



Office of the Superintendent

Safety/Emergency/Inclement Weather School Closing Information

Winter has a number of factors which contribute to school closure, delay or early dismissal. Snow, wind, ice or wind chill can all play a role in determining the decision. Looking after the safety of the students is the most important factor. All official school closings due to weather will be determined by the Superintendent of Schools.

Why does the Westport Community Schools close schools or delay opening schools for inclement weather?

To provide a quality education for every student, the Westport Community Schools supports every opportunity to ensure that students are in class and learning; however, when weather conditions threaten the safety of children and staff, we must make decisions to curtail class time to ensure that those we teach are able to get to school safely or return home without incident. The school district takes the responsibility of deciding whether to close schools seriously. Generally, schools will remain open except for extremely inclement weather. When severe weather conditions exist, parents must decide whether their children can get to school safely. **Even when the school district decides to keep schools open, parents should review their own situation to determine if they should send their children to school.** Snow, ice, and extremely cold temperatures may affect bus pick-up and drop-off times, sometimes causing buses to run late.

What are the possible choices for weather closings?

The Westport Community Schools has several schedules set up to deal with inclement weather; these are put into effect when conditions threaten the safety of children who are walking or riding school buses to schools. These schedules are: (1) Keep schools closed. (2) Open one or two hours late. (3) Close early.

Who is watching the weather?

The Superintendent, school administrators and public safety personnel carefully monitor the weather conditions, especially during the snow season. The Town Highway Department and Police Officials test the road conditions and report that information to the facilities staff. Careful consideration is given to the most dangerous bus routes in the district. So, even if it looks clear on your street, dangerous conditions may exist in other parts of our town. As a precaution, schools could be closed all day for a storm predicted to hit in the middle of the day, rather than closing school early and scrambling to get everyone home safely.

How are decisions to close school made?

The safety of all our children is our primary concern when a decision is made. In deciding whether children will be safe, we look at the following factors: A one or two-hour delay in school start times will be used, but only rarely, when ice-covered roads, dense fog, blizzard-like conditions, and/or passable roads are expected to improve by 8:00 a.m.

On a delayed schedule, school will start one or two hours later than the normal school start time. School buses will run one or two hours later than the normal route time. The time delay will be noted in the school snow/emergency announcement.

The cancellation dilemma

The decision to hold or cancel school on a day of inclement weather is always a difficult one. When we cancel school on a winter snow day, it means our students rejoice but parents may have childcare issues and ultimately, I have to add another day of school onto our June calendar. If we hold school on a difficult weather day, that may cause some students to miss school or to perhaps slip on snow or ice and get hurt on their way to and from school. Weather prediction is an uncertain science when you live in New England. However, getting snow in winter is almost a guarantee. Since I will let the safety of our children guide my decision-making with regard to snow days, I ask all parents to make emergency alternative childcare arrangements should the day come when the children have no school and parents or guardians must report to work.

Make-Up Days

As per school attendance regulations, students must attend school for a minimum of 180 days. Snow days or other school cancellations must be made up. If we exceed days available in June, we will adjust the school calendar to use school vacation time and/or Saturdays as make up days.

Early Release Information

Because of childcare issues, the district will make every effort to avoid closing school after the day has started by closely monitoring weather conditions, and will remain open if road conditions are acceptable for the transport of all students. If the weather is questionable, parents should monitor local radio and TV stations for announcements to see if the decision to close schools early is made. Please have a plan in place where your children should go in such a situation.

If weather conditions warrant the early release of students, the school day will be shortened from the normal afternoon release time. The buses will run the normal routes, but at an earlier time based on the revised school day schedule.

If the possibility exists that a parent or older sibling will not be home, we encourage parents to designate an alternate destination for their children if school dismisses early due to inclement weather or an unforeseen circumstance.

In situations where parents pick up their children at school due to inclement weather or other emergency, proper identification must be made before students are permitted to leave the building. When someone other than the parent comes for the child, a letter from the parent must be on file in the school's office giving this approval. If school is closed early due to weather, all after school and evening activities are also cancelled.

Being Prepared

Please remember to have your children dress appropriately for the weather, making sure that children will be prepared for unexpected changes in the weather. This is especially important for children waiting for the buses that may be delayed due to road conditions.

Thank you for planning in advance.

Sincerely,

Gary S. Reese

Gary S. Reese, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools

School cancellations and delays due to emergencies will be aired on the following television stations: WCVB (Channel 5), WLNE (Channel 6), WHDH (Channel 7), WJAR (Channel 10), WPRI (Channel 12) WFXT (Channel 25), WNAC (Channel 64), NECN (New England Cable News) and the following radio stations: WSAR-AM 1480, WHJJ-AM 920, WPRO-AM 630, WBSM-AM 1420, WWBB-FM 101, WHJY-FM 94.1, WSNE-FM 93.3.

"SCHOOL BRAINS" will also notify you by phone or e-mail regarding delays or cancellations. (If you would like to be contacted directly by "SCHOOL BRAINS" – please be sure the schools have your correct phone number and e-mail). We will also post delays or cancellations on our website: www.westportschools.org