

GATEWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Superintendent's Corner

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We've been very fortunate (unless, of course, you want snow) to have had an open winter to date, but long-range forecasts indicate that this is about to change. At this point we've only had two snow days: one due to actual snow and one due to a bit of precipitation and freezing road surfaces (which was only a cancellation because it was a scheduled half-day and therefore we could not do a two-hour delay).

As I write this, the couple inches of snow that we were expecting to receive overnight mysteriously vanished but the weather forecasters are predicting a major snow storm for the weekend and a series of snow 'events' this coming week. Of course the truth is we won't really know what happened until everything is over and that's too late to make decisions regarding school events.

The long-range forecast seems to show an upcoming period of colder temperatures with a much higher chance of snow and wintery weather. This seems to fit the pattern of the last couple of years so, despite only having cancelled two school days so far, we may have more coming up. If so, this is where 'blizzard bags' will prove useful for ending the school year at a reasonable time in June, and not having to cancel April vacation. I'm hopeful that the DESE will continue to allow districts to reasonably use blizzard bags (what they call 'alternative learning days'), especially in Western Massachusetts where we tend to get more weather events that force the cancellation of school. To date we've only used one blizzard bag day, so we're in good shape should the long-range forecasts be accurate. And remember, spring is just around the corner as evidenced by the lengthening of daylight hours.

As a heads-up to families, we are hoping to reschedule January's missed half-day to sometime this spring. The reason for this is that on half-days, the entire faculty (other than high school teachers) is scheduled for professional development. We were supposed to complete CPR and CPI (Crisis Prevention and Intervention) training on the two half-days in January, but were unable to do so. We need to complete this training during the current school year, in order to keep our staff certified in these important areas. As soon as we nail down a date we'll share it with everyone so that people will have as much time as possible to make arrangements for child care. We also anticipate having next year's academic calendar out in the next few weeks to allow everyone to plan for the 2019 – 2020 school year.

It's always amazing how quickly time seems to pass by. Although I've written about the budget process, the public hearing for the budget will be on March 6 (weather permitting), which is just about six weeks away. I'm hoping for good news on state aid for education prior to this meeting and anticipate that town officials, school committee members and school staff will continue to collaborate positively in order to bring forward a budget that will be readily approved by our member towns (as I indicated, the budget is up only 2.2%).

Here's hoping for safe travels, no loss of power, and no damage to our infrastructure as we move through these last few weeks of winter. Although no one should wish away the time, as we endure the next few weeks of potential wintery weather it's important to realize that greenhouse growers are already planting seeds in preparation for spring and it won't be long until maple syrup producers are tapping trees. Whatever season you like best, it's always too short for some and too long for others.

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