



**ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**  
7550 Forest Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45255

*Office of the Superintendent*

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November 2009

Dear Parents,

The winter season will soon be upon us. The district staff understands that our decision to open or close schools during inclement weather is a challenge for families. We also understand that our students are better served – academically when in school. Having stated that, our top priority remains the safety of our students, staff and families.

Weather conditions are part of the Monday central office agenda. We discuss the severity of forecasted conditions and their potential impact to the district calendar. Once we are within 24-36 hours of the forecasted severe weather, we increase the frequency of our discussion and identify our options.

#### **HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?**

We make the decision to open or close the schools in inclement weather based on a careful analysis of the following factors:

**We drive the roads.** Ray Johnson, Director of Business Operations, is out on the roads by 2:30AM traveling through each elementary attendance area. Based on conditions, he contacts the superintendent and transportation staff who then independently travel district roads. The routes that we drive allow for first hand observations of a wide variety of terrains. We also consider that many high school students drive to school and are not experienced drivers in winter conditions.

**Information on road conditions from road maintenance crews.** We have an excellent relationship with the road maintenance crews in Anderson Township and are in constant radio communication with their supervisors during our decision process.

**Amount of snow and ice accumulated and whether precipitation is continuing.** We monitor 3 weather services and speak directly with local meteorologists.

**Building conditions (such as whether we have electricity and heat).** Staff is on site at our secondary buildings 24 hours a day during the week and we will bring custodial staff in early to our elementary buildings. The primary purpose is to make sure that building systems are functional and to insure that outside walkways are cleared.

**Parking lot conditions.** Administrators talk to maintenance staff that is responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks. This process begins as early as midnight.

**Temperature and wind chill.** We consider that some of our students walk to school while others must wait outside for the bus.

**Weather predictions.** We prefer not making our decision based strictly on weather predictions, which are not always accurate. But, sometimes this is unavoidable.

**What other school districts are doing.** We also share information with other local districts and check whether they are opening or closing.

**Will there be available staff.** Many of our staff does not live in the district. We assess their traveling conditions and safety.

- **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

The superintendent does. He is responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the Director of Business Operations and the Transportation Supervisor.

- **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

As quickly as a decision is made, e-mails will be sent to all subscribers of the district notification system. Phone calls will be scheduled through the notification system beginning as early as 5:00am. Tune to local TV and radio outlets for up-to-date information on school closings. You can also check our district Web site ([www.foresthills.edu](http://www.foresthills.edu)) for information or call our School Status Hotline at 231-3600, ext. 3995. Do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

- **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

We will attempt to make the decision by 5:00 AM or earlier so the radio and TV stations can be notified and posted on our Web site. If the decision to close is made later, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

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

It should also be pointed out that, even if weather conditions worsen, we are unable to reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once a decision to open the schools has been made, 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 change during the school day, we may need to consider early dismissal, but we will provide advance notice to all parents first.

- **WHAT ABOUT A DELAY?**

We must weigh the advantages of gaining an hour (or two) to allow weather to pass or road crews to better treat the highways versus conditions worsening. We also must consider that even with a delay we risk placing our most inexperienced drivers (students) on the road. They would be driving in conditions in which they would have little experience.

In the event of a one hour delay – No morning latch key program. Morning early childhood program and morning kindergarten will be in session.

In the event of a two hour delay – Same as above plus no morning early childhood or morning kindergarten

In the event of a one hour early dismissal – Morning kindergarten dismissed as usual, no afternoon kindergarten, no afternoon early childhood program, no after school latch key program.

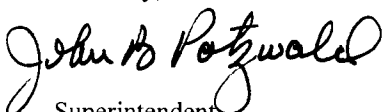
In the event of a two hour early dismissal – Same as one hour early dismissal with the exception that morning early childhood and morning kindergarten students will be provided transportation at the same time as the balance of the students in the building.

**If schools are open, and parents choose not to send their children to school during extreme weather conditions, the absence will be treated as excused and the work missed may be made up. This attendance option is always available to parents. The decision to send your child to school during extreme weather conditions is and should ultimately be yours.**

Although we make each decision after careful assessment, we know that often no absolute right decision exists. If you do not feel it is safe for your child to attend school, use your judgment on whether he or she should attend. Also, discourage students from driving in bad conditions and offer them options if weather conditions worsen.

It is our hope this information helps you to understand the process that our district staff considers to make the safest decision for the district.

Sincerely,

  
Superintendent