel from 66 different towns, so weather can be a challenge, thus having the opportunity to engage students in anytime/anywhere learning is extremely important.

During the 2015-2016 school year, 257 out of 325 (or 79%) Baxter students participated in 2 or more days of snow-day learning that was connected to content standards and/or guiding principles (Baxpectations). The students who did not complete their plans were considered "absent". The number of hours students spent working on academics ranged from 1 hour to all day. The range of standards students worked on included wellness, ELA, social studies, visual arts, science, math, and engineering. Some examples of the students' activities were: reading books, painting, taking photos, snowshoeing, researching colleges, creating a flat design in Adobe, working on Flex Friday projects, making short films, and building radio-controlled cars.

During the fall of 2015, students met with their advisor and made a detailed plan that included standards, assessment, materials, and a timeline. This plan included a time to check in with their advisor (by phone or Google doc or email), and a check out with their advisor. It included a reflection on their work and a presentation of their work to their advisory group. The numbers above were logged and reported by advisors, who had the responsibility for checking the student's work.

During the 2016-2107 school year, we plan on having students concentrate work on their Flex Friday projects. As noted in our Teacher Handbook, "learning continues even when school is not in session." Students and teachers are expected to use snow days to

continue their Flex Friday project work. Attendance and tracking of project work is the responsibility of Faculty Project Mentors, who check in at least twice during the day. Skype or Google Hangout is used for checking in for attendance and the day's plan (assuming that all involved have power and access). During the initial check in, students work with their Mentor to identify their work goals for the day. During a second check in, students report to each other and their Mentor the progress they made toward meeting their work goals. Teachers and students will use Google Classroom to provide snow day agendas, activities, and a way to track assignments.

Our request today is to implement this plan for the 2016-17 school year. In accordance with the established guidelines, up to 3 days of canceled school, due to inclement weather or other forces beyond our control, would be recognized as school days counting toward the 175 identified in our charter contract. Students who do not check in or show evidence of meeting the standards will be considered "absent" and an excused absence will require the usual documentation.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele LaForge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Michele LaForge, Head of School  
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