



PROCEDURE:	Pr A: 02
EFFECTIVE:	Oct 23, 2007
AMENDED:	
RELATED POLICIES:	A: 02, A:20
REPEALS:	
REVIEW DATE:	2017-2018

1.0 Objective

- 1.1 To establish procedures to address situations where inclement weather may affect the health and safety of staff and students.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 **Student Transportation Services**, for the purpose of this policy, refers to the Windsor & Essex Student Transportation Services Department governed by the Joint Board Transportation Committee.

3.0 Conditions that Require Students Remain Indoors

- 3.1 Weather conditions sometimes warrant indoor recesses, indoor lunch periods, pre-entry or post-dismissal periods to ensure student and staff safety. Weather conditions change during the day. When necessary, and if the weather is questionable, the Principal should consult with the following authorities when deciding whether to keep students indoors:

- Environment Canada Weather Office (www.weatheroffice.gc.ca)
- Windsor Essex County Health Unit
- The Ministry of the Environment
- Weather warnings posted to the WECDSB web site

4.0 The Decision to Close Schools

- 4.1 The decision to close schools, including on-site childcare centres, shall be at the discretion of the Director of Education or designate.
- 4.2 The decision to close the Catholic Education Centre and other attendant buildings shall be at the discretion of the Director of Education or designate.
- 4.3 In emergency situations requiring immediate action, Principals shall have discretion to close their schools and the reason(s) shall be communicated as soon as possible to:
- a. the School Superintendent;
 - b. the Student Transportation Services Department.

- 4.4 In all other situations, Principals must first consult with the Superintendent of Education and/or the Director of Education before exercising his or her discretion to close their school. The Student Transportation Services Department shall be notified as soon as possible.
- 4.5 The Catholic Education Centre shall remain open at least until all schools are closed.
- 4.6 All contact with the news media relating to school closures or early dismissal due to inclement weather shall be made through the Student Transportation Services Department or the Board's Communications Coordinator.
- 4.7 The Student Transportation Services Department shall meet with the Bus Company (ies) serving the Board before the end of September of each year to review the Board's policies and procedures pertaining to inclement weather closures.
- 4.8 The Board's Facilities Services Department shall meet with snow removal companies (under contract with the Board) and arrange for these companies to consult with Principals to clarify the Board/ school snow clearing requirements before the first snowfall.
- 4.9 A letter shall be prepared by each school outlining parent responsibility and procedures pertaining to inclement weather closures.

5.0 Inclement Weather Procedures Before the School Day Commences

- 5.1 The Director or designate, in consultation with the Supervisor of Student Transportation Services/designate, shall communicate the decision to the Superintendents to either:
 - a. cancel transportation and keep schools open; or
 - b. cancel transportation and close schools.
- 5.2 The decision shall be communicated by 6:30 a.m., when feasible, so that students, parents and Board personnel may be informed in sufficient time.
- 5.3 The Supervisor of Student Transportation Services/Designate shall communicate the decision to cancel transportation of students and/or to close schools to:
 - a. Communications Coordinator;
 - b. bus contractor(s)
 - c. taxi operators
 - d. Switchboard operator at the Catholic Education Centre
- 5.4 The Student Transportation Services Officer shall inform all radio stations and other media of transportation cancellation or school closures.

- 5.5 If it is decided to keep the schools open but to cancel transportation, all staff will be expected to make every effort to report to their work locations.
- 5.6 In the event that it is decided to close the schools and to cancel transportation, the following conditions shall apply:
- a. It shall be the responsibility of the Principal to use best efforts to ensure that all students who come to the school are looked after and to use best efforts to ensure the safe return of the students to their homes, whether schools are kept open or closed.
 - b. The Director, Superintendents, Principals, Supervisors, Managers shall remain available for contact by telephone at home or at work.
- 5.7 The Manager of Student Transportation Services shall notify the Director(s) that part of the transportation system is not operating by 6:15 A. M. If system wide shutdown of transportation has occurred, the Manager of Student Transportation Services will request authorization for a total system shutdown from the Directors or designate.
- 5.8 At approximately no later than 6:30 A. M. the media will be faxed or e-mailed the following information:
- A. All School Board transportation is cancelled and schools are open.
- OR**
- B. All School Board transportation is cancelled and schools are closed.
- OR**
- C. Schools and School Board transportation may be closed or cancelled by district (if this is the case, the Boards will include what schools are affected).
- OR**
- D. School Board transportation is cancelled in the morning due to fog and schools are open. Buses will run at normal times at noon and in the afternoon.
- 5.9 The Board will attempt to fax or e-mail the media even on less serious inclement weather days, to provide as much information as possible to the public and minimize the excessive phone calls to bus company operation.
- 5.10 The Board's Communications Coordinator will forward a complete inclement weather operational package to all media at the start of each school year.

