



The phone rings. You hear the words, “Fauquier County Public Schools are closed today,” and you just don’t get it.

Trying to make sense of it all?

Look inside for answers to Frequently Asked Questions about school closings and delays.

Shape of County Shapes Decisions



With student and staff safety as the top priority, decisions are made based on conditions across our entire 60 mile long county. Sometimes conditions are safe on one end of the county, but not on the other. One end of the county may have minimal snow, while the other has icy conditions. Despite this disparity, decisions regarding school closures affect all of Fauquier County. Why? See inside.



Fauquier County Public Schools Emergency Closures

Frequently Asked Questions about School Closings

What is the process for deciding if school will be closed? A team of FCPS transportation department employees is out driving the roads at 3 a.m. whenever a winter weather event occurs; they report road conditions to the director of transportation. Also, staff checks updated forecasts from the National Weather Service and contacts the Fauquier County Sheriff's Office and the local office of the Virginia Department of Transportation to obtain information about road closures, flooding, accidents and other pertinent data. The superintendent receives the information from the assistant superintendent for administration and makes the final decision.

When is the decision made? The superintendent makes a decision as early as possible and practical. When possible, particularly when it is clear that weather and road conditions will not improve, he makes the decision the night before. If he believes a better decision can be made in the morning, hinging on changing conditions, he exercises that option, making every effort to decide by 6 a.m.

Once announced, can a decision change? Yes. If conditions worsen, it may be necessary to change an announced decision; delays may be lengthened or changed to cancellations. Parents are encouraged to “stay tuned” for the possibility of a change.

Why is school cancelled if there is no snow? Sometimes severe weather is forecast to occur in Fauquier between 6 and 8 a.m., when school buses are getting on the road. Depending on the forecast, which is being closely monitored by school administration, occasionally the superintendent decides to cancel school before the storm's impact. It is safer to keep students home as the county faces the threat of significant ice or snow accumulation and the possibility of hazardous road conditions than to bring students to school and then send them home during a major weather event. It is a difficult call to make.

If road conditions aren't as bad in one end of the county, why can't students in that part of the county go to school? While consideration has been given to this idea, several issues make it an untenable option, such as equitable instruction for all students throughout the county, shared resources and employee contracts.

Options for Delayed Openings: 1 hour, 2 hours or 3 hours

What options does FCPS use for delayed openings? The superintendent may choose a one, two or three hour delay. He will attempt to use whichever option makes the most sense given conditions and forecasts.

With chains on buses, shouldn't we be able to have school more often? Two-thirds of our buses have chains, and drivers do use them, but often they are not enough of an aid to put drivers on the road safely. Our buses routinely do “work-arounds” for poor road conditions and closures, but there will be days when these options are simply not enough for safety's sake. Other drivers – students, parents, staff – must also be factored into the decision.

Once a weather event ends, why don't students return as quickly as we might expect? Once snowfall ends, school parking lots, bus loops and sidewalks must be cleared. School custodians are required to clear the sidewalks; however, the County, rather than the school division, is responsible for clearing all the bus loops and parking lots, which requires at least eight hours.