

Adopted: February 18, 1997
Revised: March 16, 2015

District 77 Policy 527

527 INCLEMENT WEATHER AND EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to assure the development of plans and procedures to provide direction to students, parents, and employees when it is necessary to close school because of inclement weather and other emergencies.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The superintendent shall be responsible for the development of plans and procedures involving inclement weather and emergency school closings. The superintendent or such other school official as designated by the superintendent shall make the final determination to close school because of inclement weather or other emergency situations. In deciding whether or not schools should close for weather or other emergencies, the safety of all students should be the primary concern.

III. INCLEMENT WEATHER PLAN PROVISIONS-EARLY DISMISSAL OF SCHOOL

Early dismissal of students due to inclement weather will occur as follows:

1. All schools will be closed, all students sent home, and activities cancelled.
 - a. Parents, or previously designated adults, may pick up students at any time they feel the weather is too severe to allow students to walk or ride the buses home.
 - b. Students will be dismissed to ride buses home or to walk home if the principal determines that it is safe to do so.
 - c. If it is viewed to be unsafe to leave for home, students will remain in their schools with their teachers or principals until adults arrive to take them home.
 - d. If conditions deteriorate to the point where urban students might safely return to their home, but it would be hazardous to send buses into the rural area, urban students should be released to go home but rural students should be kept at school until weather conditions improve or until parents pick them up.
 - e. If conditions deteriorate to the point that it would be hazardous to try to get students home, the schools will remain open to provide housing for the students until parents can pick them up or they can safely reach alternative housing sites, or until buses are able to run.

Responsibilities of staff when school is dismissed early are as follows:

1. Elementary Teachers

- a. To know where each student is by keeping a record of who gets on the bus, who is picked up by a parent or designated adult, and who is left in school.
- b. To take any remaining students to a central location so that they can be supervised by the principal or designee. This should be done at the time of regular teacher dismissal in each building or at the time a principal would release a teacher, if earlier than the regular teacher dismissal time.

2. Secondary Teachers

- a. Assist in the orderly dismissal of students under the direction of the building principal.
- b. To take any remaining students to a central location so that they can be supervised by the principal or designee. This should be done at the time of regular teacher dismissal in each building or at the time a principal would release a teacher, if earlier than the regular teacher dismissal time.
- c. Secondary special education teachers shall develop a procedure to account for each of their students.

3. Noninstructional Staff

In the event of early dismissal, Noninstructional staff will stay on duty until released by their building principal. Noninstructional staff will be compensated per the terms and conditions of their respective unit's master agreement when early dismissal occurs.

4. Staff policies and interpretations involving the early dismissal of school are as follows:

- a. In the event of early school dismissal, one-third of the staff, as designated by the building principal, are expected to remain at school until an all clear is received from the District office and they are dismissed by the building principal.
- b. If school is closed during the day, teachers on sick, personal, or emergency leave will be charged a half day if school is closed at noon or earlier, or a full day if school is closed after noon.

- c. A substitute working when school is closed during the day will be paid for the actual amount of time worked.
- d. A contract substitute will be paid for the full day for early dismissals.
- e. If an individual secretary is requested to work when offices are closed, he/she shall be compensated at a rate equal to two times his/her regular hourly rate.
- f. If the announcement is made that all offices will remain open, all secretarial and custodial/maintenance staff are expected to remain working. If a secretary or custodial/maintenance staff member is excused early because of individual circumstances, with administrative approval, the hours lost may be made up during the same payroll time period. If the hours are not made up, a payroll deduction for the time lost will be made or the employee may choose to use accumulated vacation time.

IV. OVERNIGHT HOUSING OR STRANDED STUDENTS

In event of a severe weather condition when schools are in session, and it is deemed unwise by the administration and the bus operators to attempt to take students home, or to allow students within city limits to walk home, provisions shall be made so that students may be held in their respective buildings, except for those who are allowed to leave with parent approval to their own homes or to alternative housing.

All parents of students who ride buses shall complete the school closing form which indicates housing alternatives for transported students. Those students who have alternative housing arrangements can be picked up.

The principals shall develop plans for such emergencies. Should numbers of students and conditions make it advisable, students may be transported to central points, such as the high schools, for overnight housing.

When students are kept at school, communication will be repeated at regular intervals to notify parents. School officials will notify parents as soon as is possible of the location of their child.

V. NOT OPENING SCHOOLS DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

The decision for closing the schools for the day shall be made by the Superintendent of Schools, or designee. Announcement of the closing will be made via local media and social media as early as possible.

