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Oct. 29, 2024

Dear Big Lake Schools Community,

Many times throughout the school year, I have to make a difficult decision whether or not to cancel or delay school, release students early, or have students engage in eLearning due to weather and emergency situations. With winter right around the corner, I wanted to share information with you regarding inclement weather procedures so you are aware of the process and are prepared on what to expect in the event that school delays or closures happen.

Please review the information below. Included is information on how to update your information in the Parent Portal so you are sure to receive any emergency closing notifications we send out.

How do I opt-in to emergency texts and phone calls?

In order to receive emergency texts and phone calls, you must opt in. Infinite Campus requires this, as not all families have access to a cell phone or unlimited text messaging. If you wish to opt into voice or text communications, please follow these steps:

- Login to your [Infinite Campus Parent Portal](#)
 - If you do not have a portal, contact your child's school for login information.
- In the top right corner, click on your avatar
- Click on Settings
- Click on Contact Preferences
- Under Message Preferences, select how you prefer to receive messages. For each message type, check Voice, Text (SMS), or Email. (You are able to choose to get different notifications based on priority or message type.)

To ensure that all families are receiving our emergency emails, texts and phone calls, we will perform a ***test on Thursday, October 31st at 12:00pm.*** If you do not receive these test messages, please follow the above instructions for Infinite Campus. (Little Learners preschool, please send a note to earlychildhood@biglakeschools.org)

Where else can I check to see closing information?

We will send communications via Infinite Campus Messenger, Voice, and Text to ensure we are reaching all families in a timely manner. Additionally, we will post any closing information on [our Facebook page](#), [website](#), [Kare 11](#), [WCCO](#), [Fox 9](#), and [KSTP](#).

Who makes the decision to close?

As the superintendent, I am ultimately responsible for making a decision to close (snow-day), delay, release early, or engage in eLearning. In my absence, a designated member of the administrative team makes the decision.

What is the difference between a Snow-Day and an eLearning day?

A snow-day is viewed as a traditional day off of school. No instruction occurs on a snow-day. An eLearning day provides remote instruction for students from teaching staff. *Please note that the first weather closing day is planned to be a traditional snow-day to allow for teacher planning and preparation for remote instruction.*

What factors are considered?

- Current and forecasted weather conditions
- Safety of students - this includes the ability of buses to start and run routes, the distance of students who may have to walk, etc.
- Increased loss of learning time for students
- Students who rely on the district to provide breakfast and lunch
- Parents who are not paid for lost workdays or are out of sick/personal time off

Do you consult with other school districts?

When considering whether or not to delay or close, Big Lake Schools consults Becker, Monticello and St. Michael-Albertville schools. These are the closest school districts to us that are similar in population and experience similar temperatures and weather conditions.

When are decisions to close, delay or engage in eLearning made?

Our goal is to make a decision as soon as possible in order to allow parents to make alternative arrangements for work/child care. Our deadline to alert parents are:

- 5:30 a.m. for closings or delays
- 11 a.m. for early releases

We try to make a decision and relay the information much earlier than these times; however, certain situations may delay the process.

What about Kids Club, Community Education, Preschool and Activities?

- When school is canceled the day before:
 - Kids Club and Hive Time are canceled
 - All Community Education and ECFE classes are canceled
 - All after-school activities are canceled
 - Little Learners preschool and ECSE classes are canceled
- When school is canceled the day of:
 - Kids Club and Hive Time are open
 - All Community Education and ECFE/ECSE classes are canceled
 - All after-school activities are canceled
 - Little Learners preschool and ECSE classes are canceled
- When a late start is in effect:
 - Kids Club and Hive Time open on time
 - AM Little Learners preschool and ECSE classes are canceled
 - AM Community Education and ECFE classes are canceled
 - After-school activities will occur
- When an early dismissal is in effect:
 - Kids Club and Hive Time will remain open until the last child is picked up
 - PM Little Learners preschool and ECSE classes are canceled
 - PM Community Education and ECFE classes are canceled
 - After-school activities are canceled

What happens during eLearning?

eLearning is used in the event that Big Lake Schools were to close due to inclement weather. After reflecting on the previous year, we have made a few updates to our processes. Please take a moment to review the plans for the 24-25 school year and reach out to your child's building if you have any questions:

- All K-12 Students will follow an eLearning schedule, including Big Lake Online and Wright Tech.
- High School and Middle School teachers will post assignments on Otus by 9:00am of the scheduled school day and will be available to students until 3:00pm (with the exception of lunch and any pre-scheduled meetings).
- K-5 Elementary teachers will post instructions for the day on Seesaw by 9:00am of the scheduled school day and will be available to students until 3:00pm (with the exception of lunch and any pre-scheduled meetings).
- Teachers will communicate expectations for the day.

What happens if my K-5 student device was not sent home?

To reduce breakage, K-5 devices are no longer sent home daily. In the event that a school closure decision is not made in time and devices are not sent home with students, refer to the Choice Boards shared in early November.

In closing, I would like to remind you to make sure your student brings appropriate outdoor weather gear to school every day. Minnesota weather is unpredictable, which makes it crucial that students are prepared with winter gear. Please always dress for comfort, which will likely mean bringing at least a jacket, gloves or mittens, and a hat every day. If you are in need of these items, reach out to your student's school office.

Thank you for your continued support of Big Lake Schools!

Tim Truebenbach
Superintendent