



INSTRUCTION: Schedules

Emergency Closures, Delayed Opening, and Early Dismissal of Schools and/or Offices

I. Purpose

To establish procedures for the closure, delayed opening, or early dismissal of schools and/or offices due to inclement weather or other emergencies, heat, or building system failure.

II. Decision-Making Process

A. The superintendent shall determine whether schools and/or offices of Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) shall be closed, delayed, or dismissed early. The decision will be based on student and staff safety and the ability to effectively deliver the educational program and any other consideration deemed relevant by the Superintendent.

B. The superintendent will consult with the chief administrative and operations officer (CAOO) prior to making a final decision.

C. A decision will be made as early as possible in order to ensure the safety of BCPS students and staff members and to provide parents and staff members with timely notification.

III. Definitions

A. *Air-Conditioned School* – A school with a central chilled water system designed to cool the major portions of the school.

B. *Heat Index* – As published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the measure of how hot it feels when relative humidity is factored in with the actual air temperature.

IV. Administrative Process

A. The CAOO shall be responsible for recommending to the superintendent that individual schools, all schools, individual offices, and/or all offices will be closed, delayed, or dismissed early under this rule.

- B. The Department of Physical Facilities shall establish heat-related closure procedures to inform the superintendent when conditions exist or are forecast that may necessitate the closure of schools and/or offices due to heat. These procedures will incorporate the use of NOAA heat index tables and heat safety resources. The procedures will be included in the Department of Physical Facilities' standard operating procedures manual.
- C. The Office of Health Services shall establish procedures to capture daily data for health suite visits for the months of August, September, May, and June.
- D. Principals shall allow students to carry water bottles at all times, regardless of heat or air conditioning status of the school.
- E. The principal shall have the flexibility to move students to cooler rooms or other appropriate areas, such as the auditorium, multipurpose room, library, or shaded outdoor areas.
- F. The recommendation to close, delay opening, or dismiss schools and/or offices early will be made in consultation with various offices and will include many factors, including but not limited to:
 - 1. Reviewing forecast and current weather conditions, outdoor temperature readings, and forecast and current heat index readings;
 - 2. Conducting on-road observations of actual road and weather conditions across the county;
 - 3. Conferring with other local and state agencies to determine if a snow emergency plan is or will be issued;
 - 4. Inspecting school driveways, parking lots, and sidewalks;
 - 5. Assessing the conditions of school buildings, including but not limited to: heating, electrical, plumbing, or temperature readings in classrooms; and
 - 6. Following heat-related closure procedures established by the Department of Physical Facilities.
- V. Closing Schools and/or Offices due to Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies (other than heat)
 - A. All-Day Closing of Schools
 - 1. All schools shall be closed for the day.

2. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a. All before- and after-school activities and school-sponsored events;
 - b. All field trips, except as outlined in subparagraph V(A)(4) ;
 - c. All extended day learning programs;
 - d. All before- and after-school child care programs;
 - e. All high school and middle school athletic practices and games;
 - f. All school-based staff meetings and professional development activities scheduled in schools; and
 - g. All planned use of facilities and grounds by non-BCPS organizations.
3. All meetings and professional development activities held in BCPS facilities that include 10-month employees shall be cancelled.
4. The superintendent shall decide whether students may participate in pre-approved foreign travel, out-of-state, statewide, and/or regional events that are scheduled outside of BCPS facilities.
 - a. The principal or executive director shall contact his/her respective assistant superintendent or chief to determine whether students will participate in these approved activities.
 - b. The assistant superintendent or chief shall contact the CAO, who will contact the superintendent to obtain approval for participation in the event.
 - c. The CAO will advise the assistant superintendent or chief of the Superintendent's decision. The decision of the superintendent is final.

B. All Day Closing of Offices

1. All offices shall be closed for the day.
2. Essential and essential-as-needed personnel shall report to work as outlined in Board Policy and Superintendent's Rule 4009, *Emergency Closings – Employee Attendance*.
3. All meetings and professional development activities in BCPS facilities shall be cancelled.

C. Delayed Openings

1. Students in Grades K-12 shall report for classes in accordance with the delayed opening announcements.
2. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a. All morning pre-kindergarten classes;
 - b. All before-school child care programs;
 - c. All morning school-based staff meetings and professional development activities; and
 - d. All morning field trips.
3. After-school activities and events will not be affected by a delayed opening.
4. School and central administrative offices will open on time, unless a delayed opening is announced when offices will open as provided in the delayed opening announcement.
 - a. Employees shall follow the delayed opening guidelines as outlined in Board Policy and Superintendent's Rule 4009, *Emergency Closing – Employee Attendance*.
 - b. All meetings and professional development activities shall be cancelled, unless provisions have been made by the meeting coordinator for a delayed start time.

D. Early Dismissal

1. All students in Grades K-12 shall be dismissed in accordance with the early dismissal announcement.
2. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a. All afternoon pre-kindergarten classes;
 - b. All afternoon field trips, except as outlined in subparagraph V(D)(3);
 - c. All extended day learning programs;
 - d. All after-school child care programs;
 - e. All after-school school-based staff meetings and professional development activities scheduled in schools;
 - f. All after-school activities and school-sponsored events;

- g. All high school and middle school athletic practices and games; and
 - h. All planned used of facilities by non-BCPS organizations.
3. The superintendent shall decide whether students may participate in pre-approved foreign travel, out-of-state, statewide, and/or regional events that are scheduled outside of BCPS facilities.
- a. The principal or executive director shall contact his/her respective assistant superintendent or chief to determine whether students will participate in these approved activities.
 - b. The assistant superintendent and/or chief shall contact the CAO, who will contact the superintendent to obtain approval for participation in the event.
 - c. The CAO will advise the assistant superintendent and/or chief of the superintendent's decision. The decision of the superintendent is final.
4. School and central administrative offices will remain open, unless the superintendent has approved the early dismissal of offices.
- a. Employees shall follow the early dismissal guidelines as outlined in Board Policy and Superintendent's Rule 4009, *Emergency Closing – Employee Attendance*.
 - b. All meetings and professional development activities held in BCPS facilities that include 10-month employees shall be cancelled.
5. Decisions to cancel school Board meetings will be made separately by the school Board Chair in collaboration with the superintendent. Whenever possible, an announcement will be made no later than 10:30 a.m.
- E. Evening and after-school activities when schools were not closed for the day or dismissed early
- 1. When schools were not closed or dismissed early during the day, but inclement weather or other emergency conditions exist or are forecast, the CAO will make a recommendation to the superintendent on whether evening and after-school activities shall be cancelled.

2. The CAO will advise the Department of Communications and Community Outreach of the superintendent's decision so that an announcement may be communicated. Whenever possible, announcements under this section will be made no later than 1:00 p.m.
3. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a. All extended day learning programs;
 - b. All after-school child care programs;
 - c. All after-school school-based staff meetings and professional development activities;
 - d. All after-school activities and school-sponsored events;
 - e. All high school and middle school athletic practices and games; and
 - f. All planned use of facilities by non-BCPS organizations.
4. The superintendent shall decide whether students may participate in pre-approved foreign travel, out-of-state, statewide, and/or regional events that are scheduled outside of BCPS facilities.
 - a. The principal or executive director shall contact his/her respective assistant superintendent or chief to determine whether students will participate in these approved activities.
 - b. The assistant superintendent and/or chief shall contact the CAO, who will contact the superintendent to obtain approval for participation in the event.
 - c. The CAO will advise the assistant superintendent and/or chief of the Superintendent's decision. The decision of the superintendent is final.
5. All evening meetings and professional development activities held in BCPS facilities shall be cancelled.
6. Decisions to cancel school Board meetings will be made separately by the school Board Chair in collaboration with the Superintendent. Whenever possible, an announcement will be made no later than 1:00 p.m.

F. Weekend Activities

1. When schools are closed or dismissed early due to inclement weather or other emergency conditions on the Friday immediately

preceding scheduled weekend activities, all scheduled activities and planned use of facilities shall be cancelled until the CAO has made a recommendation to the superintendent that the weekend activities may resume.

2. When schools were not closed or dismissed early on the Friday immediately preceding a weekend, but inclement weather or other emergency conditions exist or are forecast, the CAO will make a recommendation to the superintendent on whether weekend activities shall be cancelled.
3. The CAO will advise the Department of Communications and Community Outreach of the superintendent's decision so that an announcement may be communicated. Whenever possible, announcements under this section will be made no later than 8:00 p.m. on the evening prior to the weekend activity.
4. The superintendent shall decide whether students may participate in pre-approved foreign travel, out-of-state, statewide, and/or regional events that are scheduled outside of BCPS facilities.
 - a. The principal or executive director shall contact his/her respective assistant superintendent or chief to determine whether students will participate in these approved activities.
 - b. The assistant superintendent and/or chief shall contact the CAO, who will contact the superintendent to obtain approval for participation in the event.
 - c. The CAO will advise the assistant superintendent and/or chief of the superintendent's decision. The decision of the superintendent is final.
5. Decisions to cancel school Board meetings will be made separately by the school Board Chair in collaboration with the superintendent. Whenever possible, an announcement will be made no later than 8:00 p.m. on the evening prior to the weekend Board meeting.

