MARPLE NEWTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Marple Newtown School District Community,

As winter approaches, we extend our sincere gratitude for your ongoing support and understanding in navigating severe weather situations. As the District begins to prepare for the upcoming winter season, this communication serves as an overview of the school District's severe weather/emergency delayed opening, early dismissal, and closure processes and procedures.

How is the final decision made?
First and foremost, the priority of the safety of students and staff when making any decision to delay the start of school, dismiss early, or close school is of utmost importance. Any decision to open or close schools is made after carefully considering the following variables:

WEATHER CONDITIONS

- **Weather Forecasts:** The decision to delay opening, dismissing early, or closing school is not based solely on weather predictions from the region's meteorologists, as they are not always accurate. However, sometimes the weather forecast is presented in such an "adamant manner", making this decision based on the forecast is unavoidable.
- **Snow and Ice Accumulation:** Careful consideration is given to the timing of the precipitation such as whether the accumulation will continue throughout the school day and/or evening and overnight hours.
- **Temperatures:** Extreme temperatures can render salting and de-icing efforts ineffective.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

- **Hazardous Routes:** To date, PennDot has deemed 56 hazardous routes in our District's attendance area. Hazardous routes are determined by PennDot based on several factors such as visibility, steep grades, sharp curves, traffic volume, terrain, etc.
- **Road Conditions:** The District's attendance area is comprised of two townships, is expansive, and includes various road configurations. In addition, some roads do not have sidewalks. Evaluations are made of the most dangerous roads in the District. Roads in one neighborhood may seems safe; however, roads in other areas may be still too dangerous to travel. 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:** The District's Operations and the Transportation Department personnel work diligently throughout the storm to clear District vehicles, treat, clear, and salt parking lots, sidewalks, and building entrances.

BUILDING CONDITIONS

- **Building Conditions:** Evaluations are made as to whether the buildings are fully operational and functioning for students and staff. For example, loss of heat, loss of electricity, etc.

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COMMUTER SAFETY

- **Bus Stop Safety:** Considerations are made regarding the safety of students waiting at bus stops such as exposure to extreme weather, visibility of students to bus drivers, and the accessibility of bus stops.
- **Walking to School:** For students who walk to school, safety factors to consider are sidewalk conditions, crosswalk safety, visibility of pedestrians, and the need for alternative routes.
- **Staff Travel Conditions**: Staff members may face challenges similar to students, especially those who live in different parts of the district and surrounding counties, regions, and/or states.

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 110 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/ice is expected or accumulates overnight?

If inclement weather is forecasted or has accumulated overnight, the District deploys a "Snow Team" comprised of strategic staff members to evaluate the road conditions in the Marple Newtown community. The team evaluates the main roads, back roads, and historically the most dangerous roads travelled within our bus routes. The team reports road conditions to the Director of Operations, who provides feedback to the Superintendent by 5:00a.m. or earlier.

The Superintendent then participates in a countywide conference call, which includes the Delaware County Intermediate Unit and surrounding school districts' Superintendents. The purpose of the collaborative call is to communicate road conditions, throughout the county, as students within the county, from various homeschools, attended countywide programs such as the Delaware County Technical Schools, etc.

Gathering and considering all information is critical to making the final decision as early as possible. If it has been determined that it is unsafe to open schools on time, or at all, the Superintendent informs designated staff to communicate the message to families and staff through the various methods included in the Infinite Campus Messenger. This timeframe allows the District to communicate early enough to alert families and staff so necessary arrangements for the delay or cancellation can be made.

Can the decision be made the night before school?

Sometimes it is possible to make that decision in the evening; however, there may not be enough information to make a comprehensive decision until the early morning hours. Efforts and consideration of all variables are made to avoid closing school prematurely only to find the weather event has changed course or has dissipated.

What happens if snow starts falling while school is in session?

This is perhaps the most difficult decision to make. In order for the District to prepare for an early dismissal, this decision must be made as early as possible. This timing allows the District the necessary time to cancel afternoon Kindergarten and provide enough notice to families to prepare to receive their children early. Additionally, the timing allows for the Transportation Department, bus drivers, and building Principals to start the early dismissal process and procedures in the schools.

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How does the District communicate the decision?
The most effective method of communications is through the Infinite Campus Messenger. This program allows the District to simultaneously send out phone calls, text messages, and emails to all families and staff. The Infinite Campus Messenger program processes approximately 4,500 calls and 2,900 emails in a 15 to 20 minute timeframe. For each family, multiple phone numbers can be accessed automatically with voice and text messages about the state of school for that day. The District's website www.mnsd.org and the local media outlets will also provide the District's communication.

What happens when the storm is over?
In all scenarios, once snow has stopped falling, the District is responsible to clear snow and ice at its seven (7) building locations. Additionally, the District must clear the snow from approximately 120 student transportation and maintenance vehicles so that the vehicles can be safely entered into service. The District's employees are skilled and well equipped so the schools can be ready to receive students and staff as soon as possible. However, there are times where the District is free of snow and ice, but road conditions are still not safe, within the attendance areas of the two townships, which can cause further delays or closings.

How many snow days are built into the school calendar?
The 2025-2026 school calendar has two (2) snow days built into the academic year for all students K-11, and one (1) high school senior day. Once the District uses the two (2) days that are "built-into" the current calendar, the District must reevaluate the calendar, and begin to use the make-up snow days published in the 2025-2026 Board approved Academic Calendar. Senior make-up days will be reevaluated as needed.

Please note, the District will use the two (2) **"**built-in" snow days before beginning to use make-up snow days for students K-11. Therefore, the District will not begin making up days until a third closure is warranted for students K-11. Snow make-up days are indicated on the calendar; however, depending on the timing and number of days used, the District could be forced to extend the school year in June. The District will be sure to communicate with families and staff regarding the need for make-up days for students and/or staff.

What does the District need from families?
1) To keep your contact information in Infinite Campus up to date at all times 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 and for no other reason.

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

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

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