

Weather Based Decisions

November 2018

Dear Coventry Families:

The beginning of November is a good time to remind families of what is involved in the decision making process to delay the opening of school, dismiss students early, or to close school completely due to inclement weather.

I certainly realize this type of decision has an impact on families. I am sure we would all agree that students are better served, both academically and socially, by being in school. However, as always, the safety of students and staff is our number one priority.

How Do We Make Our Decision?

The decision to delay the opening of schools, keep schools open, or to close schools during inclement weather is based on a careful analysis of many relevant factors, such as:

- **Road Conditions:** We gather information on road conditions from Coventry's Department of Public Works and the Coventry Police Department. We give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in town. As you are aware, Coventry has areas in town where elevation has a major impact on the condition of roadways. More often than not, there may be times when your street is clear of ice and snow, and other sections of town may have roads that would be dangerous to travel. The type and amount of precipitation our town receives also has a significant impact on our public works staff's ability to clear roads for safe travel.
- **Consulting Meteorologist Information:** We prefer not making our decision based solely on weather predictions from local media outlets, which are not always accurate, but sometimes this is unavoidable. The amount of snow and ice forecasted is a major factor in the decision to close school. Temperature and wind-chill factors are also important as students wait outside for the bus or walk to school. In Coventry, we rely on information from a Meteorologist who is not affiliated with local media outlets to ensure the forecast for our area is not inflated.
- **Building Conditions:** Our schools need to be a safe, healthy, and secure environment for all students, staff, and visitors. Issues such as whether we have electricity and heat are critical factors that come into play due to the impact a storm may have. Parking lot conditions and entryways need to be safe and passable for all. In addition, all egress areas need to be cleared in the event of an emergency in one of our buildings.
- **Consultation with Area Superintendents:** While I do consult and share information with other area Superintendents, sometimes you will notice not all schools in the area make the same decisions. Over the past seven years, I have made weather related decisions based solely on information I receive on the conditions in our town from the sources described above.

How is the Public Notified?

- **Twitter:** If you would like to be the first to know about school closings, delayed openings, or weather related early releases, follow us on Twitter - @SchoolsCoventry.
- **School Messenger:** Parents and guardians should be sure current emergency contact information is kept up-to-date with the school. That information is accessed and used to: send out a phone call to all students' homes and parents' mobile phones; send an email to parents; and send a text message to parents' mobile phones (if you have agreed to that option).

- Website: Families can also check the district's website at www.coventrypublicschools.org, where a notice is added to the front page.
- Media: Local TV and radio stations are notified.

When Is The Decision Made?

On days when weather may be a factor, the above outlined process starts at 4:00 a.m. In most cases, the latest a decision will be made is 5:30 a.m., as buses need to begin routes very close to that time. Phone calls and emails to families are normally scheduled to be sent out at 6:00 a.m. We believe this gives students and families enough notice before they would need to leave home to travel to school.

Will We Close School If Conditions Worsen?

Keep in mind, even if weather conditions worsen, we do not normally reverse our decision in the morning. Once we make the decision to keep school open, many parents rely on it and leave for work. During these times, we work closely with the public works staff to address challenging road conditions to ensure every child arrives to school safe. If conditions worsen during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal, but we make it a priority to give adequate notice to all parents first through the same avenues previously mentioned.

Although I do my absolute best during this process, as you know, weather conditions can be unpredictable. This unpredictability can, from time-to-time, lead to challenging situations. During these times, please know we do everything in our power to transport students safely to and from school. There may be times when you disagree with my decision, I fully respect that. In those cases, if you do not feel as though it is safe for your child to attend school, I encourage you to use your best judgment in making that decision. For parents of older children, it would be greatly appreciated if you would discourage your child from driving in bad conditions and offer them alternatives.

I hope this information helps everyone understand the process the school district utilizes to make the best possible decision for all students and staff. In closing, should you wish to discuss this topic further, know that you can contact me at any time. Thank you in advance for your support and patience as we head into the winter months.

Sincerely,

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