



"Learning....a voyage for a lifetime"

HAMPTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT 90

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From the Superintendent:

With the severe weather conditions that the Northeast and Hampton have experienced this year, I thought it would be helpful for our students and families to be provided information about the process used by the District to call for "No School" or a "Delayed Opening" (2-hour delay). As Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the decisions made on these occasions. I make those decisions based on information I gather and on what is best for the students in the District. Groups such as the School Board and the teacher's association are not participants in the process.

If we are expecting a significant storm, Superintendents statewide are invited to participate in conference calls with the NH Department of Safety's Emergency Management Division. We receive weather updates from the National Weather Service forecasters in Gray, Maine and recommendations from Emergency Management personnel. They also provide resources should we need support during and after the storm. Preparing locally, I am in contact with the Hampton Police Department and Department of Public Works. I also confer with the SAU 21 Superintendent, since our students attend Winnicunnet High School.

On the morning of a storm I rise early (4:15 am) to collect data (i.e. forecasts, radar reports, current conditions information). I confer with SAU 21, police and public works representatives, and staff at First Student, our school bus provider. In addition, the Superintendents in the Southeast (Hampton, Exeter, Rye, Portsmouth, Newmarket, etc.) text each other with the decisions they are making in their locale.

I have to make sure roads are passable for buses as well as parents who drive their children to school, that all of the school lots are cleaned, salted and sanded, and the sidewalks are cleared for the walkers. With incredibly cold weather like recently, I also need to be assured that the buildings are warm and suitable for teaching and learning. Once a decision is reached, the Business Administrator notifies the local media outlets and the Director of Technology posts the decision on all of the District's notification systems.

I recognize the difficulties that families face when school is delayed or closed. However, decisions are made in the best interest of our students. On occasion, the decision to close or delay our opening is not well received. Sometimes there are circumstances that are beyond my control, but they do happen and I have to be ready to address the problem.

Last week was a good example: We were ready for our first day back on Tuesday, January 2nd; the buses were started each day over the weekend as a precaution; the buildings were checked for any heating issues; and the forecast was stagnant for the entire day...cold, cold, cold!

Even with all of the planning and monitoring, the bus company had a substitute driver for one of the bus runs that resulted in the bus running late. As a result, some students experienced additional wait time at their bus stop on a very cold day. I have addressed this with the bus company so that we can better communicate to the families and students when these incidents occur.

I appreciate the concerns and remain sensitive to the impact on families when these decisions are made.

Kathleen