

The Education Act and Regulations define the instructional contact requirements for staff and students. The NWT Teachers' Association Collective Agreement further defines the maximum number of sessional days for teachers. Council wishes to minimize emergency school closures so that the required instructional contact hours are met and so as to maximize the effective use of human resources. While the Regulations provide that District Education Authorities (DEAs) may temporarily close a school for health or safety reasons, the South Slave DEAs and Council hereby delegates responsibility for all school closures to the superintendent. The Minister reserves the right to require schools to make up any lost instructional time.

Schools in the region shall remain open at all times on regular school instructional days. The Superintendent may authorize an *Emergency School Closure* or the *Unplanned Cancellation of Classes*.

- 1) **Emergency School Closures** are defined as those rare occasions when the school is closed to both students and staff. The following are reasons for which the Superintendent may authorize an emergency school closure:
 - a) **Blizzards** – Schools may be closed in the event of a blizzard and white-out such that buildings are not visible and staff and students are at risk of getting lost and frozen. As a general principle South Slave schools will not close due to cold weather.
 - b) **Fire or Fumes** – School principals are expected to evacuate the school immediately in the event of a fire or noxious fumes in the building.
 - c) **Communicable Diseases** – Only the Chief Medical Officer for the NWT has the authority to close schools due to influenza or other communicable disease concerns in a community.

- 2) **Unplanned Cancellation of Classes** are defined as those occasions where the school remains open but some or all students may be exempt from attending. In such cases, staff would be expected to be in attendance. The following are reasons for which the Superintendent may authorize the cancellation of classes:
 - a) **Bussing cancellations** - While school bus contractors may choose to discontinue service at certain temperatures, schools will remain open and staff will continue instruction to those students who show up.
 - b) **Power and/or Heating failures** - The effect of power or heating failures on student instruction will depend in large part on the time of year, availability of natural lighting and the duration. Generally power or heating failures would have to be of considerable duration before dismissal of students would be considered.
 - c) **Water failures** - Water failures can have a fairly immediate effect on a consideration to dismiss students. The duration of a water shortage is a prime consideration for two reasons:

- i) health issues related to the availability of wash room facilities, and
- ii) code considerations for fire sprinkler systems. Certain schools, because of the town mains supply situation have been instructed by local fire authorities that they must evacuate in short order if there is a public water failure to the school building.

In the event of the unplanned cancellation of classes the school remains open. It remains the responsibility of parents to determine whether or not it is safe to send or otherwise transport their children to and from school. Once the student has entered school property (including the school busses if they are running) the safety of the student becomes and remains the responsibility of the school staff until the student has left the school property at the end of the morning or school day or some earlier time that the parents may be informed that their children are excused.

REGULATIONS

1. The Principal shall obtain authorization from the Superintendent prior to the notification of staff, parents or the media, of dismissal of any or all students of a school because of a threat to their safety or well-being. Only the principal or his/her designate has the authority to notify the media of a school closure upon receipt of Superintendent approval.
2. The school principal and his/her school staff remains responsible to ensure the safety of students while in their care, and until they are in the custody of their parents or guardians should they be dismissed early.
3. The Principal shall advise the DEA of all emergency school closings and unplanned class cancellations.
4. If a school or portion of a school is to remain closed, Department or Ministerial approval will be required.

Reference: Section 4, Academic Year and School Attendance Regulations
Amended: February 1999
December 2002