

January 1, 2010

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The winter season is upon us. Our district staff understands that the decision to open or close schools due to 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. But as always, our top priority is the safety of our students.

» **CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE:**

- ❑ **Information on road conditions from transportation staff at Laidlaw Educational Services and from our Buildings and Grounds staff.** We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. If your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous. Additionally, we must consider that some high school students drive to school.
- ❑ **Amount of snow and ice that has accumulated.**
- ❑ **Whether precipitation is continuing.**
- ❑ **Building conditions (such as whether we have electricity and heat).**
- ❑ **Parking lot conditions.** Administrators talk to Buildings and Grounds staff members who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks.
- ❑ **Temperature and wind chill.** Consideration of the fact that many of our students walk to school and some must wait outside for the bus.
- ❑ **Weather predictions.** We prefer not making our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate. But sometimes this is unavoidable.
- ❑ **What area school districts are doing.** We note other school closings or delays on Time Warner Cable Channel 7 and Channel 10.

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» **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

The Superintendent of Schools is responsible for the decision to close schools.

» **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

Tune to WSLB/WPAC/WGIX radio in Ogdensburg, WPDM/WSNN radio in Potsdam, WNCQ radio in Ogdensburg, WMSA radio in Massena, WTNV radio in Watertown, Television Channels 7, 10, and 13 for up-to-date information on school closings. Please do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

» **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

The decision is made by 6:00 am or earlier so timely notification to radio and TV stations can take place. If I wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised.

» **WILL SCHOOL CLOSE IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

Keep in mind that, even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once the decision to open the schools has been made, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students right back home, many will return to unsupervised and empty houses. If conditions worsen during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal, but we will give adequate notice to all parents.

Although the decision to close school is made with the best of intentions, it is an imperfect system, due to the unpredictability of weather. If you do not feel as though it is safe for your child to attend school, use your best judgment on whether he or she should attend. Additionally, discourage teenagers from driving in bad conditions and offer them alternatives if weather conditions worsen.

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district staff employs to make the best possible decision for all in our district.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Vernsey  
Superintendent of Schools

TMV/cc0