



# HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## A PATHWAY FOR EVERY STUDENT

500 Beech Street – Holyoke, Massachusetts 01040

Tel. (413) 493-1605 | Fax. (413) 534-2098

Dr. Stephen Zrike, Jr. Receiver / Superintendent

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October 25, 2018

Dear Holyoke Public Schools Families,

As you may have heard, we are very excited to announce our updated Weather Work pilot program this school year. In our updated plan, **Weather Work will take effect only after five snow days are used**. As the district calendar (<https://bit.ly/2RhZgFH>) shows, school is scheduled through Friday, June 21st, if we need to use five snow days. With this Weather Work pilot, **we can guarantee to families and staff that the last day of school will not extend beyond Friday, June 21st**.

The purpose of the Weather Work pilot is to allow for timely, relevant and quality learning experiences, as a preferred alternative to making up a large number of days late in June. If we have more than five days of cancelled school due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances, our educators will develop Weather Work assignments and projects for our students to complete.

We considered many factors to ultimately arrive at this decision to begin Weather Work after five snow days. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in collaboration with the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS), is currently reviewing all “alternative structured learning day programs” as possible solutions to weather-related scheduling issues. We expect that DESE will send all districts additional guidance on the development of programs for subsequent school years to ensure equity and access for all students.

If we have sufficient snow days to employ Weather Work this school year, we will assess the effectiveness of Weather Work by reviewing data and student work products collected by school leaders and feedback gathered from families, students and staff. Even before Weather Work snow days would take effect, we always encourage students and families to pursue learning opportunities on cancelled days of school. These are excellent days to read an interesting book, write a creative poem, practice math problems and conduct science experiments!

I want to thank Julie Griffin-Pluta, 4th grade English Language Arts and Social Studies teacher at E.N. White, and Ruth Silvia, 1st grade dual language teacher at Metcalf, for developing the Weather Work pilot. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your child’s teacher(s) first. School leaders are also available to answer questions. We have included frequently asked questions on the second page.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Zrike Jr.  
Superintendent/Receiver

**When will Weather Work be used?**

Weather Work will take effect *only after five snow days are used*. School is scheduled through Friday, June 21st, if we need to use five snow days. With this Weather Work pilot, we can guarantee to families and staff that the last day of school will not extend beyond Friday, June 21st. (Please note that the August 28th and 29th cancelled days due to extreme heat do not apply since the district calendar has already been adjusted to account for these days.)

**What is the format for assignments?**

Assignments would be shared *online and on paper* if we approach five snow days. If a student was unable to access the assignment on a cancelled day, they will receive the work when returning to school. Teachers will be available to communicate with students/families during the cancelled day.

**What are the deadlines and supports for these assignments?**

Assignments are due two weeks after the cancelled school date. To ensure all students have the time and support services needed to successfully complete their assignments, educators will be available through technology during the cancelled day and in person after the cancelled day (before, during and after school). If your child has questions about the assignment, please contact your child's teacher(s).

**Why should we implement the Weather Work pilot at HPS?**

If enacted, the Weather Work pilot provides our students with the opportunity to strengthen their digital literacy and independent learning skills. Many HPS teachers have already created opportunities for students that incorporate online research, laboratory simulations, video tutorial supports, and access to primary texts via the Internet. Preparing our students for online learning is part of providing them with the skills necessary to thrive in the 21st Century workplace.

**What is a parent or guardian is not able to support a young child with work completion? What if a student requires IEP or ELL support services to complete curriculum assignments?**

The assignments are due two weeks following the Weather Work day so that all students have the time and support services needed to successfully complete assignments. State and federal law guarantee the right of a student with a disability to receive accommodations or modifications as documented in their IEP or 504 plans. Special education teachers will talk to parents/guardians about how students with IEPs will participate in the Weather Work pilot.

**Will compensatory services for students with IEPs or 504 plans be provided?**

Similar to our procedure when a therapist or therapy assistant is absent for multiple school days or sessions, the district will offer compensatory services. Students' skills are not typically impacted when they miss a minimal amount of services, so parents may wish to waive compensatory time and ask that their child continue with the regular schedule. Parents/guardians who wish to schedule compensatory services should contact the Special Education Team Leader or 504 Coordinator at their school to find a mutually convenient time (e.g. before, during or after school, or as an extended school year service).

**When will I learn more about whether the Weather Work pilot will occur?**

While we are hopeful that the weather will not have a significant impact on our schedule this year, student safety is always the most important consideration. At the same time, we believe that students should be in class whenever possible and hope to avoid as many interruptions as we can. If it looks possible that we will use all five snow days this school year, we will send more information to families about the expectations for their child to participate in the Weather Work pilot.