VI. Early Dismissal Due to Heat

A. Early Dismissal Due to Heat

1. All students in Grades K-12 shall be dismissed in accordance with the early dismissal announcement.

2. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled in all schools, regardless of air conditioning status:
 - a. All afternoon pre-kindergarten classes;
 - b. All afternoon field trips, except as outlined in subparagraph VI(A)(5);
 - c. All extended day learning programs;
 - d. All after-school child care programs;
 - e. All after-school school-based staff meetings and professional development activities scheduled in schools;
 - f. All after-school activities and school-sponsored events; and
 - g. All middle school athletic practices and games.
3. In schools **with air conditioning**, all planned use of facilities by outside organizations may continue as scheduled.
4. High School Athletic Practices or Games
 - a. The BCPS Office of Athletics follows the Maryland Public Schools Secondary Athletic Association (MPSSAA) guidelines for practice and competition in high heat conditions.
 - b. The coordinator of the office of athletics will consult with the assistant superintendent for high schools who will contact the chief academic officer (CAO) in order to make a recommendation to cancel athletic practices and/or games.
 - c. The CAO shall contact the CAO, who will consult with the superintendent to determine whether practices and/or games should be cancelled.
 - d. The CAO will advise the CAO of the superintendent's decision. The decision of the superintendent is final.
5. The superintendent shall decide whether students may participate in pre-approved foreign travel, out-of-state, statewide, and/or regional events that are scheduled outside of BCPS facilities.
 - a. The principal or executive director shall contact his/her respective assistant superintendent or chief to determine whether students will participate in these approved activities.
 - b. The assistant superintendent and/or chief shall contact the CAO, who will contact the superintendent to obtain approval for participation in the event.

c. The CAO will advise the assistant superintendent and/or chief of the superintendent's decision. The decision of the superintendent is final.

6. All afternoon and evening meetings and professional development activities held in BCPS facilities that include 10-month employees shall be cancelled.

VII. School Closings, Delayed Opening, or Early Dismissal in the Event of Building System Failure

A. In the event of a building system failure (including, but not limited to: electric, plumbing, water, gas), the school principal shall follow the protocols outlined in the *Critical Response and School Emergency Safety Management Guide*.

B. The executive director of the Department of Physical Facilities shall be responsible for assessing the condition of the building and advising the CAO of his/her findings.

C. The CAO will consult with the superintendent, who will decide whether a school, schools, or office should be closed, delayed, or dismissed early.

D. The CAO will advise the Department of Communications and Community Outreach of the superintendent's decision so that an emergent announcement may be communicated.

E. The CAO will notify the appropriate assistant superintendent of the superintendent's decision to close, delay opening, or dismiss a school or schools early.

1. The assistant superintendent will notify the school principal(s) of the decision.

2. The Office of Transportation will coordinate directly with the affected school(s) to establish arrival and/or dismissal times and procedures.

F. Employees shall follow the attendance and reporting guidelines as outlined in Board Policy and Superintendent's Rule 4009, *Emergency Closing – Employee Attendance*.

VIII. Announcements

- A. The Department of Communications and Community Outreach is responsible for initiating all school closing announcements, including systemwide and media notices.
- B. School closings, delayed opening, and early dismissal announcements will be communicated as soon as possible following a decision by the superintendent to close, delay, or dismiss schools and/or offices early.
- C. Announcements will be communicated through the following:
 - 1. The BCPS Web page;
 - 2. BCPS news e-mail and text message alerts;
 - 3. BCPS information hotline - 410-887-5555;
 - 4. BCPS TV;
 - 5. BCPS Twitter and Facebook accounts;
 - 6. Local radio and television stations; and
 - 7. Systemwide phone notification, as determined by the superintendent.
- D. If schools and/or offices are closing for the day or there is a delayed opening due to inclement weather, whenever possible, decisions will be made no later than 5:30 a.m.
- E. If schools and/or offices are dismissing early due to inclement weather, whenever possible, the announcement will be made no later than 10:00 a.m.
- F. If schools are dismissing early due to heat, whenever possible, the announcement will be made no later than 8:00 p.m. the evening prior to the closure.

Related Policies: Board of Education Policy 1300, *Use of Facilities*
Board of Education Policy 4009, *Emergency Closings – Employee Attendance*

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Superintendent of Schools

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