



ABINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT
970 Highland Avenue Abington, PA 19001
Tel: 215-881-2570 Fax: 215-881-2545

December 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This newsletter is written as part of the annual reminder for parents and guardians regarding school closings due to inclement weather; a reminder about school district procedures regarding drugs, weapons, and violence; and safety drills that we schedule during the school year.

Weather-Related School Closing: As winter approaches, there is the potential for inclement weather to require a change to the school schedule. Procedures for late arrivals, early dismissals, and school closings are detailed in "Weather Emergency Procedures." Communication regarding these decisions is a priority, and information is provided.

Alcohol, Drugs, Weapons, and Violence: Each year it is the intent of the school administration to remind parents of the serious consequences associated with student possession or use of alcohol, drugs and weapons, or violence in our schools. The information details these consequences and enlists the support of the family to help us keep drugs and weapons out of our schools and reinforce our efforts to maintain schools that are free of violence and are safe places for students and staff to engage in the teaching and learning process.

Safety Drills: The district is committed to the use of drills that are intended to practice safety procedures in the event that they are required to be used in an actual emergency situation. The section, "Safety Drills" provides important details about school evacuation, shelter-in-place, and lockdown drills.

We hope that you will find the materials informative and helpful. As always, we recognize that the support from the home and family is critical to the district to provide the most effective learning environment possible. We look forward to the continuing support the school district receives from you, the parents and guardians of the children whom we have the privilege to serve.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy F. Sichel".

Amy F. Sichel, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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Abington School District is committed to complying fully with all Federal and state laws banning discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin/ethnicity, veteran status, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or religion with regard to instructional programs, extracurricular activities, and employment practices. Any person who believes himself or herself to be a victim of discrimination by the school district should refer the matter to the attention of the building principal or area supervisor. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, it should be brought to the attention of the Superintendent of Schools. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Director of Pupil Services, 970 Highland Avenue, Abington, PA 19001, 215-881-2505 or Director of Human Resources, 970 Highland Avenue, Abington, PA 19001, 215-881-2509.

WEATHER EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact your principal prior to the onset of the inclement weather period.

School Closing

When serious weather conditions make it hazardous to transport children, school will be closed. As in the past, notice of such closing is broadcast on local radio stations. KYW 1060, on your AM dial, operates the Newsradio Storm Center and directly receives official closing information from Abington. The school closing number for Abington is **301**. It is important to listen to the radio for this number, as the name of the school will not be announced. You also may call the KYW Newsradio School Closing Hotline at 215-224-1060 to learn if school is closed or if there is a delayed opening. In addition to KYW, closing information will be provided to television channels WCAU 3, WPVI 6, NBC 10, FOX 29, Comcast Cable Channels 43 and 968, and Verizon Fios Channel 34. Weather emergency information also will be posted on the following websites: Abington School District, www.abington.k12.pa.us; NBC 10, www.NBC10.com; WPVI 6, www.wpvi.com; and KYW, www.kyw1060.com. For those participating in the district's ListServ system, an electronic message will be sent to the e-mail address provided. If you have not already signed up, go to www.abington.k12.pa.us, click on "Subscribe to E-Mail ListServ," and follow the instructions for subscribing. The school district will also utilize its automated telephone communication system to advise parents and guardians at their home telephone number listed with the school district. **It is important to make sure that work, home or personal cell telephone numbers are accurate.** Parents and guardians can update their information through Skyward Family Access.

Delayed Opening

On occasion during periods of inclement weather, delaying the opening of school provides authorities with additional time to plow snow or to apply ice melting agents to streets and sidewalks, making the trip to school safer. As with the school closing message, Abington's number on KYW is **301**. If schools are to be closed, only **301** will be announced. If the opening of school is to be delayed by two hours, the message broadcast will be: "**301 - Two Hours Late.**" The delayed opening message also will be aired on television stations WCAU 3, WPVI 6, NBC 10, FOX 29, Comcast Cable Channels 43 and 968, and Verizon Fios Channel 34. Weather emergency information also will be posted on the following websites: Abington School District, www.abington.k12.pa.us; NBC 10, www.NBC10.com; WPVI 6, www.wpvi.com; and KYW, www.kyw1060.com. For those participating in the district's ListServ system, an electronic message will be sent to the e-mail address provided. If you have not already signed up, go to www.abington.k12.pa.us, click on "Subscribe to E-Mail ListServ," and follow the instructions for subscribing. The school district will use the automated telephone communication system to call the home number of parents and guardians.

