

BRANCHING OUT

The Maple Street School Principal's Weekly Newsletter



Dear Parents and Students:

"A hundred year storm." That was the headline that many of us woke to on Sunday, as we looked out the window to the twelve to thirty inches of snow covering our yards. At my home, three trees were on the ground, shattered by the weight of the heavy wet snow that had arrived during Saturday night into early morning on Sunday. It made for a long day of cutting, dragging, and shoveling on Sunday for sure, and also provided a somber reminder of what the upcoming winter conditions have in store for us as New Englanders.

The storm also reminded me that it is time to write about the school cancellation procedures for the District, and to take a few moments to help parents and students understand how school is cancelled. Many folks hold misconceptions about the process, and each year I welcome the chance to help folks gain a clearer understanding of how this difficult process actually occurs.

More often than not, the process of cancellation begins a day or two in advance of the impending storm. Modern forecasting really gives us an edge in being able to make critical decisions as early as possible. However, storms are fickle beasts, and they frequently shift in nature and scope causing districts to have to make alterations to plans in a hurry.

People often think that building principals make the "call" when it comes to school closures. In reality, that onerous task is the purview of the Superintendent of Schools. In my years fourteen years of being a school administrator, no regular administrative decision making task seems to be more widely discussed by Superintendents as being the source of lost sleep than "Making the call." I know that in Hopkinton, the decision is not made in isolation for sure.

The decision is made through collaboration with the police, and with the Town Public Works Superintendent. They examine projected snowfall, temperature changes, road conditions, and threats to public safety when looking at the question of school cancellation. When they determine that the road conditions are unsafe, they make the decision to cancel school.

Over the years, we hear many questions about the decision to cancel school. Yet undoubtedly, the most frequently heard question is, "There is hardly any snow where I am, why would they cancel?" The answer often lies in the rural nature of our district. Dirt roads, narrow passes, and icy conditions often impact areas differently in town, and while some areas may appear safe, others present very different safety conditions altogether.

Another frequently heard question asks, "There is no snow, just ice - why cancel?" Having driven a bus myself, I can attest that snow is often a lot easier to handle in a bus than ice. Ice is often an invisible threat that is significantly harder to compensate for in a school bus. The weight of the bus alone makes a huge difference in snow, as do the "thumper chains" each bus has to help clear the tires of snow. These do no good however when ice is in the picture.

All told, winter weather is a big part of our lives in New England schools. When Mother Nature comes calling, we certainly may be at her mercy. Just remember to keep those fingers crossed for clear skies and check out WMUR, WZID, and the school websites for cancellation information when the skies look cloudy and the threat of bad weather is on the horizon!

Have a great week ahead!

DATES TO REMEMBER

November / December 2011

S	M	T	W	TH	F	SA
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10

November Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time / Location</u>	<u>Event</u>
• November 6, 2011	All Day	Daylight Savings (Fall back 1 hour)
• November 9, 2011	8:00 AM / Art Room	Picture Retake Day
• November 10, 2011	All Day / NA	No School - Parent / Teacher Conferences*
• November 11, 2011	All Day / NA	No School - Veterans Day
• November 23 - 25, 2011	All Day / NA	No School - Thanksgiving Recess
• November 28 - Dec. 2, 2011	Times TBD / Lobby	Scholastic MSS Book Fair
• November 30, 2011	All Day / NA	Grade 5 Planetarium Trip

*Indicates Parental Invitation