

602 Transportation AP – School Closures and Bus Cancellations

School Closures

1. Except when unforeseen circumstances occur, **Prairie Rose Public Schools will begin from the premise that all schools will remain open, as scheduled in the annual School Calendar.** The Superintendent and/or Deputy Superintendent, or in the case of Colony Schools, the Colony Schools Supervisor, are the individuals who will decide whether or not a school remains open.
2. Should a school be closed, the following process will be followed:
 - a. The decision to close the school will be communicated to parents and staff as soon as possible, initiated as early as 6:15 a.m.
 - b. Notification of school closures will be provided to the Director of Communications and the Director of Transportation.
 - c. Parents and staff will be alerted via School Messenger (*phone, text, email*) that the school is closed. The message will be sent by the Director of Communications.
 - d. Bus drivers will be notified of the cancellation of buses and of school closures by the Director of Transportation.
 - e. The Directors of Communication or Transportation will update the School/Bus Cancellation page of the division website.
 - f. The principal will ensure that all school-based staff receive a communication of school closure with additional instructions.
3. If a decision to close a school is made in the morning of a regularly scheduled instructional day, the principal will ensure that a staff member is at the school during the regular drop off/school start up time. The purpose is to ensure that any student walkers or those dropped off by parents are able to access the school building. Parents will be contacted to return to the school to pick up the students.

4. Bus Cancellations

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1. The Superintendent or designate, in consultation, as necessary, with the Director of Transportation, may give consideration for cancelling bus routes from the Division level (see note below). **Bus drivers are expected to use their own discretion in deciding whether or not to operate their specific bus route.** Consultation with their employer may be part of the decision-making process.
 - a. **Even when some or all buses to the school may not be operating, in almost all instances, the school will remain open.** Schools will have designated staff at the school to greet students and plan for an instructional day.
2. **The responsibility and final decision to send children on the bus in the morning belongs to the parent(s), even if the buses are operating and the school is open.** Included with this decision to send their child on the bus, there is an expectation that all parents will have their child dressed in appropriate winter attire before the child leaves their home to get on a bus. This would include, but not limited to, winter boots, gloves, coat, and tuque.
3. Principals are responsible to communicate any significant weather issues to the Director of Transportation throughout the school day.
4. Bus drivers/contractors shall notify their dispatch of bus route cancellations. Independent contractors shall notify the Director of Transportation.
 - a. Contractor dispatch is responsible for notifying the Director of Transportation of any bus cancellations. The Director of Transportation will notify the principal of the canceled route number(s).
5. The Directors of Communication and/or Transportation will use *School Messenger (phone, text, email)* to alert parents of bus cancellations, as soon as possible.
6. The Directors of Communication and/or Transportation will update the School/Bus Cancellation page of the division website, as soon as possible.
7. The principal will communicate with the necessary school-based staff if a bus route is canceled, as soon as possible.
8. Unless the Superintendent or designate cancelled buses, for instances where the bus driver has NOT operated their specific bus in the morning, it will be the responsibility of the bus driver to notify the Director of Transportation, as soon as possible, whether the bus will be in operation for the end of the school day. This information will be updated on the School/Bus Cancellation page of the division website, as well as sent out through *School Messenger (phone, text, email)*.

NOTE:

Bus drivers are expected to use their own discretion in deciding whether or not to operate their specific bus route. Consultation with their employer shall be part of the decision-making process.

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The following extreme cold indicators will represent a starting point for considerations at the Division Level toward bus cancellations:

- a. External circumstances outside the control of the school division.
- b. Actual (ambient) Temperature of -36°C or colder as reported/predicted by the Weather Network between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- c. Wind chill values greater than or equal to -46°C as reported/predicted by The Weather Network between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- d. Temperature fluctuations (ambient and/or wind chill) between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Sending Students Home Before the End of the School Day

1. Once students are at school for the day, schools will remain open, and buses will run according to the regularly scheduled dismissal time. Exceptions will be considered based on individualized circumstances and must be approved by the Superintendent of Schools or designate.
 - a. Parents may still choose to pick up their child during the day as they see fit.
2. If buses are going to return home **before** the regularly scheduled dismissal time, the driver must ensure students are able to enter their place of residence. In the case of very young students, the bus driver needs to be sure that a responsible person is available to supervise them. The Directors of Transportation and/or Communication will work with principals to communicate with parents.
3. Principals, in consultation with the bus driver, will consider if conditions dictate whether to billet the students or bus the student's home at the end of the day.

Extra and Co-Curricular Events

1. In the event of a Superintendent or designate cancelling buses or if there is a school closure, same day extra/co-curricular events at the school and/or any other scheduled road trips shall be canceled or postponed to an alternate date.
 - a. In the case of weekend extra or co-curricular trips or events, considerations for canceling shall be the same as for bus cancellations and/or closing of a school as indicated within this procedure.

Employees and Inclement Weather

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1. When the school is open, an employee is entitled to temporary leave with full pay when the employee is unable to reach the school from his/her usual place of residence because of **impassable roads**. The expectation is that the employee will communicate this absence to the principal. It is the Board's view that temporary leave with pay due to impassable roads will relate mostly to employees who live in rural areas and face drifting snow and visibility issues. This situation could result in the employee being delayed, or unable to drive to work. However, employees are expected to travel to the school if the conditions improve by midday to the point where it becomes safe to drive. Should the roads be impassable for both the morning and the afternoon, the monthly attendance record should indicate whether a half-day or full day has been missed. As this is a paid day, any work that can be accomplished during the normal hours of school operation is the expected focus of the employee for the time spent away from the school building.
2. When the school is closed for the day, staff are not required to report to their school. However, staff are expected to work at home as much as possible.
3. When schools are open, even when some or all buses to the school may not be operating, staff are expected to attend their normal place of employment.
 - a. Should staff choose not to attend work for the day, staff must communicate to their principal/supervisor the desire to use an appropriate leave entitlement, as designated in a Collective Agreement and/or Division Policy.

Diploma Exams

Prairie Rose high schools serve students in a diverse geographical area. As a result, there is a potential for:

1. School closure on a diploma exam administration day affecting all students writing diploma exams
2. The school remains open, however, there is a localized situation affecting an individual(s) writing diploma exams that day.

In the case of a **school closure** during a diploma exam writing day, the principal of the school will:

- a. Contact all of the students scheduled to write on the school closure day. School administration will inform the students that they have the option of applying for an exemption for the missed exam or the students can write the exam at a later diploma exam writing date.
- b. The principal will complete a group exemption form for all students who have consented to be included in the exemption request.

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- c. If the student does not wish to apply for an exemption or if the exemption is not granted by Alberta Education, the student will need to write the missed exam at a later date. Most Diploma exams are available for writing in January, April, June, August and November each year.

In the case of **bus cancellations or challenges with students being able to get to school (but the school is open)** during a diploma exam writing day, the parents must contact the school principal to review the options outlined in the Diploma Exam General Bulletin. Exam writing protocols must be explained to students in the days leading up to writing a diploma exam so that the students are familiar with expectations prescribed in the Diploma Exam General Bulletin.

Please note: Parents and high school students must not place the writing of a diploma exam before personal safety. Student safety is the only premise on which to make a decision to travel to a school during less-than-ideal circumstances (weather-related or otherwise).

Cross References:

- Education Act, Section 205
- ATA Collective Agreement
- Personnel Handbook P304 – Human Resources Handbook

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