



Policy Section: **Facilities and Equipment**

800

Policy Name: **Temporary Closing of Schools/
Early Dismissal**

804

Policy Statement

It is the policy of the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board (KPDSB) that, in compliance with the Education Act, its schools will remain open during the whole period of the school year. However, the KPDSB recognizes that there may be emergency situations which will dictate a partial or total closing or early dismissal of a school or group of schools in order to ensure the safety and comfort of students and staff. The safety and welfare of students are of prime concern.

The KPDSB authorizes the closure of schools in emergency situations in accordance with the guidelines set out below.

Rationale

1. Occasionally it may be necessary to close schools or dismiss students prior to normal dismissal times because of unusual conditions or situations (i.e., snowstorms, heating plant failures, fires, other emergencies, etc.).
2. The KPDSB recognizes that the most common eventuality is severe weather.
3. Each school within the KPDSB will have an action plan to meet emergency situations. The success of the school's plan requires the cooperation of students, parents/guardians, and the community.

Guidelines

1. School Closures

- a) The Director of Education, or Designate, shall have the authority, in consultation with the Chair of the Board when possible, to close a school or group of schools for a temporary period for the following reasons:
 - i) A directive issued under the Public Health Act or Provincial Legislation;
 - ii) Disruption of transportation services; and/or
 - iii) Inclement weather, fire, flood, the breakdown of the school heating plant, the failure of an essential utility, or a similar emergency.

- b) Any school closed due to an emergency will remain closed until the emergency is declared over by the Director of Education or Designate.
- c) The Director of Education, or Designate, shall have the authority to approve early dismissal in emergency situations.

2. School Closing During School Hours (also known as Early Dismissal)

- a) Each Principal will have a written procedure in place to deal with a closing during the school day. The procedure will have as a major point of emphasis, the safety and security of the students. The procedure will facilitate the dismissal of bused students within two (2) hours of receiving notification of the school closing. Such plans will be submitted to the Director of Education, or Designate, for approval. Such plans shall be reviewed annually by the Principal and any revisions must be submitted to the Director of Education, or Designate, for approval.
 - i) Elementary – Each year, the Principal will distribute to parents/guardians a letter and handbook statement addressing the subject of Emergency Closures of School.
 - ii) Secondary – A statement in the Secondary Handbook will summarize the school's procedures for emergency situations.
- b) The Principal, or Designate, is expected to be available at the school until satisfied that all students have departed safely for home or other authorized destination. The Principal, or Designate, shall be available by cell phone where service exists or by other means until it is reasonable to assume that all students will have arrived safely at their destinations.

3. Transportation and Communication

- a) Bus arrangements are to be coordinated by the General Manager of the Northwestern Ontario Student Services Consortium (NOSSC), or Designate, in consultation with the Director of Education, or Designate, and other coterminous Boards.
- b) The school Principal shall be responsible for contacting school crossing guard employees where appropriate.
- c) Each elementary school Principal shall ensure that parents/guardians of bused students are contacted by telephone, or electronic means, prior to an early dismissal, unless signed instructions to the contrary have been received from the affected parent/guardian.
- d) The Director of Education, or Designate, will make every reasonable effort to arrange for an announcement to be placed on the local radio stations stating the time of dismissal. NOSSC will post notices and/or alerts on their website at www.nwobus.ca.

- e) The Director of Education, or Designate, will establish and maintain communication with school staff.

4. Expectations of Staff during Emergency Closing

- a) In the situation where only bus students are sent home early, staff are expected to continue their regular duties for those students who remain in school.
- b) In the event that weather conditions are so severe that the schools are closed for the day, staff may be excused with pay by the Director of Education or Designate.
- c) In the case where extreme weather conditions prevail and schools remain open, staff members who cannot travel from their usual place of residence to work may be excused with or without pay by the Director of Education or Designate. The following procedures should be followed in such cases:
- i) The Principal should be contacted by the staff member and provide an explanation of absence;
 - ii) If a staff member cannot reach their home school, they should go to another school if there is safe access to that school;
 - iii) Staff should make all reasonable attempts to reach their home school and continue to try even if it would necessitate a late arrival;
 - iv) Principals do not have the authority to excuse staff from traveling when schools are open;
 - v) All staff are expected to report weather-related absences into Apply To Education (ATE) with additional information as appropriate (i.e., reasons they were unable to attend, whether they reported to another school, etc.); and
 - vi) Staff that call in sick during extreme weather conditions may be required to subsequently provide a note from a medical practitioner attesting to their inability to attend work due to illness, failing which, staff will not be paid for the time missed. Where there is a conflict between a Collective Agreement and this clause, the Collective Agreement shall take precedence.
- d) The Director of Education, or Designate, shall have the discretionary power to grant permission for any staff member to be absent with or without pay in an emergency situation.
- e) Once main arteries between staff's usual place of residence and workplace are open staff are expected to be at school. Staff members will be deducted salary for time absent, except, if, at the discretion of the Director of Education, this requirement is waived.