

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: 11-14-2022

Now that it looks like the weather is finally changing it is important to review the process I will be using to close, delay or end school early in RSU 9 due to winter weather. As explained last year there is no exact science when it comes to the weather. Determining what is the best course of action in the mountains and valleys of Western Maine is never easy. I want to assure you that I take this process very seriously and I will do my best to weigh all the factors which go into these travel decisions. *Please understand that a great deal of time and effort goes into these decisions every time there is a chance for bad weather. Student, staff, and parent safety is my #1 concern.*

The following is the School Cancellation-Delay Process to be used in 2022-2023:

- The process starts about 36 hours before a storm when long-range forecasts from the National Weather Service begin to predict that severe winter weather may be coming.
- The night before a storm may hit, I review the updated forecasts from the National Weather Service on a regular basis.
- At 4:00 a.m. the day the storm is due, I check updated forecasts and get a briefing from a Meteorologist who supports our district.
- At this same time our Transportation Director Richard Joseph talks with other Directors to discuss what they are seeing and hearing.
- I also contact several Franklin County Superintendents to discuss their current weather status along with what next steps may be called for.
- By 4:30 a.m. Richard and I discuss what we know and determine if we need more input from Town Road Commissioners or Franklin County Emergency Management Staff.
- Because we need approximately three hours to get all our kids into school, one of the following decisions will need to be made by 5:00 a.m.:
 - o School will go as scheduled
 - o 1 hr. Delay
 - o 2 hr. Delay
 - o No school.
- Once the decision is made to adjust or cancel, we send out a Power Announcement, contact the Daily Bulldog, call WKTJ FM 93, along with contacting the following TV Stations:
 - o WLBZ Channel 2 Bangor
 - o WCSH Channel 6 Portland
 - o WMTW Channel 8 Portland
 - o WGME Channel 13 Portland.

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Early Dismissal:

- When school is in session and a storm quickly or suddenly begins to impact our area in such a way that we feel we need to send students home early we will decide as quickly as possible, recognizing it will take at least three hours to get students' home.
- We will aim to make an early dismissal decision by 10:30 – 11:00 a.m. at the latest.
- Notification of an early dismissal will be on a Power Announcement and the same news media outlets outlined above.

This year there may again be some considerations that will impact school delay and cancellation decisions. Some of our towns along with the state may have difficulty finding staff, including snowplow drivers. Obviously, our roads not being plowed quickly will have an important bearing on whether there is a need for delayed school openings or closures. A storm might have passed by 3:30 or 4:00 a.m., but if the hard-working and possibly undermanned MDOT and local town road crews have not been able to keep up with the accumulated snow or ice, school may be cancelled, or openings delayed. We will be prepared just in case this does become a problem for us in RSU 9.

Before I became a superintendent, I heard that school opening delays and cancellations were decisions superintendents hated the most. I know from experience that these decisions will lead to my name being taken in vain by some no matter what the decision is. 😊 Facing such criticism, in the past I have asked if some community members would like to be involved in this process from beginning to end for each storm, a sort of Cancellation Advisory Committee. As you can imagine I have had no takers. 😊😊😊

With the above said I do appreciate your understanding with the process we will be following this winter. Thanks!