

School Policy Templates: Heat and Air Quality

EARLY SCHOOL DISMISSAL AND CANCELLATION POLICY

How to Use This Document

The sample language below (text in black, non italics) is meant to offer a template for schools or school districts who want to amend their snow day or extreme weather policies to include extreme temperatures and days with elevated levels of air pollution. Many of the mechanisms of a snow-day policy remain in place making. The template offers a practical approach to addressing the current and emerging impacts of climate change on our school environments.

The template uses the following structure:

- *Text in blue italics* denote guidance
- Text in black is sample language that may be used directly in policies
- **[Text in red that is bracketed]** denotes sections that are intended to be modified to fit a specific school's context and preference

The sample policy language is meant to be set at a district level so that there can be a consistent approach across individual schools. The sample policy language is meant to be discussed at a district level so that there can be a consistent approach across individual schools. However, it is important to recognize that there may be a difference in the options at the schools in any district; for example, some schools have central HVAC and others do not. In those instances, the district-wide approach should not change, but each individual school can lay out their individual protocols in a separate document (i.e., school handbook).

This is not a one-size-fits-all policy, and a district can add or subtract measures based on their individual preferences.

This template was developed in partnership with the Massachusetts Association of Health Boards as part of the Massachusetts Asthma Action Partnership (MAAP) [Healthy Environments Advance Learning](#) project. **This information is provided for educational purposes only and is not to be construed as legal advice. Legal advice can only come from municipal attorneys.**

Template Language

The Superintendent must decide by 5:30 a.m. whether conditions will be safe for children, teachers, and staff to come to school. Examples of conditions where school will be canceled include, but not are not limited to:

1. If snow events have caused roads to be unpassable for vehicles, including public school buses;
2. If sidewalks and parking lots at the schools cannot be cleared;
3. If schools are experiencing power outages because of extreme weather (i.e. ice and wind and/or extreme heat);
4. If there are concerns about heat, air conditioning, plumbing, or any other facility concerns related to weather;
5. If the outdoor heat index reaches a heat index of 104 degree Fahrenheit or higher; and

Alternatively, District can set a region-specific indoor temperature/forecasted heat index threshold

6. If the schools are unable to keep classrooms between 68 degrees Fahrenheit and 78 degrees Fahrenheit, and there are insufficient cooling areas for students.

In the event of an extreme weather event, all schools in the District will always be cancelled together. Notification will be sent by **[method of alerts]** to the contacts on file with the District. Notification will also be sent to local media and posted on social media.

Note the District's preferred method of alerts here, most districts will use a combination of automated phone calls and emails.

If it is determined that the school day should be shortened, notification will be sent to parents and guardians in the same manner. If conditions are such that the Superintendent determines that with additional time, children, teachers, and staff will be able to commute to school and remain at school in safe conditions, then the school day may be delayed one or two hours. Alternatively, if the Superintendent determines that schools should dismiss early because of impending weather events, then schools will be ordered to dismiss early.

In the event of a shortened day, the following applies:

Modify the following to align with the District's delayed opening and early dismissal policies.

1. "Delayed opening" (one or two hours): schools will be dismissed at their regular times. School lunch will be served at regular times in each school, though we



cannot guarantee the serving of previously advertised menus. Buses will pick children up in the morning either one or two hours later, depending on the amount of delay. Half day morning Pre-K and kindergarten are cancelled when there is a two hour delay. It is at parent discretion if half day morning Pre-K and kindergarten children attend when there is a one hour delay; or

2. “Early dismissal”: buses will depart from the school at the time provided to parents and guardians after notification. All after-school events will be cancelled.

In all instances that school remains in session, parents and guardians must use their own discretion when determining whether to send their child(ren) to school if they have concerns about safety.

Additionally, in the event of an extreme weather incident, any communications to parents and guardians will include a list of resources provided by the [\[local or regional emergency management resource\]](#) that parents and guardians can utilize.

The District can include resources from whichever state and local government office relevant to their area that manages resources, like cooling centers, during extreme weather events.