

January 16, 2019

Dear EGRPS Families,

With winter fully upon us, I want to send some clarification on our district's school closing process. Student and staff safety is our highest concern when making a decision whether or not to close school.

We have an in-depth process we use to determine whether school will be open or closed. The process for making this decision is one that involves multiple factors and individuals, such as: monitoring weather forecasts, which include the wind chill, precipitation, and temperature; checking current weather and road conditions starting at 4:30 a.m.; driving within the district, walking the sidewalks, working collaboratively with the City of East Grand Rapids (who salt and plow our parking lots), and collaborating with other superintendents in Kent County. We make the best decision to remain open or to close as early as possible based on the most accurate information available at that time.

Even when EGRPS is open, there may be circumstances that are unique to EGRPS families, and parents have individual decisions they need to make such as: Do I think the roads are safe to drive? Are the roads safe for my teenage driver? Are the sidewalks upon which my child walks too slippery to safely walk to school? These decisions are in the hands of individual parents and we depend on you to make the appropriate decision for your children.

Yesterday's flash freeze combined with ongoing precipitation was not predicted and came on quickly. Once the drizzle started to freeze, students were already on their way to school. If the timing of the weather conditions had not been a factor, the decision on closing school may have been different. However, with students in transit, it was determined that it was safer to keep the students at school than to risk sending them back home.

During the day, the temperature hovered around 27 degrees. The ice was not able to melt, and the salt was not effective since it kept getting washed away by the precipitation. As a district, we salted our parking lots and sidewalks throughout the morning and the day. Yesterday afternoon, we canceled after school activities in an effort to keep our students safe. Once they left school and went home, we did not want them to venture back out for a school-related event.

Again, today's cancellation was made based on many factors. The leading factor is that while some of our sidewalks and roads were not slippery, a majority of the sidewalks were still slippery at 5:00 a.m. when the decision had to be made.

**Today's High School After School Activities to Resume as Previously Scheduled:**

By 1:00 p.m. we had to make a decision on whether or not to hold after school and evening activities. When walking the sidewalks at 4:30 a.m. and again at noon, we noticed many of our residents had salted the sidewalks in front of their homes. This is very helpful for our students and much appreciated. If you are new to East Grand Rapids, you should know that the City begins plowing main sidewalks at 6:30-7:00 a.m.; however, sidewalks are not salted except for those that they are able to drive next to. That being said, there are many miles of our community sidewalks that have not been salted nor will be salted in the days ahead. The 10-day forecast projects temperatures to remain between 12-30 degrees. With these temperatures, the ice will not melt. Hopefully it will dissipate, but sidewalks will continue to be a challenge and students will need to use caution when walking on them.

I ask for your support as we move forward with holding afternoon and evening activities today as well as holding school tomorrow. I strongly encourage all community members to salt the sidewalks in front of their homes. If your child has to walk on sidewalks that are still too slippery, please use discretion to either carpool or find alternate means in order to get to school. I am hopeful that the sidewalks will soon be walkable and the students can walk safely to and from school.

I hope this information is helpful. Thank you for your support and understanding as we continually monitor these winter weather conditions and consider the safety of our students and staff.

Sincerely,



Heidi S. Kattula, Ed.D.  
Superintendent