

November 28, 2011

Dear Parents,

We want to review our plan to address inclement weather and its impact on our ability to safely conduct school with you well before it needs to be implemented. The new calling system that was introduced six years ago enables us to communicate directly with every family in the District virtually simultaneously about our decisions regarding evolving weather conditions. We will carefully consider all factors when bad weather is occurring or predicted, and student and staff safety is the major priority in developing our response. It is critical that we hold school on all scheduled days in order to educate our students, but safety is the top priority. Keeping schools open or closing them are major decisions when faced with weather conditions that could affect travel or the safety of students and staff.

Decisions regarding emergency closings will utilize as much information as possible. The opinions of transportation officials, snow removal authorities and law enforcement officers will be solicited each time to help us truly assess the respective situation. Once the conditions and forecasts have been evaluated and opinions reviewed, the Superintendent will make the decision to keep schools open or implement one of the three closing or delayed start procedures.

This new calling system is very effective, but we need your help in maintaining accurate numbers. We ask that parents continue to update home and business phone numbers with their schools in order to assure that the calling system functions at its highest level and reaches you wherever you are. We may use this system to deliver more than one message during a given storm as circumstances dictate, and we can be much more specific with every message than in the past. Please remember that the system will call work phone numbers, but cannot recognize extensions. Working parents should talk with receptionists at their office about the calling system. Whenever possible, direct dial numbers or cell phone numbers should be used instead of switchboard or receptionist numbers. Parents may request a change through their school office.

We will continue to use media messages to complement the phone calls. Radio station WCCO-AM is the designated official station for weather-related emergencies. Everyone should listen to that station for our decisions, which will have been given initially through the phone calls. KSTP-TV and KARE 11-TV will also run our announcements. Furthermore, we will post information on the District's Web site.

We may conclude that we can safely transport students to and from school and keep school open, but an individual parent may disagree with our decision. Under such conditions, parents must exercise their judgment regarding the attendance of their child(ren). We will respect all reasonable decisions in these circumstances.

There are three different situations that can occur when we decide to close schools during an emergency:

1. **First**, school may be canceled for an entire day (or more). In the event this decision must be made, it will be communicated to administrators, staff and parents as soon as possible by phone. The message will then be provided to the media and posted on the Web site.

2. **Secondly**, the opening of school may be delayed when it appears that conditions are improving rapidly and that such a delay will allow safe travel or will permit a more informed final conclusion regarding a complete closing. The length of delay in opening can vary depending upon the conditions because the new calling system gives us the flexibility to be very specific. Generally, however, the message will be very definite regarding the delay. It may be possible that a complete closing will occur even when a “delay” announcement has initially been given. This decision may require more information but it will be made as soon as possible. It will be important for parents to anticipate further phone messages in the case of an initial call for a delay. School will dismiss at the regular time for each school when a delayed start plan has been used in the morning.

When a delayed start has been determined, the additional procedures to be implemented are as follows:

- Morning kindergarten, Minnetonka Pre-School, ECFE and ECSE will be canceled.
  - Field trips scheduled for the day will be canceled.
  - Students in special education programs from other districts attending school in Minnetonka shall be informed of closings or delayed starts.
  - Students in out-of-district special education placements shall follow the procedures for Minnetonka students in all other situations.
  - Students in vocational school programs will not attend a.m. sessions.
  - **Even when the opening of school is delayed, “Explorers Club” shall be open at the regular “Explorers Club” time.**
  - Other than Explorers, all a.m. Community Education activities and programs will be cancelled.
3. **Finally**, a developing storm could necessitate a school closing **before** the normal dismissal times in order to assure safe travel. This is the most challenging weather situation because parents are often away from home and the plan would only be considered if weather conditions are worsening rapidly. Specific instructions will be established when such a decision is necessary because each response will be tailored to the respective conditions. It is essential that no students be placed at greater risk because of the decision to dismiss early than would exist if they stayed in school until regular dismissal. We must follow the established procedures carefully to assure that elementary students go home only with sufficient notice to parents or the following of an established personal plan on file at the school. We will be calling all parents, but middle school and high school students will be released at the designated time without any parent assurance of their availability. We will carefully assess conditions as they are released to be certain of their safety. The additional procedures should be followed:
    - The order of dismissal in an emergency will be the same as a regular dismissal, but it is possible that the intervals between school dismissals may be greater in order to

accommodate the road conditions. This year two elementary schools dismiss when the high school dismisses, and four elementary schools dismiss forty minutes later. The middle schools are the last to dismiss. This order of dismissal places younger students in many homes well before older siblings might arrive home or before parents can reach home. **Therefore, we want to be especially cautious in any weather-related early dismissal that younger students will have a plan for supervision and/or access to their home.**

- It is essential that elementary principals have emergency procedure plans from parents on file for each student. We do not intend to dismiss any student into a risky situation.
- Parents may pick up students as soon as an announcement to dismiss is made.
- Any student who normally walks to school should be dismissed as soon as the decision to close has been made. In the case of elementary students, parents will have been contacted.
- High school students who drive their own vehicles will be dismissed immediately after the decision has been made in order to have them home safely as soon as possible, as well as get them off roadways to be traveled by buses and parents. A student who normally does not ride with a high school driver should not be excused.
- When an early dismissal decision has been made early enough, afternoon kindergarten will be canceled; however, bus drivers and principals will need to assure that all children on the respective routes have received the notification so no kindergarten student is placed in a dangerous situation. This notification must be made by phone to each parent.
- Students in out-of-district special education placements will be returned to their homes or other regularly assigned drop-off location as soon as possible when closing early.
- Students at vocational school programs shall be returned to the high school as soon as possible to enable them to be on regular transportation or to drive home themselves. If road conditions prevent a timely return to connect with regular transportation, other arrangements will be made by school officials.
- “Explorers Club” will remain open until parents or guardians have picked up all children. Students who do not normally attend “Explorers Club” must be supervised by other school personnel and are not to be sent to “Explorers Club.”
- Students scheduled for field trips on days when weather is deteriorating should not be sent on the respective trips. In the event that students have been sent on field trips and an early dismissal becomes necessary, the students shall be returned to the school as soon as possible for transportation on regular routes. If the field trip buses do not reach school before the early dismissal buses leave, a new plan will be developed by the principal and Supervisor of Transportation.

Co-curricular activities and evening community education activities scheduled on days when any of the three emergency closing decisions are necessary shall be handled as follows:

- **School is closed**—since it is possible for travel conditions to improve substantially after the decision to close has been made, a subsequent decision will be made later in the day regarding each activity. Parents or participants should call the school or program site for specific information.
- **School starting is delayed**—all activities will be held as scheduled.
- **School is dismissed early**—no activities will be held (this includes practices).

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis L. Peterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "P".

Dennis L. Peterson, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

/pls