Early Dismissal

When inclement weather develops during the day, it may be prudent to dismiss schools earlier than the regularly scheduled times. Early dismissal information will be relayed for broadcasting to KYW radio 1060; television stations WCAU 3, WPVI 6, NBC 10, FOX 29; Comcast Cable Channels 43 and 968, and Verizon Fios Channel 34. Weather emergency information also will be posted on the Abington School District website www.abington.k12.pa.us; the NBC 10 website www.NBC10.com, and the WPVI 6 website www.wpvi.com, in addition to the KYW website, www.kyw1060.com. For those participating in the district's ListServ system, an electronic message will be sent to the e-mail address provided. If you are interested in subscribing, go to www.abington.k12.pa.us, click on "Subscribe to E-Mail ListServ," and follow the prompts. In the event of an early dismissal, the school district will use the automated telephone communication system to call home, work, and cell phone numbers which have been provided by parents to the school(s) or through the Skyward Family Access. **On inclement weather days, it is the responsibility of parents to monitor these sources of information because the district cannot guarantee to contact parents personally, particularly parents with children in elementary schools.**

At the elementary level, each family must develop a procedure for children to follow in the event of an early dismissal. Each child must know what to do or where to go. All elementary schools will have emergency plan cards completed and on file for each child. That card must reflect alternative plans in the event of an early dismissal. **CHILDREN WILL BE DISMISSED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ANNOUNCED EARLY DISMISSAL SCHEDULE.**

Bus Schedules

In the event that school opening is delayed two hours, bus schedules are affected in a similar fashion. At the elementary level, a two-hour delay means that school starts at 11:00 a.m. If your child's bus normally is scheduled to arrive at the designated stop at 8:30 a.m., that bus will arrive at the stop at 10:30 a.m. The same two-hour delay of bus pick-up time applies at the secondary level. All bus schedules are affected by the late arrival schedule (public, non-public and special education).

Breakfast and Lunch Programs

Lunches will be served on days when the opening of school is delayed; however, for schools that have breakfast programs, breakfast will be cancelled. In the event of an unscheduled early dismissal, every attempt will be made to provide lunch prior to the departure of the students. Please check with your child to determine whether he/she has eaten lunch.

Child Care

It is important that parents make provisions for child care in the event of a delayed opening. **Under no circumstances should your child be permitted to walk to**

school at the regular time. The schedule for teachers and principals will be adjusted based on the two-hour delayed opening. Buildings will not be open, and there will be no shelter or supervision for your children should they report at the regularly scheduled time. On days of delayed openings, afternoon dismissals will be at the regular times.

If your child attends a before-school program operated in an Abington building, this program also is affected by the two-hour delayed opening. The YMCA child care program will not operate if there is a late arrival. If there is an early dismissal, after-school child care programs will be cancelled. Contact the Abington YMCA to determine if alternate arrangements will be provided.

Eastern Center for Arts & Technology

At the senior high school, students assigned to morning sessions at the Eastern Center for Arts & Technology should report to the high school in accordance with the two-hour delayed opening schedule. On such days, they will be excused from the Eastern Center for Arts & Technology attendance. Afternoon sessions at the Eastern Center for Arts & Technology will operate in accordance with the regular schedule.

Special Education Classes

Special education students attending Abington schools, but not residing in Abington or Rockledge, shall report to school in accordance with Abington's two-hour delayed opening schedule. Abington special education students who attend schools in other districts should report to their schools in accordance with Abington's announced two-hour late arrival.

Parent Conferences

If parent conferences and early dismissals are scheduled on days when a delayed arrival is called, they will be cancelled. Schools will dismiss at their regularly scheduled times. Parent conferences will be cancelled on days when an early dismissal is called because of weather conditions.

Building Permits

When school has been closed due to weather conditions, permits for programs in the schools will be cancelled.

SAFE, DRUG-FREE, AND VIOLENCE-FREE SCHOOLS

Each year we seek to keep you informed of the extensive plans undertaken by the Abington School District to ensure safety in our schools. The Abington School District has a well-defined Emergency Operations Plan, which was developed in conjunction with the Abington Township Police Department. The plan is updated on a regular basis and reviewed with staff. These continuing efforts include upgrades in our physical plants, staff and parent training, collaboration with the Abington Township Police Department, plus a host of prevention and

intervention programs for all of our students. The safety of students and our staff is of paramount importance.

Despite this aggressive and proactive posture, we still identify young people who choose not to conform to the law and policies of the Abington Board of School Directors. Parents and guardians are asked to carefully review this information with their son/daughter so that he/she is forewarned of the serious consequences that may be imposed by the district. The research is clear. Young people need to hear a consistent message from the school, their parents/guardians, and religious and community agencies. Young people need to know that you share our desire for a safe and drug-and alcohol-free learning environment and that you support our position.

