THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

JOEL I. KLEIN, *Chancellor*

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR
52 Chambers Street - New York, NY 10007

TO: Regional Superintendents, Local Instructional Superintendents, Community Superintendents, Superintendent of District 75, Superintendent of Alternative High Schools and Programs, Chief Executive Officer for Empowerment Schools, Senior Directors of Youth Development, Directors of Regional Operations Centers, Regional Safety Administrators, Regional Parent Coordinators, Heads of Divisions and Offices, Principals of all Day Schools, PTA/PA Presidents, UFT President, CSA President, DC 37 Director of Schools Division

FROM: **LaVerne Srinivasan**
Deputy Chancellor for Operations

Rose Albanese-DePinto
Senior Counselor for School Intervention and Development

SUBJECT: Reissuance of Procedures for School Closings and Delayed School Openings in the Case of Citywide Emergency Conditions and Major Storm Days

DATE: August 23, 2006

ABSTRACT

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, the school activities that should take place during any delayed school opening day, and the responsibilities of regional 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.

1.2 The Office of Communications and Media Relations will notify the news wire services, radio and television stations as soon as possible prior to 6:00 a.m. The Division of Instructional and Information Technology will notify the New York City 311 Information Line, and will post the relevant information on the Department of Education website Home Page. School staff and parents should be advised to check the Department of Education website (http://schools.nyc.gov/calendar), 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), WNYE (Channel 25), Univision Channel 41, and "NY 1" (Channel 1 on 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 It is expected that all Superintendents and 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**.

1.5 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 at the start of the school year so that parents will know the person to call in the school, and how to access public announcements.

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 examples, 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 2:20 p.m. session becomes 10:00 a.m. to 2:20 p.m.
- An 8:10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. session becomes 10:10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
- An 8:30 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. session becomes 10:30 a.m. to 2:50 p.m.

2.2 **IMPORTANT WHEN THE EXTRA 37.5 MINUTE SESSION FOR TARGETED STUDENTS IS SCHEDULED IN THE MORNING**: 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 **IMPORTANT:** 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 **IMPORTANT:** When the regular school day is 6 hours and 57.5 minutes for students in ***regional special education self-contained classes***, Monday through Thursday, then the examples 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 **IMPORTANT:** 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 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).

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 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), and all after-school program transportation (including transportation to after-school programs at Community-Based Organization sites). 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 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, latenesses) **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 attendance reporting standards apply (absences, latenesses) **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 pre-kindergarten a.m. session – see section 2.11 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 End-of-Year Teacher's “Affidavit" card for sites on a manual attendance recording system.

4. Dismissals from School on 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 all Superintendents and 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/calendar). **Superintendents and 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 inform their children to tell the teacher if no one will be 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. 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/calendar, 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), WNYE (Channel 25), Univision Channel 41, and "NY 1" (Channel 1 on 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. Regional, Central, and District Offices

Unless the Chancellor instructs otherwise, central and regional offices, and the offices of District 75 and of Alternative High Schools and Programs, 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, and staff must be in a position to provide essential information to parents and others.

6. Questions

Superintendents should direct all questions regarding implementation of these procedures to Richard Glover, Director of School Safety, at 718-923-5126, or Gary Bergman, Director of Research Planning and Information Management, Office of School Intervention and Development, at 212-374-2350.

Superintendents 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).

LES:dc
Attachment
c: Joel I. Klein
Andres Alonso
Kathleen Grimm
Michele Cahill
Katherine Boisture
Chrissy Lee
Daniel Carponcy

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS FOR PROCEDURES ON DAYS WITH CITYWIDE EMERGENCY CONDITIONS OR ON MAJOR STORM DAYS

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 is being sent to you to explain the procedures we follow in the case of 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.)

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/calendar) 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), WNYE (Channel 25), Univision Channel 41, and "NY 1" (Channel 1 on 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: _____

The Parent Coordinator for this school is: _____

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), and all after-school program transportation (including transportation to after-school programs at Community-Based Organization sites).

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 is at home at the time of an authorized early dismissal. 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. 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/calendar, and listen to the radio or television stations listed above for information.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

_____

School Principal