



October 19, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians:

As we move into the next couple of months, the odds for experiencing inclement weather greatly increases. However, we are hoping that Old Man Winter will go easy on us this season. Our district staff understands that our decision to open, delay, or close schools in bad weather has an impact on families. We also understand that our students are better served – both academically and socially – by being in school. As always, our top priority is the safety of our students. Below I have outlined some information that will help you understand how we make our decisions in dealing with inclement weather, and how you can best get information regarding changes in our schedule.

- **HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?**

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- ▶ **Information on road conditions from district staff and from the Public Safety Department.** We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous.
- ▶ **Amount of snow and ice accumulated.**
- ▶ **Whether precipitation is continuing.**
- ▶ **Building conditions (such as whether we have electricity and heat).**
- ▶ **Parking lot conditions.** Administrators talk to maintenance and custodial staff members who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks.
- ▶ **Temperature and wind chill.** Please remember that some of our students walk to school and many must wait outside for the bus.
- ▶ **Weather predictions.** We prefer not making our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate and can be inconsistent. However, we consider as many models as possible, and look for consistent information.
- ▶ **What other districts are doing.** We also share information with other local districts and check whether they are opening or closing.

- **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

As Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the Director of Operations and the Assistant Superintendent for Support Services.

- **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

Tune to the following TV stations (channel: 19, 21, 3, 6 or 10), or radio station (KYW-1060). You can also check our district Website – <http://www.medford.k12.nj.us> for information. Please do not call your school unless it is an emergency. Our school district closing number is 668. The quickest and most detailed information will appear on Cable Channel 19 & 21 (LDTV).

- **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

I must make the decision by 5:30 a.m. or earlier so we can notify radio stations, TV stations and post the decision on our Web site. If I wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

- **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

Keep in mind that even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses. Only in an extreme emergency would we consider an early dismissal. However, we would give adequate notice to all parents via the notification options listed above.

- **DISTRICT OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO INCLEMENT WEATHER**

- ▶ **Close School**

- ▶ **Delayed Opening**

- ▶ **Early Dismissal - no P.M. Kindergarten or P.M. Preschool
(Lunches will not be served)**

**Haines-Memorial Sixth Grade Center and Memorial School – 11:45 a.m.
Taunton Forge & Cranberry Pines Schools – 12:25 p.m.
Allen, Chairville & Kirby's Mill Schools – 1:05 p.m.**

- ▶ **P.M. School's Out Program Cancelled**

- ▶ **After School Activities Cancelled**

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. In light of varying conditions and circumstances throughout our town, the district respects your personal decision whether or not to send your child to school during an inclement weather event.

I hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district staff uses to make the best possible decision for all in our district. Please - - Think Spring!!

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Del Rossi, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools