

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Winter weather emergencies, such as snow and ice, may cause disruptions in school operations, including the closure of school, a delayed opening, or an early dismissal. This letter provides information about the procedures used when such disruptions occur. Information also is provided about the weather contingency plan that would add student instructional days to the end of the scheduled school year if schools are closed for more than four days due to excessive weather emergencies.

Closure of School

When schools are closed systemwide, all instructional programs and extracurricular activities in schools are canceled. Private day-care providers in school buildings may elect to stay open if the schools are closed but the administrative offices are open. In extreme conditions, administrative offices also may be closed. If this occurs, private day-care programs located in school buildings are closed as well.

Delayed Opening

A delayed opening means that schools open two hours later than scheduled. All buses operate on the same delayed schedule and, therefore, the pick-up times are two hours later than normal. When elementary schools open on a delayed schedule, the following programs are canceled—Head Start, prekindergarten, and other specialized programs or field trips scheduled before 10:30 a.m. However, afternoon sessions of Head Start and prekindergarten begin at the regular time. Parents should continue to check for radio, television, or Web announcements in the event a decision to delay the opening of schools is reconsidered and a decision to close schools for the day is made (by 7:00 a.m.).

Early Dismissal

An early dismissal means that schools will close 2.5 hours earlier than scheduled. All buses operate on that same early schedule and, therefore, drop-off times are 2.5 hours earlier than normal. When elementary schools close early, afternoon Head Start, prekindergarten, and other early childhood programs are canceled, as well as any special programs or field trips scheduled after 10:30 a.m.. Morning prekindergarten and morning half-day Head Start students will be dismissed at 10:30 a.m. Full day Head Start classes will dismiss with regular kindergarten through Grade 5 students.

Public Announcements

Information about school operations is announced publicly as soon as possible on area radio and television stations, Montgomery County Cable Channel 6 or Cable Channel 34—MCPS TV, on the Internet at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org, and on a taped telephone message service at 301-279-3673. Emergency e-mail announcements are available by signing up for MCPS QuickNotes on the school system's home page. If schools are closed or delayed, the announcement is made no later than 6:00 a.m. (or the night before if possible). If schools are closing early, the announcement is made by 11:00 a.m.

Emergency Weather Contingency Plan

An emergency weather contingency plan will add student instructional days to the end of the scheduled school year if schools are closed more than four days because of weather emergencies. The planned school year for students ends on June 16, 2009. However, if schools are closed for more than four days due to weather emergencies, the following schedule would extend the school year in order to add the necessary make-up days:

1. If schools are closed for five days, the school year will be extended by one day to June 17, 2009.
2. If schools are closed for six days, the school year will be extended by two days to June 17 and June 18, 2009.
3. If schools are closed seven days, the school year will be extended by three days to June 17, June 18, and June 19, 2009.
4. If schools are closed for eight days, the school year will be extended by four days to June 17, June 18, June 19, and June 22, 2009.
5. If schools are closed nine days, the school year will be extended by five days to June 17, June 18, June 19, June 22, and June 23, 2009.

Weather Conditions and Decisions

The school system uses a variety of sources of information to determine whether to close schools, delay the opening of schools, or dismiss schools early. These sources include actual physical inspection of road and school conditions by transportation officials and other staff at areas throughout the county, and an analysis of independent reports from the National Weather Service, Accu-Weather, and the news media. The most severe weather conditions within the county are used as the basis for decision-making. Consistent procedures are maintained in order to respond quickly to emergency weather conditions and protect the safety and well being of students.

All public schools within Montgomery County adhere to the same schedule concerning emergency weather conditions. The decision to change school operations is made by the superintendent of schools or his designee and affects all schools within the school system.

Sincerely,