

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURES, DELAYED OPENING AND EARLY DISMISSAL REGULATIONS

The primary concern of the Alexandria City School Board in the event of inclement weather, a building systems failure or other emergencies is the ability of students and staff to safely access school facilities. In such situations, the Superintendent is empowered to determine whether ACPS schools and/or offices shall be closed, delayed or dismissed early. In addition to safety and welfare, the decision will be based on the ability to effectively deliver the educational program, as well as any other considerations deemed relevant by the Superintendent.

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Habitability:** Indoor conditions that may impact the ability of students and staff to safely occupy ACPS facilities.
- B. **Building Systems Failure:** A heating, cooling, water, power, gas or other unanticipated systems malfunction that severely impacts the ability of students and staff to safely occupy an ACPS facility.
- C. **Loss of Resources:** The loss of external resources vital to the operation of ACPS facilities, such as power, water or sewer. Examples include, but are not limited to power outages or water main breaks, etc.

II. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decisions regarding school closures, delayed opening and early dismissal will be made as early as possible in order to ensure the safety of ACPS students and staff members and to provide parents, staff members, city agencies and community partners with timely notification.

- A. Relevant department heads, in consultation with affected administrators appropriate to the situation, shall be responsible for recommending to the Superintendent that individual schools, all schools, individual offices and/or all offices be closed, delayed or dismissed early under this regulation.
- B. The Office of Educational Facilities shall follow established procedures and best practices regarding habitability when assessing building systems failures that may impact school openings or closure.
- C. Principals or designees shall have the flexibility to move students to other rooms or other appropriate areas within the school facility in the event of a building systems failure.
- D. 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. (Further guidance on National Weather Service advisories and air quality is available in Regulation JHCF-R);
 2. Conducting on-road observations of actual road and weather conditions across the city;
 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; and
 5. Assessing the conditions of school buildings, including but not limited to heating, electrical, plumbing or temperature readings in classrooms.
- E. ACPS remains in regular communication with City agencies and community partners when considering delayed openings, early dismissals and closures.

III. FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN DETERMINING SCHOOL CLOSURES, DELAYED OPENING OR EARLY DISMISSAL

- Safety and Welfare of Students/Staff
- Weather
- Transportation
- Building Systems Failures/Habitability
- Loss of Resources
- Alternative Accommodation

IV. SCHOOL/OFFICE CLOSURES, DELAYED OPENING OR EARLY DISMISSAL DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER OR OTHER EMERGENCIES

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 below;
 - c) All extended day learning programs;
 - d) All before- and after-school child care programs (DRPCA and The Campagna Center make closure determinations independent of ACPS);
 - e) All high school and middle school athletic practices and games;
 - f) All school-based staff meetings and professional development activities scheduled in schools;

- g) All planned use of facilities and grounds by non-ACPS organizations;
and
 - h) Any planned event that is determined by the Superintendent to require cancellation under the circumstances.
- 3. All meetings and professional development activities held in ACPS 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 ACPS facilities.

B. All-Day Closing of Offices

- 1. All offices shall be closed for the day.
- 2. Essential personnel shall report to work as outlined in Section VII of this regulation.
- 3. All meetings and professional development activities in ACPS offices shall be cancelled.

C. Delayed Openings of Schools

- 1. Students in Grades K-12 and the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) program shall report for classes in accordance with the delayed opening announcement.
- 2. Morning pre-K students (Early Childhood Special Education and Preschoolers Learning Together) report in accordance with the delayed opening announcement and may dismiss one hour later than usual;
- 3. Afternoon pre-K students report in accordance with the delayed opening announcement and are dismissed at the regular time;
- 4. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a) All before-school child care programs;
 - b) All morning school-based staff meetings and professional development activities;
 - c) All morning field trips; and
 - d) Any planned event that is determined by the Superintendent to require cancellation under the circumstances.
- 5. After-school activities and events will not be affected by a delayed opening.

D. Delayed Openings of Offices

- 1. School offices and Central Office will open on time, except when otherwise provided in the delayed opening announcement.

- a) Employees shall follow the delayed opening guidelines as outlined in Section VII of this regulation.
- b) All meetings and professional development activities shall be cancelled, unless provisions have been made by the meeting coordinator for a delayed start time.

E. Early Dismissal of Schools

1. All students in Grades K-12 shall be dismissed in accordance with the early dismissal announcement.
2. Morning pre-K will generally be dismissed at 11:00 am (depending on the time of the announcement).
3. The following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a) Afternoon pre-kindergarten classes depending on the time of dismissal;
 - b) All afternoon field trips, except as outlined in this regulation;
 - c) All extended day learning programs;
 - d) All after-school school-based staff meetings and professional development activities scheduled in schools;
 - e) All after-school activities and school-sponsored events;
 - f) All high school and middle school athletic practices and games;
 - g) Planned use of facilities by non-ACPS organizations (**DRPCA and The Campagna Center make closure and early dismissal determinations independent of ACPS**); and
 - h) Any planned event that is determined by the Superintendent to require cancellation under the circumstances.
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 ACPS facilities.
5. School offices and Central Office will remain open, unless the Superintendent has approved the early dismissal of offices.
 - a) Employees shall follow the early dismissal guidelines as outlined in this regulation.
 - b) All meetings and professional development activities held in ACPS facilities that include 10-month employees shall be cancelled.
6. Decisions to cancel School Board meetings will be made separately by the School Board leadership in collaboration with the Superintendent.

F. Cancellation of Evening and After-school Activities when Schools are 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 relevant department heads will make a recommendation to the Superintendent on whether evening and after-school activities should be cancelled.

2. If such an announcement is made, the following programs and activities shall be cancelled:
 - a) All extended-day learning programs;
 - b) All after-school school-based staff meetings and professional development activities;
 - c) All after-school activities and school-sponsored events;
 - d) All high school and middle school athletic practices and games;
 - e) Planned use of facilities by non-ACPS organizations (**DRPCA and The Campagna Center make closure and early dismissal determinations independent of ACPS**); and
 - f) Any planned event that is determined by the Superintendent to require cancellation under the circumstances.
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 ACPS facilities.
4. All evening meetings and professional development activities held in ACPS facilities shall be cancelled.
5. Decisions to cancel School Board meetings will be made separately by the School Board leadership in collaboration with the Superintendent.

G. Cancellation of Weekend Activities at ACPS Facilities

1. When schools are closed or dismissed early due to inclement weather or other emergency conditions on a Friday, the Superintendent will consult with relevant department heads to determine whether scheduled weekend activities and planned use of facilities shall be held as planned or cancelled.
2. 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 ACPS facilities.

V. SCHOOL/OFFICE CLOSURES, DELAYED OPENING OR EARLY DISMISSAL DUE TO BUILDING SYSTEMS FAILURE/HABITABILITY

- A. In the event of a building systems failure (including, but not limited to electric, plumbing, water, or gas), the school principal shall consult with Office of Educational Facilities staff, who will assess the condition of the building(s) and advise the Chief Operating Officer of the findings.
- B. The Superintendent, in consultation with relevant department heads appropriate to

the situation, will decide whether the school(s) or office(s) should be closed, delayed, or dismissed early on a case-by-case basis.

- C. If the Superintendent announces a school/office early dismissal due to a building systems failure, he/she will consult with relevant department heads to determine whether outdoor and/or offsite athletic practices or events will be cancelled as well.
- D. The Office of Communications will begin the notification process to students, staff, and families, as well as to city agencies, relevant community partners, and media outlets when applicable.
- E. When a closure, delayed opening or early dismissal results from a building systems failure, the operating status for programs/activities in ACPS facilities follow the same guidelines as when a closure or delayed opening results from inclement weather or an emergency, and are found in Section IV of this regulation,
- F. Employees shall follow the attendance and reporting guidelines as outlined in Section VII of this regulation.

