



**Department of
Education**

Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

**2011-2012 Procedures for School Closings and
Delayed School Openings in the Case of
Citywide Emergency Conditions and Major Storm Days**

December 2011

A citywide policy on procedures for school closings and delayed school openings is necessary in the case of citywide emergency conditions or major storm days. These procedures will serve as a guide to students, parents and staff. The reissuance of this memorandum reaffirms the Chancellor's authority to announce the citywide closing or delayed opening of schools, and outlines the requirements and expectations that pertain to the dissemination of information on the Chancellor's announcement, the impact on pupil transportation and other procedures, the school activities that should take place during any delayed school opening day, and the responsibilities of school support organizations and central offices.

1. Citywide Announcement to Close or Delay the Opening of Schools

- 1.1 The Chancellor will announce the citywide decision to close or delay the opening of schools (including the cancellation of after-school activities – see section 2.10 below) during citywide emergency conditions or major storm days after consultation with the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management, the Weather Bureau, the City Sanitation Department, and the City Transit Authority. The citywide decision will be made as early as possible prior to 6:00 a.m. on the affected day. **Only the Chancellor is authorized to make this announcement.**
- 1.2 The Office of Communications and Media Relations will notify the Associated Press news wire service, the New York City 311 Information Line, and radio and television stations as soon as possible prior to 6:00 a.m. The Office of Communications and Media Relations will work with the Division of Instructional and Information Technology to post the relevant information on the home page of the Department of Education's website in addition to Facebook (<http://facebook.com/nycschools>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/nycschools>) . School staff and parents should be advised to check the Department of Education's website (<http://schools.nyc.gov>), call 311 and listen to information broadcast by any of the following radio stations: WINS (1010 AM), WCBS (880 AM), WABC (770 AM), WLIB (1190 AM), WADO (1280 AM), WBLS (107.5 FM), WNYE (91.5 FM), as well as the following television stations: WCBS (Channel 2), WNBC (Channel 4), WNYW (Fox Channel 5), WABC (Channel 7), Univision Channel 41, and "NY 1" (Channel 1 on Time Warner Cable television). Major radio news stations, such as WINS (1010 AM) and WCBS (880 AM), should be listened to on portable radios in the event of a major blackout.
- 1.3 In all instances when the Chancellor's announcement is made to close or delay opening schools, the Office of Pupil Transportation will advise the bus companies.
- 1.4 All school phone messages and Parent Coordinator outgoing voicemail messages should be changed to announce the authorized closing or delay in opening of schools. Schools

without parent coordinators at the time of an emergency closing should specifically cite the District Family Advocate/District Office as an additional resource for parents to obtain information. District Offices should be among the information options where parents can solicit updates.

- 1.5 It is expected that all schools will adhere to the Chancellor's citywide announcement to close or delay the opening of schools, or to dismiss students early if necessary (see section 4 below), during citywide emergency conditions and stormy weather. **No schools may open late, dismiss students early, or close without the Chancellor's authorization.**
- 1.6 It is essential that all parents and students be informed of the contents of this memorandum, including their school's contact person and telephone number. A sample letter to parents is attached. It should be put on school letterhead and distributed to each student as soon as possible so that parents will know the person to call in the school, and how to access public announcements. Translations will be available at our web site at <http://schools.nyc.gov/calendar>.

