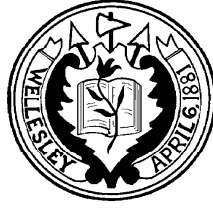


WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

40 KINGSBURY STREET, WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS 02481-4827

Bella T. Wong
Superintendent of Schools



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December 22, 2011

Update on NO School Cancellation Announcements

Dear Wellesley School Families and Staff,

Wellesley Public Schools and the Wellesley Police Department are pleased to announce that school cancellation notices will now be available through text messages and email. The Wellesley Police Department's Community Notification System also includes text and email alerts about Wellesley traffic delays, crime and emergency alerts, power and utility outages, as well as weather alerts. The service is free, and the messages are sent directly from the Wellesley Police Department's Emergency Communication Center.

You must first register in order to avail yourself of this optional service. To sign up for this free service, go to www.WellesleyPolice.com and look for the sign up box located in the lower right hand corner of the front page. Families can also sign up directly by clicking on this link:

http://service.govdelivery.com/demos/MAWELLPD/landing_page/index.html.

Please note that you must check off 'Send updates immediately by email' in order to be notified instantly via email. If you have questions or problems with signing up for this service, please contact Sgt. Scott Whittemore at 781-235-1212 or swhittemore@wellesleyma.gov for additional information. Upon registration for this service, announcements will then be sent directly to your cell phone or email inbox when school is cancelled due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances.

Although the Wellesley Police Department will be transmitting these messages, please do not call 911 or the Wellesley Police Department to inquire as to whether school has been cancelled for the day. The text message and email alerts are in addition to, and do not replace, the other methods we use to notify families that school is cancelled. The School Department will continue to post no school announcements through Channels 4, 5, and 7 and the following web sites: Town of Wellesley, Wellesley Public Schools, Wellesley Townsman, Wellesley Cable Channel and Wellesley Patch.

Rationale for School Cancellation

The primary reason for school cancellation due to inclement weather is travel safety including, but not exclusively, factors such as to what extent school parking lots and walkways will be cleared in time for school arrival. Travel safety also includes consideration of our staff, a majority of whom do not live in the Town of Wellesley.

Same Day Morning Cancellation

On the morning of a possible school cancellation, starting at 4:30 a.m., I review available information on weather and travel safety through communication with the Wellesley Department of Public Works and Police Department, and a review of websites that report on local conditions. Through prior agreement, I am also in communication with the following area school districts: Natick, Needham, Newton, Weston, and Wayland. A no-school decision for same day cancellation will be made by 5:15 a.m. at the latest, in order to allow sufficient notice to our bus transportation providers, staff and families.

Prior Day Cancellation

Through the winter season I am generally made aware of inclement weather forecasts. As the date of possible inclement weather draws near and the forecast become more refined, I begin to monitor these reports more closely. On occasion, weather reports coalesce around a forecast for severe inclement weather with a significant degree of certainty that may merit a cancellation notice going out the day before. If I think that level of certainty has been attained, I will provide this earlier notice to provide staff and families more time to prepare.

Early Dismissal

There may also be days when weather forecasts support the possibility of an early dismissal. An early dismissal is especially disruptive for our families with younger children and our families whose parents or guardians work outside the Town of Wellesley. Also, since the students are already in school, we must consider safe travel from school-to-home, as well as whether a responsible adult will be home to receive students dismissed earlier than scheduled. It is not possible to transport our students across grade levels all at the same time. Furthermore, the timing of forecasted inclement weather may support keeping students in school the full day rather than dismissing early. The forecast for inclement weather may vary hour to hour. All of these factors contribute to the complexity of an early dismissal. A decision for an early dismissal will only be made if it is clear it is the safest option during a potentially heavy inclement weather situation.

A same day early dismissal decision must be made by 10:45 AM at the latest for a typical full day schedule in order to allow time for parent or guardians to adjust plans to be home or to pick up children early from school. Middle School and High School students will be dismissed first and elementary and preschool students are dismissed second. This allows more time to ensure a responsible adult or older sibling is available to either pick up or receive the younger students at home. However, please be assured some school staff always remain in school until every child has been safely released to a responsible caretaker.

Delay of School Opening

On occasion, the weather forecast may support a delayed opening. A delayed opening can be for one or two hours. I encourage staff and families to not just delay travel to school by one or two hours, but to understand the delay means it may take more time to travel and to adjust accordingly. The intention is to allow more time to support safe travel. I also remind you that the time to travel to school with a delayed opening can be affected by the typical morning rush hour traffic. Finally, if a possible delay of opening falls on a day that is ordinarily scheduled as a half day, I may determine it is more prudent to cancel the school day entirely.

All in all, it is important to support continuity in school schedule and routines. Unplanned delays, cancellations and early dismissals are all disruptive events. While it may be nice to have a reprieve on occasion, too many of any of these events in a given year can impact preparation for standardized test dates. These dates are not in our control and do not typically get adjusted. Therefore, any decisions

to adjust the school schedule due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances are made with a great deal of measure, making best use of the information available at the time to assure safety for all our students and staff, while balancing the need for continuity and minimizing disruption when practical.

I extend my appreciation to the staff in the School Department, Department of Public Works and Police Department who make it their utmost priority to work with me to support and assure safety and continuity for our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bella T. Wong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

Bella T. Wong