

School Closings, Late Starts, and Early Dismissals

Winter weather always brings concerns of safe travel for everyone in the Midwest. Safety concerns are amplified for school personnel and parents when school districts have buses filled with students traveling throughout our district for daily transportation and throughout the region for school activities.

Fred Krafthefer, Palmer Bus Service, and I are primarily responsible for making transportation decisions. In some situations, the National Weather Service or law enforcement agencies advise no travel which makes our decision so much easier.

Fred and I begin evaluating weather conditions the preceding day when inclement weather is forecast. We review weather forecasts and discuss our current road conditions. On the day of anticipated inclement weather, we will begin checking weather and road conditions prior to 4:45 AM. Sources available to us include latest forecasts and radar images provided by television studios, Intellicast, the National Weather Service, and the MN Department of Transportation. I have phone access to the Grant and Douglas County Highway department supervisors. When making weather related decisions I discuss conditions and forecasts either through phone calls or text messages with multiple area administrators.

My goal is to make a decision to start late or cancel school by 5:45 AM. School may start late to allow for early morning clearing of snow, travel in daylight hours, or allow more time to further evaluate weather conditions. On days when a late start was used to consider conditions, I try to make a decision to cancel school by 7:45 AM.

Decisions related to early dismissals will be made at least 60 minutes prior to the dismissal to allow time for drivers to become available and also to provide a short advance notice to parents. Decisions related to after-school and evening events are typically made between noon and 2:00 PM depending on the scheduled event time.

Factors considered for any weather related decisions are based on current and projected conditions including: visibility, snowfall, snow accumulations, wind speed and drifting snow, temperature, and ice on roads.

Our ultimate decision is based on the likelihood that our drivers can safely transport students to and from school sites and activities. We know delays and alternate routes are inevitable, a few rural roads may be deemed impassible, and occasionally a bus may get stuck. When District personnel are apprised of buses getting stuck or running late, we will use School Messenger to notify families.

Parents will be apprised of weather related decisions through our School Messenger system and multiple media networks. A primary phone number is automatically pulled into the School Messenger system through the student registration process. If a family desires text messaging or additional phone contacts, please contact a secretary in any of our three school sites. Non-family members can sign up for School Messenger notifications through a free App accessed through the District' Home Page. If you have questions related to the School Messenger system, please contact Kevin McNamara, Technology Coordinator, at 320-528-7408 or kmcnamara@isd2342.org.

We make our decisions based on the overall conditions of the District. If at any time a parent/guardian determines that conditions in their area are unsafe for travel, the parent/guardian can choose to have their child stay home. If you have questions or a concern, I welcome your call at 320-528-7301.

Wishing you a safe and enjoyable winter.

Dale Hogie, Superintendent

(Weather Memo – 1 15 20)