VI. NOTIFICATION TO STUDENTS, PARENTS AND STAFF

- A. The Office of Communications coordinates all emergency communication and serves as the liaison between the schools and the public/media. As such, it is responsible for initiating all school closure, delayed opening and early dismissal announcements, including divisionwide notifications and media bulletins.
- 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 are typically communicated through multiple platforms. However, in cases of emergency or circumstances beyond ACPS' control, not all of the following communication channels may be used:
 - ACPS website;
 - ACPS Social Media (Twitter and Facebook);
 - ACPS Social Media en español (Twitter and Facebook);
 - ACPS e-mail and text message alerts (translated into Spanish, Arabic and Amharic when logistically possible);
 - City of Alexandria eNews (www.alexandriava.gov/eNews)
 - ACPS information hotline (703-866-5300);
 - ACPS TV, Channel 71 in the City of Alexandria;
 - Local radio and television stations; and
 - Divisionwide phone notification as deemed appropriate.

- D. If schools and/or offices are closing for the day or there is a delayed opening due to inclement weather, notification will be made as early as possible.

VII. EMPLOYEE WORK SCHEDULES DURING SCHOOL/OFFICE CLOSURES, DELAYED OPENING OR EARLY DISMISSAL

A. All-Day Closing of Schools

1. Alexandria City Public Schools employees should adhere to the following guidelines when schools are closed for the day due to emergencies such as inclement weather, a building systems failure, or loss of resources.

When schools and administrative offices are closed the following essential personnel report:

- Chief Operating Officer
- Director of Pupil Transportation and Fleet Management
- Director of Educational Facilities
- Director of Maintenance and Custodial Services
- Director of Safety and Security Services
- Security personnel
- Maintenance Shop Supervisor
- Building Systems Manager
- Building Services Manager
- Building Engineers
- Custodians (except temporary, part-time)
- Maintenance Shop employees

2. When schools are closed and administrative offices are open during the emergencies listed above, all school office and Central Office employees report and liberal leave is in effect.

3. **When schools are closed (but city services remain open) due to public health emergencies** based on the recommendation of the Alexandria Health Department, the following essential personnel report (on a modified schedule):

- Director of Safety and Security Services
- Security personnel
- Director of Maintenance and Custodial Services
- Assistant Director of Maintenance and Custodial Services
- Maintenance Shop Supervisor
- Building Systems Manager
- Building Services Manager
- Building Engineers

- Custodians (except temporary, part-time)
- Maintenance Shop employees

Other personnel (including contract employees) will work remotely (as directed by their supervisor to perform the employee's regular duties). **Employees may be required to report on-site on an as-needed basis by the employee's Department Director.**

4. **When schools are closed due to a citywide quarantine** based on the recommendation of the Alexandria Health Department, the following essential personnel report (on a modified schedule):

- Director of Safety and Security Services
- Security personnel

Other personnel (including contract employees) will work remotely (as directed by their supervisor to perform the employee's regular duties). **Employees may be required to report on-site on an as-needed basis by the employee's Department Director.**

B. All-Day Closing of Offices

1. All essential personnel (as listed above) report at the regular time.
2. School office and Central Office employees do not report to work.

C. Delayed Openings of Schools

1. All essential personnel (as listed above) report at the regular time.
2. All non-essential personnel report 1-2 hours later than their regular time in accordance with the delayed opening announcement.
3. Bus drivers/bus monitors report 1-2 hours later than their regular time for morning runs in accordance with the delayed opening announcement, unless otherwise directed.

D. Early Dismissal of School(s)/Office(s)

1. All essential personnel (as listed above) remain at work according their regular schedule.
2. In consultation with the Superintendent and/or Central Office administrators, non-administrative licensed staff, paraprofessionals and school security officers will be released after students have been dismissed and buses have departed. If needed, principals may require some staff to

remain to supervise students until all students have left the premises. All other daytime staff are expected to work a regular day, unless otherwise instructed by the Superintendent or designee. Night personnel report at their regular time or take leave with a supervisor's approval (unless otherwise instructed). Bus drivers/bus monitors report two hours earlier than their regular time for afternoon runs, unless otherwise directed.

Established: April 21, 2016
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Cross Refs.: EBCD Emergency School Closures, Delayed Opening
and Early Dismissal
GAA Staff Time Schedules
GCBD Staff Leaves and Absences
GCBD-R Staff Leaves and Absences Regulations
JHCF-R Wellness Guidelines for the Alexandria City Public
Schools