

A WEATHER ADVISORY FOR REGION ONE

I want to share with parents, students, and staff the issues with which we must consider, as we are now approaching the winter season.

We know what we experienced in August with the heat and that necessary adjustments were made in our school day, due to the fact that most of the schools in our region do not have access to air conditioned rooms.

We understand that a change in our school day can cause parents to adjust their schedules and we realize that this can present a hardship. However, living in the northeast, we also understand that when road conditions and/or temperatures are severe, these situations can present a danger to students and staff and others who travel or who have a distance to walk.

By Connecticut law, students must have 180 school days and nine hundred hours of instructional time. When time is missed due to weather, we still abide by this law. Our schools already exceed 900 hours and we follow the 180 day rule, so when we miss time for weather, we are still following state statute.

As superintendent, I make the final decision to close or delay school and I take this responsibility very seriously. When there is a morning weather event, this process begins when a number of superintendents in the northwest area of the state join together for a conference call with a meteorologist around 3 AM. The meteorologist has the most current weather reports and forecasts. Following receipt of this information, I call a several of our local road maintenance crews in our towns.

I try to make a decision by 5:30 am, based upon on the forecast, before the buses leave to begin their routes. With that said, weather conditions do change and there will be times when what we expect to be a late start may turn into a cancellation. Also, as our region covers 275 square miles, it can be difficult to be certain of the road conditions from one area to another.

Many factors are taken into account when determining the conditions that affect our school day. Of most importance to everyone is the safety of our students and drivers. Travel to and from school can be treacherous with the right weather conditions. When speaking with road crews, I gather information about their opinion regarding the safety and condition of the roads.

In our Region, we use School Messenger, which sends out announcements to anyone who wishes to sign up for this service. All families are automatically signed up to receive messages. Families can customize their preferences to receive texts, phone calls, and/or emails. If you have not received this message in the past and wish to begin, please your school's main office. The radio and television stations will also broadcast delays and cancellations, so we ask that parents and guardians of our students watch for these announcements.

When we have a delay of two hours, all bus routes will operate two hours later than usual. The remainder of the school day and dismissal time will remain the same as any other regular school day.

Just as late starts may be called due to weather, it is occasionally also necessary to dismiss school early when weather conditions arise that again present safety concerns. We will always make every attempt to notify families as early in the day as possible. This announcement also will go out through School Messenger.

We ask that families have an emergency plan in place in the event of an early school closing. Students should know ahead of these times where to go in the event of an early closing. If weather forecasts show circumstances to be too dangerous for any travel, we expect that most after school care programs will not be open or will close early. In our six K-8 schools, expectations for these days may vary. Please check with your student's after school care program to find out their policy for early dismissals.

Please note: On days when school is cancelled or when there is an early dismissal, the after school and evening activities and meetings are also cancelled.

Making the decision to delay or cancel or dismiss school early is often a difficult one to make. As a parent, you have a right to determine not to send your child to school during severe weather. If you have any questions regarding this information, please know that you may contact me or seek more clarification from your student's principal.

Thank you for your understanding. And let us have hope for a mild and very safe season.

- Dr. Pam Vogel