

January 14, 2015

Dear Parents:

Now that we have returned from Christmas break, we are right in the thick of the very tough months of January, February and March with regard to cold weather and excess snow. This message will give you more information regarding how our district looks at cold weather days so you might have a better understanding of the decision-making process when we are considering closing school.

State/Local Laws/Guidelines Factors

1. School must be in session for 175 days per year with a minimum 1,098 hours of instruction during those days.
2. We need 75% of enrolled students to attend school on any given day for it to be counted as a valid school day. That means if more than 25% of our students are absent the day does not count and must be “done over”. This eliminates bussing on main roads only.
3. Schools are allowed six (6) snow days per year before needing to make up a day.
4. Late starts or early dismissals count against #1 above.
5. All decisions to close school are made by the local school superintendent who considers factors relating to student safety - limited visibility, unsafe driving conditions, snow, ice, fog, and extreme cold.
6. A -20° wind chill factor is a guiding factor in the case of extreme cold.
7. We also consider the ability of school buildings to function (heat, water or power problems), road conditions for staff, students and parents, and the ability of busses to safely transport students. Slippery roads may also make it unsafe for students to wait by the roadside for their school bus.

How is a decision made to cancel school?

1. Shiawassee County superintendents consult with each other the evening before anticipated severe weather and again in the early morning hours via conference calls and group text. We receive information from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), the Shiawassee County Road Commission, the State Police, our own transportation departments, and the intermediate school district (SRES D). We discuss the situation and arrive at a decision to cancel or not.
2. If a decision is made to cancel school we communicate via radio and TV stations and School Reach, our new voice, text, and email message service.
3. It is the intention to give as much advance notice as possible so parents have time to arrange for alternate child care. Sometimes, however, we must wait for the weather to develop first if there is a chance it might veer off. Last year it seemed we were on the edge of a number of storms and weather fronts.
4. An additional thing to consider is that the county typically stops plowing about 7 p.m. each day and resumes again at 6 a.m. At that hour (6 a.m.), it may be too late to open school since getting busses plowed out, brushed off, warmed up and ready to go begins about 5 a.m. The first busses leave as early as 5:25 a.m. in some districts so a decision to bring in employees has to be made no later than 5 a.m., if possible.
5. Plowing priorities can also impact the decision to cancel school. In Shiawassee County, state roads such as I-69 get plowed first, then M-52, Lansing Road, M-21 and M-71. The main paved county roads and other paved roads follow the State roads with rural roads and sub divisions last. Plowing often creates a situation where the main roads are clear and passable but we cannot safely transport students because their neighborhood roads are still hazardous. Once again if we do not have 75% attendance the day does not count.
6. A number of students throughout the county attend programs at the SRES D. SRES D programs close when Owosso or Corunna Schools close and that may also affect other local decisions.

Closing Thoughts

Despite all the effort and communication that goes into cancelling school, trying to predict the weather can make a fool of us all. We do our best and hope you appreciate some of the complexity of this seemingly simple decision.

*Finally and above all, please remember **it is the parents' decision** whether their child attends school on any day. If you believe it is unsafe for your child to attend school then please keep him or her home and call school to excuse them.*

Respectfully,



Dave Moore, Superintendent
Corunna Public Schools