

I. Policy Statement

Maryland Public School Law (Section 7-103) specifies that public schools shall be kept open for not fewer than 180 actual school days during a ten-month period of each school year. In certain instances, it may become necessary to close a school or schools, or the entire school system as a safety or health measure. Decisions related to the closing of schools are the responsibility of the Superintendent/designee, who will consult with or provide information to the board in a timely and appropriate manner.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the closure of a school, schools, or the school system.

III. Standards

- A. The provisions of this policy apply to the closure of a school or schools, and the school system, including late openings and early dismissals.
- B. The Superintendent/designee is authorized to close a school or schools, or the school system, when weather or other emergency conditions warrant and will consult with or provide notification to the Board as appropriate.
- C. A decision to close will be made based on factors that affect the safe and orderly administration of schools.

IV. Compliance

- A. All staff are responsible for reporting conditions sufficient to warrant a possible closure of a school, schools or the school system to appropriate supervisory staff, who will notify the Superintendent/designee.
- B. The Superintendent is responsible for establishing procedures for the dissemination of school closing announcements that include the use of multiple media outlets and other means of communication. Media outlets and other means of communication designated for this purpose will be published and provided to parents at the start of each school year.

- C. In the event of an early dismissal, building principals are responsible for ensuring that all students are released in accordance with their emergency cards.
- D. In the event of a closure, employees of the Howard County Public School System are responsible for reporting to work consistent with the provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreement, office/department supervisor, or administrative directive.

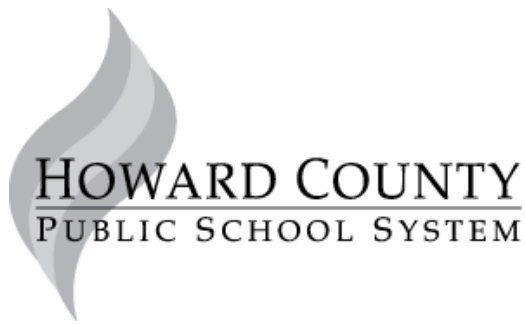
V. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VI. References

- A. Legal
Federal Law
§1400, U.S.C. 20, §794, U.S.C. 29, §504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article
§§9-104, 4-205, 6-401(d), 6-501(f), Title 9
- B. Other Board Policies

ADOPTED: January 5, 1971
AMENDED: August 24, 1989
January 13, 2005
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2005



POLICY 3010-PR
IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES
EMERGENCY CLOSING OF SCHOOLS

Effective: July 1, 2005

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- I. When it is necessary to close a school, schools or the school system for any period of time due to emergency reasons, the following steps will be taken:**
- A. Weather-Related Closings
1. The Director of Transportation and his staff will assess road and weather conditions through personal observation and contact with appropriate government agencies and other school systems.
 2. The Director of Transportation will contact the Superintendent/designee no later than 5:00 a.m., when weather conditions are questionable.
 3. The Superintendent will generally determine regarding the necessity for and nature of a closure no later than 5:15 a.m. and activate the process for notification as appropriate.
- B. Closure for Other Reasons
1. Any employee of the Howard County School System who becomes aware of conditions of a nature sufficient to warrant the possibility of closing one or more schools in the system for emergency reasons is to use appropriate channels of communication to notify the Superintendent/designee of such conditions.
 2. The Superintendent/designee will make a determination regarding the necessity for and nature of a closure and will initiate the necessary action based on that determination.
- C. If the circumstances in a given school preclude implementation of the procedures above, the principal will:
1. Take appropriate action to protect the safety and welfare of students and staff.
 2. Notify the Superintendent/designee of the circumstances and the action taken.
- D. In the event of an early dismissal, building principals are responsible for ensuring that all students are released in accordance with their emergency cards.

II. Communication

- A. The Director of Public Information will review procedures for communicating emergency school closing information to school system staff and the community annually.
- B. The process will be activated by the Superintendent/designee as necessary to ensure that key staff members and the public are notified of a closure.
- C. Information relayed to the media will include the following information as follows and should be repeated verbatim across means of communication.
 - 1. “All Howard County Public Schools Closed”
Reporting Criteria:
 - a. Students do not attend school.
 - b. All school-sponsored activities canceled.
 - c. All school-based community-sponsored activities canceled.
 - 2. “All Howard County Public Schools and Offices Closed”
Reporting Criteria:
 - a. Students do not attend school.
 - b. All school-sponsored activities canceled.
 - c. All school-based community-sponsored activities canceled.
 - d. Employees not required to report except for essential personnel.
 - 3. “All Howard County Public Schools to Open One Hour Late”
Reporting Criteria:
 - a. Students report one hour later than normal.
 - b. Bus schedule adjusted accordingly.
 - 4. “All Howard County Public Schools to Open Two Hours Late”
Reporting Criteria:
 - a. No half day morning kindergarten classes or a.m. preschool.
 - b. Students report two hours later than normal.
 - c. Bus schedule adjusted accordingly.
 - 5. Information regarding early dismissals will be formulated on a case-by-case basis and will address the status of student attendance, bus schedules and after-school activities as appropriate.

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