

October 30, 2023

Blog – Inclement Weather Decisions

The National Weather Service has informed me that we should be getting our first snow of the winter on Halloween. It wouldn't be long before the days get shorter, the weather gets colder and the television news weatherperson will be telling us to prepare for our first major snowstorm. So, I thought that this would be an appropriate time to write a blog about how I go about making the decision about whether or not to close school because of inclement weather.

There is no magic formula for when school will be delayed, let out early or closed. The decision is based upon whether or not our school busses can safely do their routes and get the children safely to school. In order to make this determination, I receive weather updates from the national weather service, talk with my fellow superintendents from around the area and most importantly communicate with Kobussen, our bus company about what they are experiencing and their thoughts about whether or not they believe they can safely do their bus routes. If it appears that road conditions are treacherous and not likely to improve then school is canceled for the day. I start working on this decision between 4:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. and I try to make decision before 6:00 a.m. Once the decision has been made, a mass message will be sent out to all staff and parents, I will then contact the various radio and television stations to inform them about my decision and the decision will be placed on our website and Facebook page. I will also call the administrative team, maintenance and food service staff to let them know about my decision, so that they can appropriately plan their day.

When the weather becomes extremely cold, schools make their decisions to close based upon the wind chill temperature. In the past, it has been my experience that when a winter weather warning is issued by the National Weather Service, school will be cancelled. The wind chill temperature that triggers this warning is a wind chill of negative 35 degrees below zero. However, if weather central issues a wind chill advisory then I will determine what I believe is in the best interests of the staff, students and parents of the school district based upon local conditions.

The decision to call off school is definitely not an exact science. I will make the decision based upon the best information that I have available at the time. If I determine that conditions exist that will allow school to run on schedule and you disagree with my decision, please feel free to keep your child or children at home. As a parent, you will need to make the decision that you feel is best for your family and I will always respect your decision.

Finally, people sometimes wonder whether or not inclement weather days will be made up in the summer. The current language about inclement weather days is that these days will be made up at the discretion of the District. Currently, our school calendar has enough extra minutes to allow us to not make up every inclement weather day. So whether or not we would have to make any days up would depend upon how many inclement weather days we have this school year. In my past districts, the first two or three inclement weather days are usually waived and all days beyond this are decided on a case-by-case basis. When determining if any additional days can be waived, I look at whether or not the school district will meet the minimum numbers of face-to-face hours required by the Department of Public Instruction, which is approximately the equivalent of 175 days.

I hope this helps explain the process used to determine whether or not to hold school when the weather is threatening. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at wanderson@email.parkview.k12.wi.us or call me at (608) 879-2717 extension 6130 and I will do my best to answer them. As always, thank you for your support and understanding, I truly appreciate it.