2. Extent and Scope of Authorized Citywide Delays in School Openings

- 2.1 In the case of an authorized delayed school opening, the Chancellor will announce a two hour opening delay citywide, and will cancel all extra sessions of 37.5 minutes for targeted students, whether they are scheduled at the start of the day (pursuant to special approval) or at the end. In the following example of a 6 hour and 57.5 minute day (including an afternoon extra session of 37.5 minutes for targeted students), the citywide two-hour delayed opening would affect various existing start times as follows (for any morning scheduled extra session of 37.5 minutes for targeted students, see section 2.2 below):
 - An 8:00 a.m. to 2:57.5 p.m. session becomes 10:00 a.m. to 2:20 p.m.
 - An 8:10 a.m. to 3:07.5 p.m. session becomes 10:10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 - An 8:30 a.m. to 3:27.5 p.m. session becomes 10:30 a.m. to 2:50 p.m.
- 2.2 In the case of the scheduling, pursuant to an approved School-Based Option (SBO) process, of the 37.5 minute extra session for targeted students at the start of the day, the citywide two-hour delayed opening would be in addition to the cancellation of the morning extra session, as follows for a day of 6 hours and 57.5 minutes:
 - An 8:00 a.m. to 2:57.5 p.m. session becomes 10:37.5 a.m. to 2:57.5 p.m.
- 2.3 When the regular school day is 6 hours and 50 minutes for all students Monday through Friday, then the examples for the citywide two-hour delayed opening would affect various starting times as follows:
 - An 8:00 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. session becomes 10:00 a.m. to 2:50 p.m.
 - An 8:10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. session becomes 10:10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 - An 8:30 a.m. to 3:20 p.m. session becomes 10:30 a.m. to 3:20 p.m.
- 2.4 When the regular school day is 6 hours and 57.5 minutes for students in special education self-contained classes, Monday through Thursday, then the example for the citywide two-hour delayed opening would affect various starting times as follows:
 - An 8:00 a.m. to 2:57.5 p.m. session becomes 10:00 a.m. to 2:57.5 p.m.

- 2.5 In the case of schools on "overlapping" sessions, the two hour delay applies to the regular start time of each starting session scheduled for that day. As an example of a triple overlapping session in the same building with a 6 hour and 50 minute day, the changes would be:
- A 7:20 a.m. to 2:10 p.m. session becomes 9:20 a.m. to 2:10 p.m.
 - An 8:10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. session becomes 10:10 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 - A 9:00 a.m. to 3:50 p.m. session becomes 11:00 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.
- 2.6 Principals of all schools should inform parents as early as possible in the school year (in writing and during PA/PTA meetings) that, in case of an authorized delayed school opening, regular school buses will run, but that the arrival times will be delayed by two hours to accommodate the authorized delayed school opening. In addition, buses will not be available for any start or end of day extra sessions of 37.5 minutes for targeted students (for bus service for dismissed students, see sections 4.1 and 4.2 below). Transportation related questions should be directed to OPT's Customer Service Unit at 718-392-8855.
- 2.7 Parents of children with medical and/or health issues requiring nursing services during the school day should be advised to use their own discretion in consultation with the principals in sending their children to school on days with citywide emergency conditions or on major storm days.
- 2.8 Parents of children with disabilities should also be advised (in writing and during the PA/PTA meetings) to use their own discretion as to whether they will permit their children to ride to school on days with citywide emergency conditions or on major storm days, recognizing that travel time will necessarily be longer and that there may be delays in the schedules of the morning trip to school and in the trip home in the afternoon.
- 2.9 Parents must be reminded that their children will not be picked up when nurses or paraprofessionals who are required to ride with them are not aboard their school buses.
- 2.10 It is essential that parents and staff be made aware that, in all instances of an approved and authorized citywide delayed school opening, or of an approved and authorized citywide closing of schools, the following will be cancelled unless the Chancellor makes an announcement to the contrary: all field trips, all extra sessions of 37.5 minutes for targeted students at the start or at the end of the regular school day, all after-school programs (including Community-Based Organization after-school programs on public school sites), all after-school program transportation (including transportation to after-school programs at Community-Based Organization sites), all Adult and Continuing Education classes, all Young Adult Borough Centers, PSAL and all evening GED programs. Public school staff whose after-school services are funded by the public school system will not be made available for after-school activities.
- 2.11 While the Chancellor does not have authority to close nonpublic schools, nonpublic school transportation provided by the City adheres to the Chancellor's decisions.
- 2.12 Concerning half day prekindergarten programs within public schools on days of an authorized delayed school opening, the morning (a.m.) session will be cancelled for students, but all staff are to report as indicated in section 3.1 below.