Bomb and/or Security Threats

Although bomb or other security threats are rare, in the event our telephone operators receive one, we immediately put into place our emergency response procedures. Should any student be involved in making a bomb or security threat to the Abington School District, either by phone or in any other fashion, the following consequences may be in place:

1. Suspension from school pending an investigation;
2. Referral to the Abington Township Police Department;
3. Referral to the Superintendent of Schools or designee;
4. Possible expulsion from school. The exact length of the expulsion will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Alcohol and/or Drug Possession

A second issue pertains to substance use, specifically students in possession of alcohol and illegal substances in our secondary schools. We attempt to ensure that our schools, school properties, any school-sponsored activities, and any school district vehicle or public conveyance used to transport students to and from a school or district-sponsored activity are drug-and alcohol-free; therefore, we have implemented interventions to attempt to stop individuals from engaging in these actions. When and if appropriate, we will implement locker searches, searches of students, handbags, backpacks, automobiles, etc. and the use of drug-sniffing dogs. Here are the possible consequences for those who elect to break the law and relevant policies of the Board of School Directors:

1. Suspension from school pending an investigation;
2. Referral to the Abington Township Police Department;
3. Referral to the Superintendent of Schools or designee;
4. Possible expulsion from school. The exact length of the expulsion will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Acts of Violence

The most common "acts of violence" in schools customarily are classified as "minor altercations" or "fights."

At a minimum, they will result in suspension for involved parties. In addition to suspension for fighting, combatants may expect the following possible additional consequences:

1. Referral to the Abington Township Police Department through the School Resource Officer. The officer may deliver a citation with a recommendation of a fine for disorderly conduct and possible assault charges to the student(s). The School Resource Officer may submit a petition to Juvenile Court;
2. Suspension from school pending an investigation;
3. A referral of a serious act of violence to the Superintendent of Schools or designee;
4. Possible expulsion of the student(s) from school. The exact length of the expulsion will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Harassment and Bullying

The school district maintains a strong stance against harassment and bullying to provide a safe, positive learning climate for students in the schools. The district has implemented bullying prevention programs including Olweus and School-Wide Positive Behavioral Support. Students who violate the Board Policy on Harassment and Bullying may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Weapons Possession

The Public School Code of Pennsylvania sets forth a uniform and mandatory course of action to deal with students who possess weapons. The legislation mandates expulsion from school for a period of not less than one year for any student possessing a weapon. There is no requirement that the student use or attempt to use the weapon. Should an Abington student possess a weapon, the following consequences may be imposed:

1. Suspension from school pending an investigation;
2. Referral to the Abington Township Police Department;
3. Referral to the Superintendent of Schools or designee;
4. Possible expulsion from school. The exact length of the expulsion will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

We implore you to restate to your son/daughter that bringing drugs or alcohol to school or to school events or engaging in behavior that threatens the health, safety, and welfare of others may lead to serious consequences, including expulsion from school. Again, we ask you to review this letter with your child(ren). We understand that the topics are not pleasant, but the school district is serious about its posture. Unacceptable behavior will result in the consequences detailed above. We will not be dissuaded from that position based on claims that parents and students were not informed of our rules and intentions.

Please work with us to ensure safety in our schools, and together we will all create a better environment for everyone. If you have any questions, please contact the

school's assistant principals or principal, who fully support this effort. Together, we can all make a difference.

SAFETY DRILLS

The Abington School District Emergency Operations Plan includes provisions for students and staff to participate in safety drills to practice procedures that may be needed in the event of a critical incident. These safety drills are simulations designed as a routine exercise to familiarize school staff and students with the steps necessary in an emergency. A brief description of the drills is provided as follows:

Building Evacuation Drills: Evacuation drills are a scheduled procedure in all of the Abington School District school buildings as well as the Administration Building. These drills are scheduled during each month of the school year. They are timed exercises with the goal of evacuating the building in a safe and orderly manner as quickly as possible. These drills include provisions to simulate "blocked" exits and force the use of alternative evacuation routes. They are selectively scheduled at times when activities such as lunch, physical education, and recess are in session at the school. The fire drill is the traditional evacuation drill that is most commonly scheduled on an unannounced basis by the building principal at different times during the day. The same procedures that are used during fire drills apply to other situations that require the evacuation of a building.

Shelter-in-Place Drills: The Abington School District conducts "shelter-in-place" drills. Depending on the site, these areas of shelter may be within a student's existing classroom, a corridor area outside of the classroom, or another area of the school where there is protection from a storm such as a tornado. The district cooperates with state and county agencies in a severe weather emergency drill. This drill simulates the approach of a severe storm. The drill is traditionally scheduled in March as the change of seasons into spring can often bring the threat of destructive thunderstorms, strong winds, and the possibility of tornados but can be scheduled at other times of the year.

Lockdown Drills: The district practices a series of lockdown drills. These are drills to keep students and staff contained in classrooms or other rooms in the school building that can be locked down or otherwise secured. The building principal will conduct an "announced" lockdown drill and then conduct additional drills on an unannounced basis.

The Abington Township Police Department is working to support the school district in these drills. They provide counsel to strengthen lockdown procedures. Parental understanding and support of the need for staff and students to engage in these safety drills is important. A safe and secure learning environment is a priority for the Abington School District.

