

INSTRUCTION

Emergency Closing of Schools

1.0 Official Closing of the School

This procedure outlines the process for, and the actions to be taken when, the Director delegates to temporarily close a school or class in accordance with the provisions of section 19(1) of the Education Act because of one of the following:

- a) failure of transportation arrangements; or
- b) inclement weather, fire, flood, the breakdown of the school heating plant, the failure of an essential utility or a similar emergency".

- 1.1 This procedure is to be interpreted and applied in accordance with the District's commitment to promoting and upholding Indigenous rights and human rights in all of its learning and working environments. This includes anti-colonial, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist approaches and actions to provide services and employment that are safe, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, equitable, accessible and free from all forms of discrimination and harassment consistent with the, DDSB's Indigenous Education Policy, Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy, the Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy and related procedures.

2.0 Student Safety

- 2.1 The safety of students is the most important consideration.
- 2.2 Because students may arrive at school in various ways and may not be aware that a school has been closed, it is essential that School administrators make provisions for a small team of school staff to receive students for a reasonable period of time during the regular time of entry in the morning even if there has been a decision to close the school for the day. The team is pre-identified at the beginning of each school year and will be responsible for contacting parents so that students are able to return home safely.
- 2.3 When students are dismissed early under any circumstances, school administrators shall make school telephones available to students who wish to contact their parent(s) or guardian(s).
- 2.4 In the event of emergencies occurring such as those outlined in Section 19 (1)(b), the Principal of the school is authorized to take such action as is necessary to close the school. Because the Principal is on-site, the assessment of "emergency conditions" is primarily their responsibility. It is expected, where possible, that the Principal will do so in consultation with their Family of Schools Superintendent, the Operations Department and/or other appropriate DDSB personnel as outlined below. If circumstances allow, the Principal should consult with other appropriate officials prior to declaring an emergency situation such as, for example, the local Fire Department and Regional Works Department.

- 2.5 If the issue is a disruption in the functioning of a utility, a mechanical or water system, or any other urgent facility concern, the Area Custodial Supervisor should be the first point of contact to engage Facilities Services staff and determine whether or not the school can remain operational. If the Area Custodial Supervisor is not available, the Manager of Custodial Services should be contacted.
- 2.6 Communication regarding the situation must be shared by the Lead Custodian with Facilities Services. The School Principal will provide the necessary updates to the Family of Schools Superintendent and the Operations Department.

3.0 Emergency Closing of School Due to Public Health Situation

- 3.1 All emergency closing of schools due to a public health concern will be directed by the local public health unit, Durham Regional Health Department. The Principal will consult with the DDSB Health & Safety and Operations Departments for specific directions.

4.0 Emergency Closing of Child Cares, Depots, Community Hubs

- 4.1 In the event that schools are closed during an emergency, the closure of the building will also necessitate that Child Care Centres, Depots, Community Hubs and other permitted events be cancelled.

5.0 Classroom Instruction at Secondary Schools

- 5.1 In the event that secondary schools are closed during an emergency situation, staff will pivot instruction to online learning for the day, as appropriate to do so and as directed by the Board. Staff will follow their regular timetable but will do so virtually. Communication will take place utilizing the planned communication channels. Any staff that may be unable to meet virtually requirements will be required to consult with their Principal/Supervisor.

6.0 Classroom Instruction at Elementary Schools

- 6.1 In the event that elementary schools are closed due to an emergency situation, staff will continue with their professional duties, which may include, but not limited to: planning, assessment, online instruction and communication with families. Staff will provide students with virtual learning opportunities as appropriate to the class/grade. Communication will take place utilizing the planned communication channels. Any staff that may be unable to meet virtual requirements will be required to communicate with their Principal/Supervisor.
- 6.2 Communication will take place utilizing the planned communications channels.

7.0 Guidelines for Early Dismissal Because of Emergency Conditions

- 7.1 When the decision is made to dismiss classes at a time other than regular dismissal because of emergency conditions, regard shall be had to sections 7.2 to 7.4 below.
- 7.2 The Principal, with the agreement of the Associate Director of Corporate Services and Durham Transportation Services (DSTS), may arrange for the busses to run. Since others on the regular route may be affected, it is expected that an attempt will be made to consult with Principals of other schools that may be impacted. This might be done through the DSTS, and/or co-ordinated by others at the Education Centre.

- 7.3 If the Principal has concerns regarding the safety of students in the event of early dismissal, then the students should be retained in the school. Parents and guardians of young students must be notified as to the location of their children.
- 7.4 In the event that it is not safe to transport by vehicle or relocate students during an emergency situation, then the school's Emergency Response Plan shall be activated.

8.0 Records

- 8.1 Following a temporary closure due to an emergency, the Principal shall make a brief written record of the emergency conditions and the actions taken by the school. The record should include reference to any situations which may require follow-up. The Family of Schools Superintendent and the Operations Department should be informed as soon as possible of the emergency conditions and the action taken.

9.0 Communications

- 9.1 Emergency situations may arise requiring that parents/guardians be advised of the action being taken with regard to their children.
- 9.2 The School Principal will utilize common communication methods to share necessary information with staff and the school community (ex. Staff email, phone tree, SchoolMessenger, newsletter, etc.). The communication plan should be communicated with school staff at the beginning of each school year. Where information affects the entire system, or a major portion thereof, the main sources of communication will be board and school websites, SchoolMessenger, school communication letters, and social media platforms.
- 9.3 In the event of a major emergency situation requiring communication with Durham Student Transportation Services, telephone answering service in the Education Centre will be expanded by assigning additional office staff to the task. Telephone operators and other Education Centre staff shall remain on duty until all schools have reported clear conditions and a return to regular operations.
- 9.4 It is expected that early in September parents will be advised by the school Principal of the plans for dealing with transportation disruptions and other emergencies, as well as the communication channels that will be used to inform them in such a circumstance.

10.0 Disruption of Transportation Services:

- 10.1 For the purpose of coordinating transportation services in the event of an emergency, decisions will be coordinated by the CAO of DSTS.
- 10.2 Every effort will be made to advise parents, as soon as possible, regarding changes in the regular transportation schedule through the planned communication channels.

Appendix:
None

Effective Date
2022-06-20