

Dear Parents,

The different instructional plans in our schools will impact how we address emergency situations this year. Students in various grades this year are in different school plans, and we need to be specific about our plans on inclement weather days. These plans will cover students who are in district-provided childcare and teachers who have chosen to do their instructing from school. Since all students will have had some experience with e-learning by the time we encounter inclement weather, we will not need to have actual school closures or delayed starts any longer. We will just have all students shift to e-learning when weather conditions dictate not having students or staff physically in school.

The decision to have school or close on days of inclement weather has always been challenging, but it will be much easier this year. We will make decisions that secure the safety of students and staff who would have been in school, while still recognizing our responsibility to conduct school as scheduled whenever possible. Decisions regarding emergency closings will utilize as much information as possible, and the opinions of weather forecasters, transportation officials, snow removal authorities, law enforcement officials, superintendents in neighboring districts and our own staff out on the roads will be solicited as necessary. Once the conditions have been evaluated and opinions reviewed, the Superintendent will make the decision to remain open or implement one of the two closing procedures.

The District's mass-communications system enables us to communicate directly with every family in the District through email and phone virtually simultaneously about our decisions regarding evolving weather conditions or other emergencies. We will carefully consider all factors when bad weather is occurring or predicted, and student and staff safety will be the major priority in developing our response. 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. Keeping school open is not about financial considerations but about our commitment to educate our students.

The District's mass communications system is very effective, but we need your help in maintaining accurate phone numbers. Please make sure the information listed for you in Skyward (which you can find through MY SSO on the District's Web site) is accurate and current. If you would like to receive text messages in the event of a school closing, delay or emergency, please add a cell phone number in the third phone field in Skyward.

We may use our communications system to deliver more than one message during a given storm, as circumstances evolve, and we can be very specific with every message. Please remember that the system will call work phone numbers, but it *cannot* recognize extensions. Working parents should talk with receptionists at

their office about managing calls from the calling system. Whenever possible, direct dial numbers or cell phone numbers should be used instead of switchboard or receptionist's numbers. Again, changes to your contact information can be made directly by you through MY SSO.

We will continue to use media messages to complement the phone calls; however they require much more basic messages than we are able to use through the calling system. 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. WCCO-TV, FOX9-TV, 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 to keep students home in these circumstances.

I want to review the various conditions that can be implemented this year when weather affects our normal conducting of school in any of our buildings. There are three different scenarios that can be involved in a decision to close schools during an emergency:

1. **First, in-person school may be cancelled for an entire day (or more).** In the event a decision must be made to close school for students and staff who would normally be in school, it will be communicated to administrators and the media as soon as possible to plan for the closing of in-school classes. All students and staff would shift to e-learning during the closure. This includes students in district-provided childcare and teachers who have chosen to instruct from school. Students already on e-learning would see no change in instructional delivery. Students who would normally come to their schools for e-learning would need to stay home. All other employees will also be called as soon as we have made a decision, and WCCO-Radio will be informed so they can make announcements for us. Explorers will be open at two sites (Scenic Heights and Groveland) to accommodate students whose parents depend upon Explorers at any site for childcare on all work days, regardless of the weather. Also, the MCEC site will be open for Early Childhood students. So, even when school has been cancelled, these two sites will be available for students who regularly attend Explorers at any location. MCEC will be kept open as well for Early Childhood students. In an extreme situation when no travel is allowed throughout the Metro, those sites will also be closed; however, that situation will be fully communicated to parents and posted on the District's Web site.

Employees who are scheduled to be at school on an inclement weather day should stay home if schools are closed. I realize that many employees have to leave home very early on questionable weather days and may be on their way to school by the time a definite closure decision can be made. We try to make

decisions as early as possible, but sometimes it gets later than we would like. They should keep their cell phone and/or radio available for messages.

- a. In-person Minnetonka Preschool classes, as well as ECSE and ECFE, will be cancelled and conducted virtually.
- b. Field trips will be cancelled.
- c. Students in Special Education programs from other districts in Minnetonka schools shall be informed of closings immediately.
- d. Students in out-of-district Special Education placements shall follow the procedures for Minnetonka students in all other situations.
- e. Students in vocational school programs will not attend sessions.
- f. Even when school is closed, Explorers shall be open at the regular time of 6:30 am., as described above.**
- g. Other than Explorers (including Junior Explorers), all Community Education activities and programs will be cancelled.

The previous plan whereby the opening of school may have been delayed when it appeared that conditions could improve rapidly and a delay would have allowed safe travel or if a delayed decision would permit a better final conclusion regarding a complete closing will not be used this year. All students will use e-learning for the day.

- 2. **Secondly, a school closing during the day** may be deemed necessary before the normal dismissal times in order to assure safe travel by students and employees. This is the most challenging weather situation because an early closing would only occur when a storm is expected to worsen rapidly and contacting parents of young students could be challenging. Specific instructions will be established when such a decision is made because each response will be tailored to the specific conditions on that day. It is essential that no student be placed at greater risk because of the decision to dismiss early than if we waited until regular dismissal. We must follow the established procedures carefully to assure younger students go home only with sufficient notice to parents or the following of an established personal plan on file at the school. These additional procedures should be followed:
 - a. The order of dismissal of schools using hybrid models or providing childcare will be the same as a regular schedule, but it is possible that the dismissal intervals between schools may be greater than usual in order to accommodate road conditions. The order of dismissal places many younger

students in their homes well before some older siblings or parents might arrive home. Therefore, we want to be especially cautious in any weather-related early dismissal to assure 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 on file for each student and that phone calls to parents be utilized in the case of emergency dismissals which are earlier than regular dismissals.

- b. Any student who normally walks to school should be dismissed as soon as the decision to close early has been made and the parents (elementary) have been contacted. High school students who drive their own vehicles shall be dismissed immediately after the decision has been made in order to have them get home safely as soon as possible, as well as get them off of roadways to be traveled by buses and parents. A student who normally does not ride with high school drivers should not be excused at the earlier dismissal.
- c. When an early dismissal decision has been made early enough, ECSE, ECFE, and afternoon Minnetonka Preschool will be cancelled; however, MCE administrators will need to assure that parents of all children have received the notification before closing. This notification must be made by phone to each parent to ascertain the availability of parents.
- d. Since road conditions will affect the progress of individual buses, principals will need to be prepared to load buses in whatever order they arrive and then get them on their routes.
- e. Students in out-of-district Special Education placements will be returned to their homes or other regularly assigned drop-off locations as soon as possible when closing early.
- f. Students in vocational 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 they normally ride regular transportation, their presence on the respective buses shall be ascertained to be sure they have not been left at the High School without a ride.
- g. Explorers will remain open until all children have been picked up by parents or guardians. Students who do not normally attend Explorers must be handled by non-Explorers personnel and are not to be sent to Explorers. Explorers employees must make arrangements to assure supervision of remaining students until they are picked up by parents.
- h. 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 for getting students home will be developed by the principal and Supervisor of Transportation to assure them a safe ride home.

Co-curricular activities and evening community education activities scheduled on days when any of the 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. Information regarding specific program cancellations will be posted on the District's Web site.
- **School is dismissed early**—no activities will be held (this includes practices).

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

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