- A. Responsibilities of Instructional Staff (School Closed for the Day)

1. When school is closed for the day, teachers are not expected to report for duty unless the announcement of school closing states that teachers are to report for duty. Teachers may report to work if they desire to do so.
2. The principal of a building is expected to report for duty whenever possible to supervise students who may have been transported to school.
 - a. Such students should be sent home as soon as it is safely possible.
 - b. Students are not to be in the building when the school is closed for inclement weather unless waiting for transportation or for safety reasons.
 - c. All student practices and activities are cancelled when school closes. Coaches and other activity leaders are asked not to schedule practices without special approval from the appropriate director and the building principal. Games and programs may be held if it is difficult to reschedule the activity. The latter must be approved by the building principal.
 - d. If the principal cannot reach the building, he/she should ask the custodian or other available person to assume responsibility for caring for any students who might arrive.
3. General Policies and Interpretation
 - a. If school is closed for the full day, teachers on sick leave, personal leave, or emergency leave will not be charged for that day.
 - b. If school closings cause the number of instructional hours to drop below those required by State statute, it is understood that these hours must be made up by holding school on vacation days, such as during spring vacation, or on days following the normal closing of school. Changes affecting more than two (2) days will be presented to the Meet and Confer Committee for review.

B. Responsibilities of Noninstructional Employees (School Closed for Day)

1. Clerical and Secretarial Personnel

Are not expected to report for duty unless the announcement of school closing states that the offices will be open and clerical staff are to report for duty.

If an individual secretary is requested to work when offices are closed,

he/she shall be compensated at a rate equal to two times his/her regular hourly rate.

2. Custodial/Maintenance Personnel

In the event that schools and offices are closed for an emergency, and custodial/maintenance employees are required to perform services, an employee's compensation will be adjusted per the Maintenance and Custodial agreement.

3. Other Employees

Do not report for duty during inclement weather unless specifically requested to do so.

VI. PARENTS' RESPONSIBILITIES DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER

In all cases of inclement weather conditions, parents should decide whether or not their children should attempt to come to school. It is both the right and the responsibility of the parent to make this decision.

A student who is absent because of weather conditions must be marked absent. Such absence will be excused as a legitimate reason for absence. Students will be expected to make up work missed. Students who ride buses in winter weather should be dressed appropriately. Bus emergencies can be serious if the student is not dressed adequately.

Announcements of early school closing will be made approximately one and one-half hours before buses leave the schools. Parents should limit their calls to the schools, especially until such time as the closing announcement has been distributed via media or social media.

- A. Rural parents should assume responsibility for meeting the bus at the stop, if they judge the situation warrants.
- B. Parents may pick up students early at their respective schools. Principals will excuse such students upon parents' requests. Drivers of private cars coming to pick up students must not park in the bus loading areas; neither should they block the bus entrances or exits, because buses must leave as quickly as possible.
- C. Parents should have an alternate plan in the event buses are unable to return students to their homes.

VII. PRIVATE AND PAROCHIAL SCHOOL PARTICIPATION

The nonpublic elementary, middle, and high schools in District 77 have agreed to follow the decision of the officials of District 77 in the closing of their schools.

VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF BUS CONTRACTORS

- A. It is the responsibility of bus contractors to report weather conditions in their bus areas to the Superintendent of Schools. If they feel conditions warrant school closing, they shall notify the superintendent of the fact.

Early morning calls should reach the superintendent prior to 6:00 a.m. in order that a decision can be made and announcements can be made through the local media before 6:30 a.m.

- B. The bus contractors shall maintain contact with their drivers and shall establish some method of notification if it is necessary to reach them for an early closing of school.
- C. The bus contractors shall maintain contact with the superintendent or designee on stormy days. If it is necessary for the bus contractors to be away from their phones, they should designate someone to take the calls.
- D. The bus contractors will be notified immediately by telephone of all school closing announcements.
- E. The school administration will notify the local media of all school closing information.
- F. Bus contractors must inform their drivers of the following recommended courses of action in storm emergency conditions:
1. If the bus becomes stalled, it is recommended that the driver stay with the bus and the students until emergency aid reaches them. It is generally dangerous to allow students to go for help.
 2. If students' homes are some distance from bus stops, and the bus driver is not sure that students can reach their homes safely, students are to be returned to one of the high schools.
 3. If the driver is unable to deliver students to their homes because of road conditions, all students are to be returned to one of the high schools. Drivers are to check with the school officials so that accurate lists of students can be made.

Legal References: None