

# MT. BLUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

CHESTERVILLE – FARMINGTON – INDUSTRY – NEW SHARON – NEW VINEYARD – STARKS – TEMPLE – VIENNA – WELD – WILTON

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TO: RSU 9 Parents & Staff  
FROM: Christian M. Elkington, Superintendent  
RE: RSU 9 Storm Closing-Delay Process  
DATE: 10-8-2024

With the winter months approaching, and weather becoming more unpredictable, it is important to review the process of how we decide whether to close school early, delay the start of school, or end school early due to bad weather. We understand that predicting the weather in our area can be tricky, especially in the mountains and valleys of Western Maine. I promise to take this process very seriously and consider all the factors involved. We know how important it is to keep our students, staff, and families safe, so we'll always prioritize that when making decisions about school closures.

## **The following is the School Cancellation-Delay Process we will use in 2024-2025:**

We start planning for potential school closures about 36 hours before a storm is expected. This is when the National Weather Service starts providing long-range forecasts.

### **The day before the storm:**

- I review the latest forecasts from the National Weather Service.
- Our Director of Transportation, Richard Joseph, also reviews these forecasts.

### **On the morning of the storm (around 4:00 AM):**

- I check the newest forecasts and get a briefing from a meteorologist who supports our district.
- Richard talks with transportation directors in other nearby areas to see what they're expecting.
- I also contact other superintendents in Franklin County to discuss their weather situation and potential plans.

### **By 4:30 AM:**

- Richard and I discuss what we know and decide if we need more information from local road crews or Franklin County Emergency Management.

### **Our goal is to make a decision by 5:00 AM:**

- Because we need approximately three hours to get all our kids into school, a decision will need to be made by 5:00 a.m.

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## **Here are the possible decisions:**

- School will go as scheduled.
- 1-hour delay.
- 2-hour delay.
- No school.

## **How We Communicate School Closings**

Once we decide to adjust or cancel the school day due to weather, we'll use the following methods to inform everyone:

- **Power Announcement:** We'll send out a message through our Power Announcement system.
- **Local News:** We'll contact the Daily Bulldog, WKTJ FM 93, and the following TV stations:
  - WLBZ Channel 2 (Bangor)
  - WCSH Channel 6 (Portland)
  - WMTW Channel 8 (Portland)
  - WGME Channel 13 (Portland)

## **Early Dismissal Due to Weather**

If a storm quickly or suddenly impacts our area and we need to send students and staff home early, we'll make a decision as quickly as possible, recognizing it takes at least three hours to get everyone home safely.

## **Our goal is to make a decision between 10:30 AM and 11:00 AM.**

We'll use the Power Announcement system and contact the same news outlets mentioned above to let everyone know about an early dismissal.

## **Potential Challenges for School Delays and Cancellations**

As in years past, we may continue to face some additional challenges when deciding whether to delay or cancel school due to weather. Some of our towns and the state may have difficulty finding enough staff, including snowplow drivers. If roads can't be plowed quickly, it may affect whether we need to delay school openings or cancel school. Even if a storm has passed, if roads are still covered in snow or ice, we may need to cancel school or delay the start of the day.

We're prepared to deal with these potential issues and will make decisions based on the safety of our students, staff and families.

Before taking on this role, I had heard from other superintendents that deciding whether to delay or cancel school due to weather is one of the most difficult parts of the job. No matter what decision is made, some people will always disagree. In the past, I've offered to let people who have strong feelings about school closures get involved in the decision-making process for each storm, sort of a "Cancellation Advisory Committee." I have had no takers.

## **Thank You for Understanding**

I appreciate your understanding of the process we'll be following this winter as we make decisions about school delays and cancellations. We'll do our best to keep everyone safe and informed during challenging weather conditions.