6.0 Incomplete Routes

- 6.1 If after commencing a route, the driver is unable to complete a portion of the route, it shall be the driver's responsibility to inform the Principal(s) concerned of the incomplete operation.
- 6.2 The Principal shall notify the Manager of Student Transportation Services of any incomplete routes immediately.

7.0 Inclement Weather Procedures After the School Day has Commenced

- 7.1 The Director/designate shall communicate the decision to the Supervisor of Student Transportation Services /designate and to the Superintendents that schools will close early.
- 7.2 The decision to close schools early shall be made before 10:30 a.m.
- 7.3 The Supervisor of Student Transportation Services shall communicate the decision to close schools early to:
 - a. the Communications Coordinator
 - b. bus contractor(s)
 - c. taxi operators
 - d. Switchboard Operator at the Catholic Education Centre
- 7.4 The Student Transportation Services Officer or Communication Coordinator shall inform all radio stations and other media of bus cancellation or school closures.
- 7.5 The Superintendents of Education shall communicate the decision to close schools early to:
 - a. all Principals
 - b. the Trustees in the families of schools
- 7.6 It shall be the responsibility of the Principals to use best efforts to ensure that all students who are in school are looked after and to ensure the safe return of the students to their homes.
- 7.7 The Teachers and school/office staff shall remain at their work locations until their Principal/Supervisor authorizes them to go home.

8.0 Role of Director of Education

- 8.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Education in consultation with the Director of the coterminous Board(s), to make a decision to either:
 - a. keep schools open; or

b. close schools.

8.2 When the decision is announced, staff shall implement either:

a. Inclement Weather Procedures **Before** the School Day commences, or

b. Inclement Weather Procedures **After** the School Day commences.

9.0 Role of Parents/Guardians

9.1 In the event of impending severe weather conditions, parents should consider the safety of their children in deciding whether or not to send them to school.

9.2 Parents should stay tuned to local radio stations for weather reports and school board announcements.

9.3 Parents who, in spite of school board transportation cancellations, drive their children to school, will be required to make the necessary arrangements if schools are cancelled for the safe return home of their children. School board transportation that does not run in the morning will not run for the rest of the day except for fog days.

9.4 Phone calls to the school during severe weather conditions are to be made only in the case of an extreme emergency.

9.5 Parents shall be requested to provide the school with the name and telephone number of a neighbour alternate, (someone who lives in close proximity to the home) who would be willing to act on their behalf in the event that they cannot be reached.

10.0 Role of Principal

10.1 The Principal shall in-service staff on the requirements of the Board's Inclement Weather - Emergency School Closings Policy, clarify the roles of teachers/staff in the event of inclement weather and identify options and expectations.

11.0 Early or Delayed Dismissal

11.1 In the case of an early dismissal, all parents (or their alternate) of grades JK-8 children must be notified prior to the dismissal of the children.

11.2 In cases of a prolonged delayed dismissal, all parents (or their alternate) of the children involved, must be notified of the delay. Should such a delay require a public announcement, the Principal shall contact the Manager of Student Transportation Services for this purpose.

11.3 An up-to-date list of family telephone numbers and alternate phone numbers are to be compiled for such emergencies.

- 11.4 Older children could be encouraged to assist younger children under severe weather conditions.
- 11.5 Through a letter or other form of communication at the beginning of the school year, Principals shall notify parents that, under severe weather conditions, they should meet their children at school or at their school board transportation stop.
- 11.6 In the event of a delayed dismissal, it is the responsibility of the Principal to provide adequate supervision. It is at the discretion of the Principal to decide what constitutes supervision and to assign teachers for this purpose.
- 11.7 In the event that staff and students must remain in the school overnight, on the day following such an event, the school shall be closed for one day to allow students and staff to recuperate.

