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Dear Marple Newtown School District Families,

As winter approaches, we extend our sincere gratitude for your ongoing support and understanding in navigating severe weather situations. This communication outlines the school district's processes and procedures for severe weather/emergency delayed openings, early dismissals, and closures.

How is the final decision made?

The safety of students and staff is our top priority when deciding to delay school openings, dismiss early, or close schools. Each decision is made after careful consideration of the following factors:

WEATHER CONDITIONS

- **Weather Forecasts:** Decisions are not solely based on meteorological predictions, as they can be inaccurate. However, certain forecasts may necessitate action if presented with strong confidence.
- **Snow and Ice Accumulation:** Consideration is given to the timing of the precipitation and to whether precipitation will persist throughout the school day, evening, or overnight.
- **Temperatures:** Extreme temperatures can reduce the effectiveness of salting and de-icing efforts.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

- **Hazardous Routes:** To date, PennDOT has identified 57 hazardous routes within our District, based on factors such as visibility, terrain, steep grades, sharp curves, and traffic volume.
- **Road Conditions:** The District's attendance area spans two townships and includes a variety of road types, some without sidewalks. While some roads may appear safe, others may remain hazardous. The District relies on the two townships treating, clearing, and salting the roads. Without passable road conditions, District buses cannot safely transport students to school.
- **Parking Lot/Sidewalk Conditions:** Operations and Transportation staff work diligently to clear vehicles, parking lots, sidewalks, and building entrances during storms.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

- **Functionality:** Buildings must be operational, including essential utilities such as heat and electricity, to safely accommodate students and staff.

COMMUTER SAFETY

- **Bus Stop Safety:** Student safety at bus stops is evaluated based on exposure to extreme weather, visibility, and accessibility.
- **Walking to School:** For students who walk to school, safety factors include sidewalk conditions, crosswalk safety, and visibility of pedestrians.
- **Staff Travel Conditions:** Staff members may encounter hazardous conditions, especially those commuting from outside the district.

COLLABORATION WITH NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS

- **Surrounding Districts:** Communication is shared regarding other local districts' decisions to delay the start of school, dismiss early, close schools, or remain open. This communication is necessary because students throughout the county attend county-based programs such as The Delaware County Technical School, specialized Special Education programs, etc. In addition, MNSD

transports students to over 107 schools daily, as per the PA State law mandated transportation boundaries. The awareness of countywide road conditions is necessary to evaluate the safe travel of students to school buildings other than the six (6) within MNSD.

What happens if snow or ice is expected or accumulates overnight?

When inclement weather is forecasted or accumulates overnight, the district activates its "Snow Team" to evaluate road conditions across the Marple Newtown area. This team assesses main roads, back roads, and hazardous routes, providing their findings to the Director of Operations by 5:00 a.m. The Superintendent participates in a countywide conference call to discuss regional road conditions and gather insights. Based on this information, the final decision is made as early as possible and communicated to families and staff via Infinite Campus Messenger.

Can the decision be made the night before?

While we strive to decide the evening before, sometimes weather patterns require waiting until the early morning to ensure accurate decisions.

What happens if snow starts during school hours?

Early dismissal decisions are made as early as possible to provide sufficient notice to families, cancel afternoon kindergarten, and allow our staff, the Transportation Department, bus drivers, and building Principals to prepare for the early dismissal process and procedures in the schools.

How does the district communicate decisions?

The Infinite Campus Messenger system simultaneously sends phone calls, texts, and emails to all families and staff. It processes approximately 4,500 calls and 6,000 emails within 15–20 minutes. Updates are also posted on the District's website and shared with local media outlets.

What happens after a storm?

Once snow has stopped falling, District staff clears snow and ice at all seven (7) building locations and ensures approximately 120 transportation and maintenance vehicles are ready for use. However, even if district properties are cleared, unsafe road conditions in surrounding areas may still cause delays or closures.

How many snow days are built into the calendar?

The 2024–2025 calendar includes three (3) snow days for students in grades K-11 and two (2) for seniors. If all three (3) days are used, the District will reevaluate the calendar and utilize designated make-up days as outlined in the approved academic calendar. Depending on the timing and number of closures, the school year may need to be extended in June.

What can families do to help?

- 1) Always keep your contact information in Infinite Campus up to date so that District communications can be received.
- 2) Prepare for weather/emergencies by having plans in place in case there is a school closure, delay, and/or early dismissal.
- 3) Please understand that the District is making this decision for your child's safety and the safety of our staff.

Thank you for your continued support and for all you do for our students and schools.

Sincerely,
Tina M. Kane, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools