

INCLEMENT WEATHER - EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

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POLICY

It is the policy of the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board:

1. to expect that each school be in session and that each employee be in attendance at his/her duties each school day;
2. to close schools when it is apparent that inclement weather conditions might affect the safety of pupils and staff;
3. to cancel the transportation of students when it is considered to be unsafe;
4. to establish procedures to be followed should it become necessary to close schools/Board buildings;
5. that this policy shall apply to all schools including elementary, secondary, Continuing Education, ancillary educational locations, e.g. Wilma's Place, other Board buildings including Central Administration, Nicholas Mancini Centre, Thomas Mahony Building, and child care centres;
6. that this policy shall apply when the Regional Weather Office predicts an unusual amount of snow; and or any other weather emergency;
7. that this policy shall apply to either the entire City of Hamilton or when inclement weather may affect only one or more parts of the city.

REGULATIONS

1. The decision to close schools shall be at the discretion of the Director of Education or designate.

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2. The decision to close the Board office and other attendant buildings shall be at the discretion of the Director of Education or designate.
3. Principals shall have discretion to close their schools and the reason(s) for which shall be communicated as soon as possible to:
  - a) the Communications Officer;
  - b) the School Superintendent;
4. Once all students are safely dismissed, the Principal shall dismiss all staff, including the secretary and custodial staff upon completion of the normal closing procedures.
5. The Catholic Education Centre shall remain open at least until all schools are closed.
6. All contact with the news media relating to school closures or early dismissal due to inclement weather shall be made through the Board's Communications Officer via cellular phone.
7. The **Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services** 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.
8. The Board's Plant Operations Department shall meet with snow removal companies and arrange for these companies to consult with principals to clarify the Board's/school snow clearing requirements before the first snow fall.
9. A letter shall be prepared each year outlining parent responsibility and procedures pertaining to inclement weather closures. This letter is to be available in languages other than English and French in order to accommodate the variety of nationalities within the school system.

## PROCEDURES

Once the decision has been made to close schools and child care centres due to inclement weather, the following procedures are to be implemented:

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Inclement Weather Procedures **Before** the School Day Commences

1. The Director or designate, in consultation with the **General Manager of The Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services**, shall communicate the decision to the Superintendents to either:
  - a) cancel transportation and keep schools open; or
  - b) cancel transportation and close schools.
2. The decision shall be communicated by 7:00 a.m., when feasible, so that students, parents and Board personnel may be informed in sufficient time.
3. The **General Manager of the Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services** shall communicate the decision to cancel transportation of students and/or to close schools to:
  - a) Communications Officer;
  - b) Bus contractor(s);
  - c) Taxi operators; and
  - d) School Crossing Guards (Police).
4. The Communications Officer shall inform all radio stations and other media of bus cancellations or school closures.
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.

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 ensure that all students who come to the school are looked after and to ensure the safe return of the student to their home, 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.

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Inclement Weather Procedures **After** the School Day has Commenced

1. The Director/designate shall communicate the decision to the **General Manager of The Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services, Communications Officer** and to the Superintendents:
  - a) that schools will close early;
2. The decision to close schools early will be communicated as early as possible.
3. The **General Manager of the Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services** shall communicate the decision to close schools early to:
  - a) **bus contractor(s);**
  - b) **taxi operators; and**
4. The Communications Officer shall inform all radio stations, other media **and school crossing guards** of bus cancellations or school closures.
5. The Superintendents of Education shall communicate the decision to close schools early to:
  - a) all Principals, and
  - b) the Trustees in the families of schools.
6. It shall be the responsibility of the Principals 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. The Teachers and school/office staff shall remain at their work locations until their Principal/Supervisor authorizes them to go home.

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## Role of Transportation Department

1. It shall be the responsibility of the **General Manager of The Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services** to monitor weather conditions in order to ensure the safe transportation of students.
2. When weather warnings are announced, the **General Manager of The Hamilton-Wentworth 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 Hamilton Weather Office
  - b) The Hamilton Police Services
  - c) Ontario Provincial Police
  - d) Other school boards in the area
  - e) school bus contractor(s) serving the Board
3. **If, in the opinion of the General Manager of The Hamilton-Wentworth Student Transportation Services, the weather conditions could endanger the safe transportation of students, the General Manager of The Hamilton-Wentworth 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.**

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## Role of the Director of Education

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Director of Education, to make a decision to either:
  - a) cancel transportation and keep schools open; or
  - b) cancel transportation and close schools.
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.

## Role of Parents

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.
2. Parents should stay tuned to local radio stations for weather reports and school board announcements.
3. Parents who, in spite of bus 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. Buses which do not run in the morning will not run for the rest of the day.
4. Phone calls to the school during severe weather conditions are to be made only in the case of an extreme emergency.
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.

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## Role of Principal

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.
2. Early or Delayed Dismissal
  - a) In the case of an early dismissal, all parents (or their alternate) of grades ECE-8 children must be notified prior to the dismissal of the children.  
  
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 Board's Communications Office for this purpose.
  - b) An up-to-date list of family telephone numbers and alternate phone numbers are to be compiled for such emergencies.
  - c) Older children could be encouraged to assist younger children under severe weather conditions.
  - d) Principals are encouraged to notify parents that, under severe weather conditions, they should meet their children at school or at their bus stop.
  - e) 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 adequate supervision and to assign teachers for this purpose.
  - f) 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.

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## 3. School Closure

- a) In the event that a decision to close schools is not made and announced before 7:00 a.m., the Principal/designate must be at the school to safely redirect any child who may have missed the announcement of closure.
- b) Regardless of the time of announcement of a school closure, the Principal/designate shall be at the school.
- c) 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.
- d) The Principal/designate shall be present at school for the beginning of the afternoon session to redirect any child who may appear.

## Principal's Designate

## 1. In choosing a designate, the following prioritized list is to be considered:

- a) Vice-Principal (where applicable);
- b) Assistant to Principal [Elementary]
- c) Principal Intern [Elementary]
- d) Teacher on school staff;
- e) Teacher employed by the Board; or
- f) Consult with Superintendent for alternate arrangements.

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## Role of Child Care Centres

Child care staff and school personnel will work together to meet the needs of families and ensure the safety of all children.

1. If the school closes, the child care centre located in that school also closes.
2. 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 made aware that in the event of closure they or their alternate must be available to ensure the child's return home.
3. 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 to determine whether the centre will remain open. Each centre shall have clearly defined procedures for closure.
4. The Child care 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.
5. 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.
6. The school principal and child care supervisor shall co-ordinate the notification of parents(or their alternate) regarding an emergency situation. To avoid duplication, the child care staff will assume responsibility for contacting all families whose children attend the centre. These families would then be taken off the list for 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.

BM 21 JUN 77 2 MAY 95 1 OCT 02 6 JUN 06 29 JUN 10

RELATED BY-LAW(S): 7.03

RELATED BOARD COMMITTEE: Committee of the Whole

POLICY REVIEW DATE: FIVE (5) YEARS