



## DETROIT MEDIA SCHOOL CLOSINGS ALLIANCE



# To Close or NOT to Close?

## *Weather Related School Closing Factors*

Our District staff understands that our decision to open or close schools in bad weather has a big effect on families. We also understand that our students are better served, both academically and socially, by being in school. The safety of our students and staff is our top priority in making a decision to keep schools open or to close schools in bad weather.

### HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?

We make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- **Information on road conditions** from our transportation provider and from our buildings and grounds department. We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district.
- **Amount of snow and ice accumulated**
- **Whether or not snow/ice is continuing**
- **School building conditions** ( whether we have electricity, water and heat)
- **Parking lot conditions:** Administrators confer with maintenance and custodial staff members who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks.
- **Temperature and wind chill:** Some of our students walk to school and some must wait outside for the bus.
- **Weather predictions:** We prefer not to make our decision based on weather predictions, (which are not always accurate) however, sometimes we must rely on them in conjunction with other criteria.
- **What other school districts are doing:** When feasible, we make our decision following consultation with other Oakland County school districts.

### WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

The superintendent of schools makes the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the director of transportation and the director of buildings and grounds.

### HOW ARE PARENTS NOTIFIED?

There are several ways to find out if school is closed.

- Tune in to local radio: WWJ 950 AM, WJR 760 AM
- Tune in to local television: CBS WWJ-TV 62, NBC (WDIV) Channel 4, ABC (WXYZ) Channel 7, FOX 2 Detroit, WDIV CW 50 (FOX) Detroit, and local school cable Channel 19 (WBTV).
- Via the District website ([www.wbsd.org](http://www.wbsd.org)) where information will be posted on the front page

In most cases, the District will initiate its calling and e-mail notification systems (through our **Subscriber** list-serve), through **PowerAnnouncer**, as well as post the message on its **website** and **Facebook** pages, to alert parents if school is closed.

***Parents should contact their child's school to update their contact information as needed.***

### **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

Usually, the decision to close school is made no later than 5:30 a.m. or earlier so we can notify radio and TV stations and post the decision on our web site. If we wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

### **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

If weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to have school, many parents rely on that decision and leave for work. If we then send students right back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses.

If conditions get worse during the school day, we may need to have an early bus dismissal (15 minutes) starting with the high school. This is NOT an early dismissal. Instead, by doing this we are trying to keep the buses running on schedule throughout the afternoon. Walkers and students who are picked up will still be dismissed at the usual time. The only change is that buses in the first tier routes at the high school leave 15 minutes early. When possible, the automated calling system will be initiated if buses are leaving early.

### **ARE THERE SNOW DAYS BUILT INTO THE CALENDAR?**

The District does NOT build snow days into the calendar. The State of Michigan does allow the equivalent of six days for emergency closing of schools. Therefore, if the District closes due to weather or other emergencies for more than the equivalent of six school days, the district would have to determine how to make up those school days.

### **OTHER INFORMATION**

The District asks parents to do all they can to dress students appropriately for the conditions, especially students who walk to school or ride the bus.

### **PARENT DECISION**

Although the District does its best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. **If you feel as though it is not safe for your child to attend school, please know that you always have the option of keeping your child at home.**