

Extreme Weather Conditions and School Status

Making a decision to delay or cancel classes or close schools due to extreme weather conditions is a serious matter. The school district values student and staff safety, learning time in schools is precious, and we also recognize that our community is dependent on schools being open for normal daily routines to take place - with children engaged in learning and under the care and supervision of education staff while their parents pursue work and other commitments.

The district standard is that schools will remain open and operating as close to normal as possible except in extreme circumstances such as prolonged power outages, physical damage to a school and/or transportation route closures. Site specific challenges will be addressed as discussed below.

Challenges:

Factors and variables involved in management of extreme weather impacts include:

- receipt of timely, accurate, site-specific information regarding weather-related conditions and the impact on conditions at school sites;
- geographic and climatic diversity in the district;
- an understanding among staff and parents that a decision to leave classes open does not take away any individual's right and responsibility to assess their own circumstances and safety in getting to school; therefore, parents and students must be assured that absence due to safety concerns will not result in lost marks or other sanctions;
- staff processes outlined in collective agreements/employment contracts;
- availability of a work force so we can achieve effective and efficient deployment of school district and contractor equipment to make schools accessible; and
- coordination with municipal resources so any site improvements made by district teams (i.e. clearing a parking lot) are not "undone" by a city plow sealing off the driveway with a bank of snow.

Protocols:

- Liaison has occurred with city staff to identify school access roads and move them up the city's priority list for clearing.
- Assignment of responsibility and accountability for class cancellation/school closure decisions rests with area assistant superintendents.
- Physical Plant monitors school and road conditions from midnight – 6 a.m. to provide a summary report to the superintendent regarding conditions throughout the district.
- Assistant superintendents receive from school-based personnel timely and site-specific information for a 6:30 a.m. status decision that is communicated via media and district website, as needed.
- A "late start" procedure (e.g. after recess) for individual schools or groups of schools can be considered—with school-level and district communication—if it is likely conditions will improve before and during the early morning hours.
- "Snow plans" can be initiated to ensure site-specific routines are in place.

LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING