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Subject	CLOSING (TEMPORARY) OF SIMCOE COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD FACILITIES AND THE IMPACTS OF INCLEMENT WEATHER
References	Policy 4470 – Temporary Closing of Schools
Contact	Administrative Council

1. Background

It is the expectation of the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) that all schools will remain open each scheduled school day for those students and staff who are able to attend.

1.1 The *Education Act* provides the following information:

1.1.1 A board may close or authorize the closing of a school or class for a temporary period where such closing appears unavoidable because of:

1.1.1.1 failure of transportation arrangements; or,

1.1.1.2 inclement weather, fire, flood, the breakdown of the school heating plant, the failure of an essential utility or a similar emergency.”

1.2 Section 19(2) of the *Education Act* provides information in the case of a bargaining unit strike or lockout, that the board may close one or more schools if:

1.2.1 the safety of students may be endangered during the strike or lockout;

1.2.2 the school building or the equipment or supplies in the building may not be adequately protected during the strike or lockout; or,

1.2.3 the strike or lockout will substantially interfere with the operation of the school.

2. Health and Safety Concerns During the Day

2.1 On rare occasions, board facilities may present health and safety related emergencies. Examples of these emergencies are: fires, chemical spills, electrical or mechanical malfunctions, floods, lack of or excess heat, and interruption of the potable water supply.

2.2 The principal of the school, faced with any of the above circumstances, and the Superintendent of Business and Facility Services, have the authority to act in the best interests of the health and safety of the students and staff.

2.3 Where any of the above occur, the principal will take any action necessary to ensure the immediate safety of occupants. The principal will consult with the superintendent of education and the Superintendent of Business and Facility Services in the determination of further emergency response, or of the need to close the school or the Education Centre. The superintendent of education shall advise the Director of Education, who will make the final decision on closure.

- 2.4 In the event that the school is closed, the superintendent of education shall:
- 2.4.1 notify the superintendent with the responsibility of transportation, who will notify the Simcoe County Student Transportation Consortium (SCSTC);
 - 2.4.2 notify Facility Services staff who will notify community use groups who have permits to use the facility during or after hours;
 - 2.4.3 notify Facility Services staff, who will notify the child care planner in order to inform the child care and/or before and after school coordinator. The principal will notify the onsite child care and/or before and after school operator;
 - 2.4.4 ensure the principal implements the school emergency closing plan;
 - 2.4.5 ensure the principal implements procedures to provide for students/staff away on school sponsored field/co-curricular trips, and other school sponsored activities;
 - 2.4.6 communicate with the board's Health and Safety Officer; and,
 - 2.4.7 communicate with the Manager of Communications.

3. Inclement Weather

- 3.1 General
- 3.1.1 Every reasonable effort will be made to keep all schools open each day for those students who are able to attend. When school transportation is cancelled, school staff is expected to plan for such emergencies in order to transition students, who are unable to attend due to inclement weather, to their online platforms (Google Classroom and/or SCDSBhub [Brightspace by D2L]) and continue with academic programming.
 - 3.1.2 Parents/guardians are to be reminded, in writing at appropriate times (October and January) each school year, that it is their responsibility to decide whether or not it is safe for their child(ren) to leave for school under severe weather conditions.
 - 3.1.3 When school buses are cancelled, they are cancelled by weather zones (Central, North, South, and West).
 - 3.1.4 If Professional Development (PD) is scheduled in an impacted weather zone(s), it will be cancelled for that/those zone(s) only.
 - 3.1.5 In cases **where buses have been cancelled**, parents/guardians must also be reminded that it is their responsibility to decide whether or not their child(ren) should set out for school or should be driven to school. In the event that children who are not bussed are kept home, parents/guardians are expected to inform the school of their child's(ren's) absence.
 - 3.1.6 Parents/guardians are to be reminded that where they have driven their child(ren) to school, it is their responsibility to ensure that appropriate arrangements have been made to provide for their child's(ren's) safe return home at the end of the regular school day during the school day if conditions worsen and it is necessary to close the school at any time before the end of the regular school day. Parents/guardians are to be advised that if buses are cancelled in the morning they are cancelled for the entire day and will not run at a later time that day.
 - 3.1.7 It is important to communicate that even though the buses may not be running, children have the right to attend school.

- 3.2 Inclement Weather Closures Prior to School Opening
 - 3.2.1 In very severe weather conditions, the principal may recommend the school be closed prior to the commencement of the school day, provided the following criteria have been met:
 - 3.2.1.1 school transportation has been previously cancelled;
 - 3.2.1.2 road conditions are such that all roads, including major routes, secondary routes and in-town roads, pose untoward risks for staff and students; and,
 - 3.2.1.3 access to the school is such that it poses a risk to staff and students.
 - 3.2.2 The principal will make a recommendation to the superintendent of education, who will, in turn, report the recommendation to the Director of Education for a decision.
 - 3.2.3 The superintendent of education will communicate the decision to close a school to the Manager of Communications.
 - 3.2.4 The superintendent of education will communicate the decision to close a school to the child care planner, child care operator and/or before and after school operator.
 - 3.2.5 When school transportation is cancelled, school staff is expected to plan for such emergencies to transition students, who are unable to attend due to inclement weather, to their online platforms (Google Classroom and/or SCDSBhub [Brightspace by D2L]) and continue with academic programming.

- 3.3 Inclement Weather Closures During the School Day
 - 3.3.1 Where weather conditions deteriorate during the school day, the principal may recommend that the school be closed and send students home, provided the following criteria have been met:
 - 3.3.1.1 the superintendent with the responsibility of transportation has consulted with the SCSTC to ensure that the opportunity to provide transportation home is both appropriate and safe. (Note: in most cases it is more appropriate to have the students remain at school, until bussing can be provided in a safer manner, than to transport students home);
 - 3.3.1.2 sufficient time is available to make the necessary arrangements and contacts; and,
 - 3.3.1.3 the principal has consulted with the superintendent of education, who will report the recommendation to the Director of Education.
 - 3.3.2 When school transportation is cancelled, school staff are expected to plan for such emergencies to transition students, who are unable to attend due to inclement weather, to their online platforms (Google Classroom and/or SCDSBhub [Brightspace by D2L]), and continue with academic programming.

- 3.4 When a decision has been made to close a school during the school day due to inclement weather, the superintendent of education shall:
 - 3.4.1 notify the superintendent with the responsibility of transportation, who will notify the SCSTC;
 - 3.4.2 notify Facility Services staff who will notify community use groups who have permits to use the facility during or after hours;
 - 3.4.3 notify Facility Services staff, who will notify the child care planner in order to inform the child care and/or before and after school coordinator. The principal will notify the onsite child care and/or before and after school operator; and,
 - 3.4.4 notify the Manager of Communications.

- 3.5 The principal of a school affected by the decision to close shall:
 - 3.4.1 implement the school emergency closing plan;
 - 3.4.2 implement procedures to provide for students/staff on field/co-curricular trips and other school-sponsored activities; and,
 - 3.4.3 remain at the school, in contact with the SCSTC, to ensure that all buses have reached their final destinations and none are returning to the school with students.

4. Operations and Maintenance Procedures During Inclement Weather

- 4.1 When the operations and maintenance operations in a school are closed, schools shall be considered open for the following shift unless the operations and maintenance staff has been informed differently by the immediate operations supervisor.

5. Education Centre Closing Due to Inclement Weather

- 5.1 Education Centre Procedures
 - 5.1.1 Following the closure of all schools and in very severe weather conditions, the Director of Education may declare the Education Centre closed prior to the commencement of work, provided the following criteria have been met:
 - 5.1.1.1 road conditions are such that all roads, including major routes, secondary routes, and in-town roads, pose undue risks for staff; and,
 - 5.1.1.2 access to the Education Centre is such that it poses undue risks to staff.
 - 5.1.2 When the decision has been made to close the Education Centre, the Director of Education shall notify the superintendents, who will ensure their staff are notified.
 - 5.1.3 The news media shall be advised by the Manager of Communications.

6. Expectations of Staff

- 6.1 It is expected that staff make every reasonable effort to be present.
- 6.2 Staff should make an assessment of the impact of the inclement weather on their ability to get to their worksite.
- 6.3 Staff are expected to monitor the weather throughout the day and when conditions improve, it is the responsibility of staff to attend their workplace.
- 6.4 Should an employee believe they will be greater than 15 minutes late to their work site, they should make every reasonable effort to advise their principal or manager of their impending lateness.
- 6.5 An employee, other than a temporary employee, who contacts their immediate supervisor (or designate) and indicates that they will not be able to get to work that day because of inclement weather conditions, shall not have the day charged against supplemental absence credits if the school or office is officially closed for the entire day or part of the day.

- 6.6 An employee who contacts their immediate supervisor and indicates that they are unable to attend work due to inclement weather, will have the day charged against supplementary absence credits if the school or office remains open for the day.
- 6.7 There will be no deduction of supplementary absence credits for staff who report to work within the first three hours of their working day.
- 6.8 Supplementary absence credits will be deducted proportionate to the length of the day the employee has been absent if they arrive after the first three hours of work.
- 6.9 An employee who has entered an absence in EasyConnect due to illness or other reason, prior to the school or office being officially closed due to inclement weather, will lose that sick leave credit.
- 6.10 A continuous occasional teacher (LTO) who has earned supplemental absence credits will be treated in the same manner as outlined in items 6.1 – 6.8.
- 6.11 Employees may not bring their children to their work site on a day when busses are cancelled or their child's(ren's) school is closed.
- 6.12 School staff are expected to continue regular programming with their students through their online platform(s).

7. Supply Coverage – Schools

- 7.1 Principals must identify and communicate with their staff if supply coverage is necessary when transportation is cancelled to their school. This will be dependent on the number of students who typically attend.
- 7.2 Should an employee enter an absence in EasyConnect due to inclement weather, and transportation has been cancelled to their school, they will request supply coverage only if directed by their principal.
- 7.3 Should an employee enter an absence in EasyConnect due to inclement weather, and transportation to their school has not been cancelled, they must request a supply in the normal manner.
- 7.4 The principal will make a determination later in the morning if additional supply coverage is required.

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