

Chalk Talk

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I think it's funny how the things I loved as a kid, aren't the same anymore. For example, I loved red Kool-Aid as a kid. It didn't have to be cherry or strawberry or fruit punch, it just had to be red! "Kool-Aid, Kool-Aid, tastes great! Wish I had some! CAN'T WAIT!" As an adult, not only have I lost any interest in drinking Kool-Aid, I don't even buy it for my kids. Somewhere along the line there are certain things I loved as a kid, but now I don't want anything to do with them. That list also includes microwave burritos, Brown Sugar Pop Tarts, most cereals, and now, snow days might be slowly joining that list.

I loved snow days as much as any kid, but just like when my mother allowed me to buy a cheesecake and eat the entire thing myself, I think I have had my fill! As of Wednesday, February 13, 2019, Montrose Community Schools have cancelled 11 school days due to inclement weather. With only half of February behind us, there is a good chance we could have another day or two considering how unpredictable our Michigan weather can be.

School districts are required to have 180 days of instruction and a minimum of 1098 hours in a school year. Adding more minutes to a day does not help to remedy the issue of missed days. The State forgives the first 6 days cancelled for emergency purposes (weather, power outage, water main). Districts are also allowed to apply for 3 additional days that must get approval from the State Superintendent. At this time Montrose Community Schools has not received confirmation of approval. It is understood ours is not the only one they are looking at.

To date, Montrose Community Schools is going to have to add at least two days to the end of the school year. This moves our last day of school from Friday, June 7, 2019 to **Tuesday, June 11, 2019**. Each day that is canceled from this point will prompt us to add another day to the end of the school year. Our updated calendar can be found on our website (www.montroseschools.org). I understand this change in calendar is an inconvenience, but the fact we are making up days does not impact our decision as to whether or not it is safe to come to school. If the conditions were unsafe on the 2nd cancelled day, it is unsafe on the 12th.

I have heard our legislators are discussing the possibility of additional forgiveness days. Until we see a final decision and how that impacts our school and community, Montrose Community Schools will continue to adjust our calendar based on the legislation that currently exists. It is our goal to give our families as much time to plan as possible.

Montrose Community Schools may be considered a smaller school in regard to enrollment, but our boarders cover a lot of area. Believe it or not, when I drive roads to assess the conditions, I cover nearly 40 miles without leaving our district! Even though we have an excellent County Road Commission and our city employees are top notch, there are some areas of the district that can be worse than others due to drifting, location, etc. To that end, there may be times when there is a two or three mile stretch where we cannot send the busses. In that event, we will call the families and set up an alternate pick up point or excuse the student's absence if one cannot be arranged. While this is not my favorite thing to do, I would prefer not to cancel school for 1,500 students because we cannot get to five students.

Please know that our first consideration in a school cancellation, as in all matters, is student safety. In addition to driving the roads, we communicate with surrounding school districts, the road commission, and check predicted weather to make an informed decision. We try to make the decision by 5:30 am. We have multiple ways to communicate school cancellations. In addition to communicating school closings using SchoolMessenger, the

information is posted on the school website (www.montroseschools.org), television stations, radio broadcasts, and some social media websites.

The decision to cancel school is always a difficult decision and one that is taken very seriously. The safety of our students, staff, and community is what drives this decision. As always, the parent makes the final determination if they feel comfortable sending their child to school in inclement weather conditions.

I truly appreciate the support and patience we have received throughout this winter. Thank you for your flexibility as we continue to navigate these unprecedented situations. If you ever have questions or concerns, feel free to contact me.

Go Rams!

Linden A. Moore, Ph.D.

Superintendent

Montrose Community Schools