



Inclement Weather Decision Making Process and FAQ

Athens City Schools is aware of the effects of opening school during less than perfect conditions and of closing or delaying schools when poor weather conditions exist.

ACS understands that students are better served – both academically and socially – by being in school.

ACS students and staff members travel to school in many ways.

Some are driven on school buses, some walk to schools or bus stops, and some are driven by parents. When the school district considers the impact of weather conditions on the ability to open schools, all of these methods of transportation are considered

ACS buses begin their runs shortly after 6:30 a.m. and our goal is to make a decision by 5 a.m.

Occasionally weather conditions worsen quickly thus requiring a decision after 5 a.m. Parents need to be aware of this possibility and plan accordingly. The safety of our students, staff, and parents remains our primary consideration. Once a decision is made, the process of notifying media outlets, sending Schoolcast calls to parents, and posting to the district social media pages begins.

Where can I find emergency announcements?

Athens City Schools uses multiple outlets to announce emergency closings:

- ACS Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/athenscityschools/>
- ACS Twitter feed, @AthensCitySch
- Schoolcast notification system – **parents must provide current phone numbers and email addresses for use in this notification system**
- area radio and television stations are notified of the announcement
- local newspaper *The Daily Post Athenian* is notified of the announcement

There is no official announcement made when schools are operating on a normal schedule.

If we're lucky, weather events occur in ways and times that make it easy to decide to open, delay, or close.

If precipitation is on the ground and the precipitation is frozen or will refreeze, the decision to delay or close is easier. But, storm tracks can change at any time, significantly affecting the outcome in our city. For this reason, ACS administrators may wait until early in the morning to see what really occurs instead of making a decision based upon a forecast. Snow, sleet, or freezing rain often doesn't start until between 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. Flooding can occur on roads in the early morning hours. On some days, Athens City residents may experience perfect conditions while areas of the county may have different and dangerous conditions in other parts.

When weather events have occurred or are occurring, the school district confers with local police and sheriff's department, 911, the Emergency Management Office, the National Weather Service, and TDOT. ACS administrators also report what they are experiencing. The Superintendent and the Supervisor of Transportation and School Safety may drive across city roads and around schools to obtain firsthand information on current conditions. Then, the Superintendent makes the final decision. Ultimately, each parent should be prepared to make the best decision for his or her child. If schools are open, but a parent does not believe it is safe for his or her child, the parent should keep their child at home and contact the child's principal..

What are the possible options for inclement weather closings?

There are options to deal with inclement weather which are put into effect when conditions threaten safety of children. These options are: (1) close schools, (2) open late, or (3) close early. If schools have a delayed opening for the start of school, they will dismiss at their normal times. If schools open two hours late, buses will run accordingly and run two hours later than their normal pick up time for your child. Similarly, if schools are dismissed two hours early, buses will pick up students from school two hours early and parents can anticipate their child home two hours before their regular arrival time.

Why aren't schedule change announcements made sooner?

Ideally, a decision may be made the night before if a reliable forecast is issued and we are able to announce a delayed opening or closing by the 6:00 p.m. news. If conditions do not allow a decision to be made the night before, our goal is to announce school closings and delayed openings by 5 a.m. However, the timing of the decision remains secondary, to safety issues.

We understand how inconvenient it is to arrange childcare at the last minute.

Parents are urged to make arrangements ahead of time for the care of their children when schedule changes are made (and to provide for the rare situation when it is necessary to close an individual school because of a power failure or other circumstances). Children should know where to go if a parent will not be home.

What happens when the number of school days lost due to inclement weather or illness exceeds the number of days planned in the school year calendar?

There are ten inclement weather days built into the school calendar. The Superintendent and Central Office Administrators are responsible for developing and implementing a plan to make up for additional days missed. Teachers work hard to ensure continuity of learning for students when school days are missed due to district closures.

Do days have to be made up if schools are closed for illness?

We will always try to keep schools open during flu season as the CDC guidance recently has suggested that closing schools due to flu typically does not decrease the number of flu cases. The most important thing is for students to remain at home if they have the flu or flu-like symptoms. If we should have to close schools due to an extremely large percentage of absences or a lack of employees to operate the schools, the day will be taken from the 10 inclement weather days built into the calendar.

How do I find out if a particular event is canceled or postponed due to inclement weather?

If school is not in session or is dismissed early due to inclement weather (or widespread illness), the superintendent in consultation with the principal(s) of the impacted school(s) will determine if scheduled after school events and activities in which students are involved will be postponed or cancelled. Board Policy 1.8011 Emergency Closings state that "If school is not in session or is dismissed early due to snow or inclement weather, all scheduled activities in which students are involved shall be postponed or canceled." Extended care notices will be communicated from individual schools and from the organization providing the care.

Can I choose to keep my child home even if schools are open? Will this be an excused absence?

Parents may decide to keep their child home. Parents should contact their child's schools to determine if the absence will be excused as it will be based on individual circumstances.

Can I come and pick up my child when there is a TORNADO WARNING issued for our area?

No. A tornado warning is the most severe warning and release of students during a tornado puts everyone in danger. If a warning of this level has been issued when students and school personnel are on campuses, no buses will operate nor students released until the warning is lifted. Students and all personnel within the school building will remain inside in designated tornado areas until the warning has expired.