

Dear Parents and Guardians:

We receive questions every year about the decision to close school and how that decision is made. This year the state will only allow districts three calamity days. I have been asked if we are more likely to stay open since we have fewer days. The answer is no. The decision to close school is made based on what is safe for children and for the staff. That does not change because we have fewer calamity days. Please keep in mind that we have make-up days on our calendar (June 3, 6, 7, 8, 9). You should plan your summer accordingly.

Our district staff understands that a decision to open or close schools in bad weather has a major effect on families. We also believe that our students are better served - both academically and socially - by being in school. Having stated that, our top priority remains the safety of our students and staff.

- **HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISIONS?**

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of the following relevant factors;

We drive the roads - We are out on the roads by 3:30 a.m. and travel throughout the district. The routes that we drive allow for first hand observation of a wide variety of terrains. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous. Also, we must consider that a number of high school students drive to school.

Information on road conditions from road maintenance crews - We have an excellent relationship with the road maintenance crews in Deerfield 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 weather services and have the ability to speak directly with local meteorologists.

Building conditions - Staff is on site at our secondary buildings 24 hours a day during the week and we bring custodial staff in early to our elementary buildings. The primary purpose is to make certain that building systems are functional and to ensure that outside walkways are cleared.

Parking lot conditions - Administrators talk to maintenance staff who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking lots and sidewalks.

Temperature and wind chill - Please remember that some of our students walk to school and some must wait outside for the bus.

Weather predictions - We prefer not making this decision based solely on weather predictions, which are not always accurate, but sometimes 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 do not live in the district and we consider their traveling conditions and safety.

- **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

As superintendent of schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the Manager of School Business Affairs and the Petermann's Transportation Supervisor.

- **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DECISIONS?**

Schools Closed: No transportation service provided (public or non-public). Classes will not be in session.

Two Hour Delay (in school starting time): Buses will run regular routes two hours later. **If you hear a two-hour delay, you should continue to monitor your TV/radio since changing conditions could**

warrant a later announcement of closing schools. We are reluctant to use the two-hour because of the needs of parents to make alternative child care arrangements and our need to notify Kings Local School District staff of reporting times.

Early Dismissal: Schools will dismiss early with the time specified in a media announcement and call command. Many parents work and we are concerned for the safety of children who may go home to an empty house.

- **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

- *Call Command Parent Notification (call could be made to parents as early as 5:30 a.m.)

- *District Website

- *Local TV and Radio Stations

- **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

- This decision is usually made by 6:00 a.m. or earlier in order to notify radio and TV stations and to begin the call command notification to parents and staff. (Keep in mind that call command can sometimes take as much as 45 minutes to reach all households.) If we wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have left for work, leaving their children unsupervised by the time the announcement is made.

If schools are open, and parents do not want 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. Although we take this decision very seriously, we know that often our decision may not accommodate everyone. The decision to send your child to school during extreme weather conditions is and should ultimately be yours. Also, discourage young drivers from driving in these conditions and offer alternatives if weather conditions worsen. Please also remember that a child always has the option to ride the bus.

We hope this explanation allows you to feel more comfortable and better understand the process our district staff uses to make the best possible decision. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Valerie M. Browning, Ph.D.

Superintendent, Kings Local Schools