

## Lessons Learned: APS Response to Storm Leon Overview

APS students, parents, employees and community members came through a difficult time and faced monumental challenges during the inclement weather event of January 26-30, 2014 – Storm Leon. APS does not underestimate or underappreciate both the shock and trauma of students, parents and employees who had to endure the storm while riding on buses, driving or sheltering in place. As a result, throughout the district APS is in the process of reviewing emergency and crisis management protocols and procedures. In response to the superintendent’s charge, a Lessons Learned Debrief was conducted during the month of February 2014 with the analysis of the results intended to be used to help the district make significant improvements in the area of emergency preparedness and response. The goals of the Lessons Learned were to:

- Conduct lessons learned around the January weather/traffic event and incorporate the voice of parents, teachers, principals, bus drivers and other critical communication and operational personnel.
- Determine what worked well, what did not and changes needed to move forward.
- Review safety policies and determine their ability to guide district personnel during inclement weather or other crisis.

Over 650 participants provided feedback through online surveys, face-to-face meetings or conference calls. Survey participants included 235 parents, community members and employees as well as 157 teachers. During the face-to-face meetings, 150 transportation employees participated, including bus drivers, supervisors and other department personnel. In addition, 79 principals provided feedback as well as 24 other critical communication and operational personnel.

Actions taken that worked well or were effective fell into three categories: commitment of staff, safety and emergency response and communication and collaboration. Feedback regarding areas of improvement was summarized and then organized into 11 recommendations according to the following phases of emergency management: prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. A few key highlights of the areas targeted for improvement include:

- Decision Making – Ensuring protocols and procedures support taking a proactive approach to maintaining student and staff safety at all times.
- Communication – Engaging in increased communication both externally and internally around emergency preparedness throughout the district, including more effective communication of crisis procedures as well as communication leading up to, during and after a crisis or emergency.
- Resources – Making significant improvements in the acquisition, utilization and accessibility of equipment and supplies during an emergency, including but not limited to food supplies, medicine and vehicles.
- Policy – Revision of regulations under the Safety and Emergency Preparedness policy (EBB), specifically to address gaps identified for emergency closings and designation of essential personnel.

A report summarizing feedback of what worked well in addition to the recommendations for improvement was provided to district senior leadership for review. District leaders will determine the most appropriate actions to take as next steps and the resources needed. The suggested actions in the report should be viewed as

recommendations only, based on stakeholder feedback. In some cases, district leadership may identify alternative solutions that are more effective or efficient.

Since the weather event of January 26-30, 2014, the district has already begun implementing short-term recommendations as well as initiated planning for full implementation of long-term solutions. Some of these recommendations were in place and used during the storm event of February 11-14, 2014 resulting in a positive outcome for students, parents and employees. The recommended next step is for further review of the Lessons Learned report by a district Cross Functional Action Team that would be responsible for ensuring alignment of short-term and long-term solutions with the APS Continuity of Operations Plan as well as the APS Emergency Response and Crisis Management Plan.