

December 2016

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

As we move into the next couple of months, the odds for experiencing inclement weather greatly increases. However, we are hoping that Old Man Winter will go easy on us this season. Our district staff understands that our decision to open, delay, or close schools in bad weather has an impact on families. We also understand that our students are better served – both academically and socially – by being in school. As always, our top priority is the **safety of our students**. Below I have outlined some information that will help you understand how we make our decisions in dealing with inclement weather, and how you can best get information regarding changes in our schedule.

- **HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?**

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- ▶ **Information on road conditions from district staff and from the Public Safety Department.** We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous.
- ▶ **Amount of snow and ice accumulated.**
- ▶ **Whether precipitation is continuing.**
- ▶ **Building conditions (such as whether we have electricity and heat).**
- ▶ **Parking lot conditions.** Administrators talk to maintenance and custodial staff members who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks.
- ▶ **Temperature and wind chill.** Please remember that some of our students walk to school and many must wait outside for the bus.
- ▶ **Weather predictions.** We prefer not making our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate and can be inconsistent. However, we consider as many models as possible, and look for consistent information.
- ▶ **What other districts are doing.** We also share information with other local districts and check whether they are opening or closing.

- **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

As Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the Maintenance and Operations Supervisor and the Medford Township Public Safety Department.

- **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

All parents/guardians will receive an automated phone message from the Superintendent via School Messenger on or before 5:30 AM. Tune to the following TV stations (Channel: 19, 21, 3, 6 or 10), or radio station (KYW-1060). You can also check our district Website – <http://www.medford.k12.nj.us> for information. Please do not call your school unless it is an emergency. Our school district closing number is 668. The quickest and most detailed information will appear on Cable Channel 19 & 21 (LDTV).

- **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

I must make the decision by 5:30 a.m. or earlier so we can notify radio stations, TV stations and post the decision on our Website. If I wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

- **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

Keep in mind that even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses. Only in an extreme emergency or if prior arrangements have been made will we consider an early dismissal. However, we would give adequate notice to all parents via the notification options listed above.

- **DISTRICT OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- ▶ **Close School**

- ▶ **Delayed Opening – *SEE ATTACHED INFORMATION***

- ▶ **Early Dismissal – *SEE ATTACHED INFORMATION***

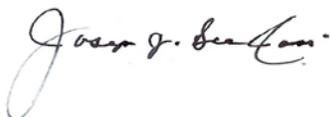
- ▶ **P.M. School's Out Program Cancelled**

- ▶ **After School Activities Cancelled**

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. In light of varying conditions and circumstances throughout our town, the district respects your personal decision whether or not to send your child to school during an inclement weather event.

I hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district staff uses to make the best possible decision for all in our district. Please - - Think Spring!!

Sincerely,



Joseph J. Del Rossi, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

JJD/prd
Attachments

DELAYED OPENING INFORMATION

Again this year we are going to employ a two hour delayed opening of our schools should the weather forecast indicate improving conditions. As you know, winter can bring severe icing to our roads, but a two hour period of time could mean better road conditions and safe travel for our busses. **On extreme days we will be forced to close**; however, under any questionable weather conditions you will receive an automated phone message from the Superintendent via School Messenger. Also, you can refer to the following TV stations (Channel: 19, 21, 3, 6 or 10), radio station (KYW-1060) or our district website – <http://www.medford.k12.nj.us> for an announcement. If we are employing a two hour delayed opening, it will result in the following:

1. The 2 hour delay **Kirby's Mill Preschool** schedule is as follows:
 - **AM PRESCHOOL CANCELLED**
 - **PM Preschool – 11:45 AM – 2:15 PM**
 - **Full Day Preschool 10:30 AM – 2:15 PM**
2. All students **Grades K - 8** should be at their regular bus stop **2 hours later** than usual. For example, if your child is normally picked up at 8:00 a.m., on this delayed opening day they will be picked up at 10:00 a.m.
3. Dismissal at all schools will be the same as usual.
4. The morning session of the "School's Out" Program will **not** be available on a delayed opening school day. Please send students to school at the designated delayed opening time.
5. Lunch will be served.

If you should have any questions regarding the procedures, please contact your building principal at your earliest convenience.

EARLY DISMISSAL INFORMATION

In light of the challenging weather patterns that we have experienced the past few years and the uncertainty of weather possibly changing by the hour, it is necessary to include early dismissal in our school closing protocols. Traditionally, the Medford Township Public School District has not implemented an early dismissal schedule due to inclement weather. Over the past twenty (20) years, our district has only had one early dismissal due to an extreme weather related emergency. This rationale focuses around the fact that we make every effort not to dismiss students to unsupervised homes.

In the event that we receive a weather forecast that indicates deteriorating weather conditions **after twelve noon the following day** we **may** implement the following procedures:

- If possible, the afternoon or evening prior to the inclement weather event, you will receive a notice from the Superintendent through School Messenger that we may or will be implementing an early dismissal schedule the following day. This communication will also be available via email, hard copy, LDTV, radio, television and school website.

This early notification will allow parents/guardians an opportunity to make arrangements for supervision the night before in case an early dismissal is required. The early dismissal schedule will be as follows:

Haines Sixth Grade Center and Memorial	Early Dismissal 11:45 AM
Taunton Forge & Cranberry Pines Schools	Early Dismissal 12:25 PM
Allen, Chairville & Kirby's Mill Schools	Early Dismissal 1:05 PM
Full Day Preschool Kirby's Mill School	Early Dismissal 1:05 PM
AM Preschool Kirby's Mill School	Regular Dismissal 11:00 AM

PM PRESCHOOL CANCELLED

LUNCHES WILL NOT BE SERVED

It is our intent that this procedure will assist you in being proactive and prevent the district from having to take unnecessary snow days. However, we truly hope we will not have to implement this procedure during the upcoming winter. If you should have any questions and/or concerns, please contact your building principal.