12.0 School Closure

- 12.1 In the event that a decision to close schools is made and announced after 7:00 a.m., the Principal/designate shall use best effort to be at the school to safely redirect any child who may have missed the announcement of closure or if no one can be at the school, call the local Police to check the school to ensure that any children who may be at the school are transported home or to a supervised location.
- 12.2 In the event children arrive at school, parents are to be notified in order that arrangements may be made for the safe return home of their children. No child should be allowed to leave the school until these arrangements have been completed.
- 12.3 The Principal/designate shall use best efforts to be present at school for the beginning of the afternoon session to redirect any child who may appear, or if this is not feasible to call the local Police and have them take actions similar to section 12.1.
- 12.4 Once all students are safely dismissed, the Principal/designate shall dismiss all staff, including the secretary and custodial staff upon completion of the normal closing procedures.

13.0 Principal's Designate

- 13.1 In choosing a Principal's designate, the following prioritized list is to be considered:
 - a. Vice-Principal (where applicable);
 - b. Head teacher;
 - b. Teacher on school staff;
 - c. Teacher employed by the Board; or
 - d. Consult with school secretary or custodian for alternate arrangements.

- 13.2 The Principal's designate or other staff assigned to the school should have a key to the school, access to a phone and necessary phone numbers.

14.0 Role of Student Transportation Services Department

- 14.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Manager of Student Transportation Services to monitor weather conditions in order to ensure the safe transportation of students. The Manager shall follow the Transportation Services Inclement Weather Procedures when monitoring weather conditions.
- 14.2 When weather warnings are announced, the Manager of Student Transportation Services shall contact one or more of the following agencies to obtain specific information about the weather warnings and the areas affected:
- a. The Windsor Weather Office
 - b. Ontario Provincial Police
 - c. School bus contractor(s) serving the Board
- 14.3 The Manager of Student Transportation Services shall appoint a contact person "a weather monitor", in each area of the Windsor-Essex Region on an annual basis. This person would provide the Manager with a report on weather conditions when called upon to do so. Prior to making a recommendation to the Director of Education as to whether or not to close a school(s), the Manager of Student Transportation Services shall communicate with the contact persons to confirm the weather conditions in each area being called.
- 14.4 If, in the opinion of the Manager of Student Transportation Services, the weather conditions could endanger the safe transportation of students, the Manager of Student Transportation Services shall make recommendations to the Director of Education with respect to the cancellation of transportation and to the closing of schools in an area affected or throughout the entire region due to inclement weather.

15.0 Role of Child Care Centres

- 15.1 Childcare staff and school personnel will work together to meet the needs of families and ensure the safety of all children.
- 15.2 If the school closes, the childcare centre (Day Care or Latch-Key) located in that school also closes.
- 15.3 If transportation is cancelled and the school remains open, the centre will be open to receive children whose parents chose to accept responsibility for transporting children to and from the centre. Parents shall be aware that in the event of closure they or their alternate must be available to ensure the child's return home.

- 15.4 During periods when school is not operating, i.e. Christmas Break, March Break and after school hours, it will be the responsibility of the Board of Directors or operator, in consultation with the Parent Advisory Committee (where there is no Board of Directors) to determine whether the centre will remain open. Each centre shall have clearly defined procedures for closure.
- 15.5 The Childcare centre will accept responsibility for children only for the times when a child would normally be in attendance at the centre. School programs must provide for children during the regular hours of school instruction.
- 15.6 If the closure occurs after the school day has commenced, the responsibility for a child will remain with the program the child was attending at the time of the closure.
- 15.7 The school principal and childcare supervisor shall co-ordinate the notification of parents (or their alternate) regarding an emergency situation. To avoid duplication, the childcare staff will assume responsibility for contacting all families whose children attend the centre. These families would then be taken off the list for the school. After the centre staff has contacted all their assigned families, the telephone line in the centre could be made available to school personnel for their additional calls.

16.0 Role of Contracted Bus Operators

- 16.1 Spotters in each area should check and report road conditions to their operator as early as possible and in accordance with the Student Transportation Services Inclement Weather Procedures (spotters are a necessity - the only means that you have to accurately assess the road conditions).
- 16.2 The bus operators will make their own decision, as to whether their operation will run or not.
- 16.3 The bus operators shall report their decision to the area spokesperson and inform other bus operators that weather conditions may be unsuitable for operation in that part of the County.
- 16.4 The area spokesperson shall call the designated Supervisor by 6:00 A. M., to report the operational shutdowns (if any).
- 16.5 The bus operator will await further instructions from the Board (if necessary).
- 16.6 In the case of a delayed bus or incomplete bus route, the bus operator will notify the schools affected as soon as possible.
- 16.7 Inclement weather route sheets must be prepared and forwarded by September 1st of every school year.