3. School Activities During the Day of an Authorized Citywide Delayed School Opening

- 3.1 All school staff are responsible and obligated to report to work as early as possible, but not later than the later starting time on a day with an authorized two hour delayed opening. Regular attendance reporting standards apply (absences, lateness) based on the later starting time. These regular standards include the principal's discretion in approving or denying extraordinary Transportation Delay Forms for staff (OP201) contingent upon, as applicable, confirmation of delays by the Transit Authority, Department of Transportation or other agencies involved with the specific cause of delay (again, based on the later starting time).
- 3.2 It is expected that the school building will be prepared to receive students and staff, and that the day will provide an effective instructional and feeding program.
- 3.3 Regular student attendance reporting standards apply (absences, lateness) based on the later starting time. The day is to be recorded as an instructional day for purposes of reporting aggregate attendance for the Period Attendance Report (PAR) (except for prekindergarten a.m. session – see section 2.12 above; code R-46, “grade not in session,” should be used).
- 3.4 A system wide indication for the authorized delayed opening will be automatically noted for schools utilizing the ATS System. Authorized delayed school openings due to citywide emergency conditions or weather should be noted on the Teacher's “Affidavit” card for sites on a manual attendance recording system.

4. Authorized Dismissals from School on Citywide Delayed Opening Days

- 4.1 All end of day extra sessions of 37.5 minutes for targeted students will be cancelled. As a result, all students should be dismissed at the regular dismissal time for students not attending the extra 37.5 minute sessions. However, in the event that citywide emergency conditions or a storm worsen during the school day, the Chancellor will notify School Support Organizations, radio and television media, and bus services of an earlier dismissal schedule. The Information will also be accessible on the 311 Information Line and on the Department of Education website Home Page (<http://schools.nyc.gov>).
Schools may not independently dismiss students early.
- 4.2 In the case of contract bus transportation, principals and staff are to remain in school with bused children, as needed, until buses arrive for dismissal or until a parent or guardian arrives to take the children home. Parent notification must be ensured to the greatest extent possible.
- 4.3 Parents should be advised to record on the Blue Emergency Card, and to file a note with the teacher indicating any changes in dismissal routine should there be no one at home in case of an authorized early dismissal.
- 4.4 Parents should also be advised to discuss contingency plans with their children in case children are released early and parents are not at home to care for them. If possible, parents should make arrangements with a relative, friend, or neighbor who is at home during the day. Schools must ensure and verify that the relative, friend or neighbor is listed by the parent on the “Blue Emergency Contact Card,” and that all information requested on these cards is up-to-date and entered into ATS. Parents should be made aware that schools are not authorized to release pupils to persons not listed on the “Blue Emergency Contact Card.”
- 4.5 Parents should be further advised to call 311, or access the Department of Education website Home Page at <http://schools.nyc.gov>, or listen to any of the following radio stations to be informed of an early dismissal: WINS (1010 AM), WCBS (880 AM), WABC (770 AM), WLIB (1190 AM), WADO (1280 AM), WBLS (107.5 FM), WNYE (91.5 FM), as

well as the following television stations: WCBS (Channel 2), WNBC (Channel 4), WNYW (Fox Channel 5), WABC (Channel 7), Univision Channel 41, and "NY 1" (Channel 1 on Time Warner Cable television). Major radio news stations, such as WINS (1010 AM) and WCBS (880 AM), should be listened to on portable radios in the event of a major blackout.

5. CFN's and Central Offices

Unless the Chancellor instructs otherwise, all central offices, and the offices of District 75 and 79 must remain open for regular hours on days when schools are authorized by the Chancellor to close or open late due to citywide emergency conditions or major stormy weather as staff must be in a position to provide essential information to parents and others.

6. Questions

Staff should direct all questions regarding implementation of these procedures to Harmon Unger, Office of School Intervention and Development, at 212-374-4220, or Angelo Lisa of the Division of School Facilities, at 718-610-0266.

Staff should direct all questions concerning public announcements for authorized school closings or delayed openings to the Office of Communications and Media Relations, at 212 374-5141. Parents should direct all questions concerning authorized school closings or delayed openings to the relevant school (see attached sample letter to parents).

**SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS FOR PROCEDURES ON DAYS WITH CITYWIDE
EMERGENCY CONDITIONS OR ON MAJOR STORM DAYS
(TRANSLATIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE SCHOOL)
SCHOOL HEADING SHOWING ADDRESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER**

Date: _____

RE: Procedures on Days with Citywide
Emergency Conditions or on Major Storm Days

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter explains the procedures we follow on a day with citywide emergency conditions or a major storm day. The Chancellor will make an announcement to all public schools in the city on whether to close schools or delay their opening. This announcement is made in consultation with other City officials. All authorized delayed openings will result in the regular starting time being two hours later (Please note that, in addition to this two hour delay, the morning or afternoon extra 37.5 minute session for small group instruction, tutoring or test preparation, will be cancelled, as well as all field trips, all adult and continuing education activities, and all after-school activities – see below.)

By 6:00 a.m., the decision is announced on the 311 Information Line, on the Department of Education website Home Page (which can be accessed at <http://schools.nyc.gov>) and on the following radio stations in the city: WINS (1010 AM), WCBS (880 AM), WABC (770 AM), WLIB (1190 AM), WADO (1280 AM), WBLS (107.5 FM), WNYE (91.5 FM), as well as the following television stations: WCBS (Channel 2), WNBC (Channel 4), WNYW (Fox Channel 5), WABC (Channel 7), Univision Channel 41, and "NY 1" (Channel 1 on Time Warner Cable television). Major radio news stations, such as WINS (1010 AM) and WCBS (880 AM), should be listened to on portable radios in the event of a major blackout.

The school telephone number is: _____ The regular school hours (including the extra 37.5 minute sessions for small group instruction, tutoring or test preparation) are: _____
If there is an authorized delayed school opening the school hours will be: _____
Our Parent Coordinator _____ can be reached at _____.

When there is an authorized citywide school closing or delayed school opening, the following will be cancelled unless the Chancellor makes an announcement to the contrary: all field trips, all extra 37.5 minute sessions for small group instruction, tutoring or test preparation at the start or at the end of the regular school day, all after-school programs (including Community-Based Organization after-school programs on public school sites), all after-school program transportation (including transportation to after-school programs at Community-Based Organization sites), all Adult and Continuing Education classes, all Young Adult Borough Centers, and all evening GED programs.

When there is an authorized citywide delayed school opening, school buses will run, but their arrival times will be delayed by two hours. In addition, buses will not be available for any start or end of day extra 37.5 minute sessions for small group instruction, tutoring or test preparation (since these sessions will be cancelled). Morning prekindergarten programs within public schools will also be cancelled.

It is expected that when there is a delayed opening, all end of day extra sessions will be cancelled. As a result, all students will be dismissed at the regular time for students not attending the extra 37.5 minute session for small group instruction, tutoring or test preparation. However, if citywide emergency conditions or a storm worsen, the Chancellor may have to announce an early dismissal. The Chancellor will notify bus services of the earlier dismissal schedule. You should advise your child to tell the teacher if no one will be at home at the time of an authorized early dismissal. Students should alert their driver, prior to getting off the bus, if they do not see their parent at the bus stop. You should have plans in place with a relative, friend or neighbor in case your child is released early and you will not be at home to care for him or her. Your child should know of your plans. There may be delays during a storm or emergency condition if your child rides a school bus. To locate your child's bus, please call OPT's customer service unit at (718)392-8855.

Please note that you must have listed that relative, friend or neighbor on the school's "**BLUE EMERGENCY CONTACT CARD**" because schools are not authorized to release pupils to persons not listed on that card. You may also identify on the card a person or persons who should not have access to your child, as well as indicate the actions you would like the school to take if none of your listed contacts can be reached. The school will follow your recommendations as much as possible. **It is important that you make certain that the card is up-to-date.** If your child takes a school bus, school staff will remain in school with the bused children until buses arrive for dismissal or until your child is picked up.

If you have a child with a disability, you should use your discretion in deciding whether to send him or her to school when there is a delayed opening. If your child has medical or other health issues requiring nursing or other services during the school day, including services requiring a nurse or paraprofessional to ride on the bus, you should consider not sending your child to school. Please be reminded that your child will not be picked up if a nurse or paraprofessional who is required to ride with him or her is not aboard the school bus.

Again, contact the 311 Information Line, access our website Home Page at <http://schools.nyc.gov>, and listen to the radio or television stations listed above for information.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

School Principal