School Cancellation and Delay Information
by John Pandolfo, Superintendent

With the winter season now truly upon us, we want to update you all on how we will be handling school cancellation and delays for this year and the future. For the past several years, James Taffel, Barre City Elementary School Principal, has collaborated with Dr. Bacon, our former Superintendent, to gather information, make a decision, and communicate that decision regarding a school closing or delay. James and I are in the process of transitioning that role over to me, as I live much closer to Barre than Dr. Bacon did and am able to take a larger role. I would like to thank James for his role in the past and for the continued support he will provide me as I get up to speed in this critically important task. Safety is our primary concern; we consider the safety of the road conditions for our school buses, our student drivers, our parent drivers, and our staff in making a weather related decision.

I am providing an outline of how the process works to make a decision:
1. Prior to a "weather event" and early in the morning of an event, we gather information in the following manner:
    - We look at forecasts from a variety of sources well in advance.
    - We contract with Roger Hill, local meteorologist, to provide regular updates and consultation, both prior to and on the morning of events.
    - We communicate with the road crews and/or police departments for both Barre Town and Barre City.
    - We communicate with other school superintendents in the region to coordinate closing/delay decisions when it makes sense, realizing localized conditions and other factors may necessitate different decisions for different SUs and districts.
2. Our goal is to have a decision made by 5:30am.
    - This is not always possible, as there are a lot of things happening quickly.
    - Most often, Roger makes a recommendation and we follow it, as he gets automatic input from many sources and has expertise we do not. The models that Roger has access to are much more detailed and specific to localized areas than the websites that we have available. Roger considers what has happened, what is happening currently and what is most likely to happen as the day goes on. It is rare that our own information does not align with his recommendation.
    - If Roger's recommendation has not come out yet by 5:30am, we wait a little longer.
    - If we feel like we have information and circumstances that requires a different decision than Roger recommends, we review everything again carefully before making that decision.
3. Once a decision is made to delay or close, we communicate in the following ways:
    - We initiate a "Call Em All" through the phone system to contact all families and staff on the list with an automated phone message
    - We contact the media so that notice is posted and announced on local TV, radio, and other media sources

- We send out an email to each schools "-everyone" list so that staff are notified
- We post on school and SU Facebook pages, web pages, and phone greetings
- We contact the police and road crews to help them plan and prioritize their work
- We contact the Food and Bus service companies

Once school is in session, we use a similar process of data-driven, collaborative decision making to determine if an early release or cancellation of after school activities is necessary, always making safety our top consideration. For all of these cancellations, delays, and early releases our goal is to coordinate as much as makes sense among our schools. With that said, when circumstances dictate different decisions for our different schools we will absolutely make those decisions, again with safety as our top priority.

The decision to delay or cancel is extremely important for everyone's safety. We take it very seriously. Given the nature of how unpredictable weather is, there is no guarantee that we can make the correct decision every time, but we do our absolute best. Please help us by being patient and understanding, and providing appropriate and constructive feedback.