



FENNVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Educational Excellence. Community Atmosphere. Global Perspective."

P.O. BOX 1

FENNVILLE, MICHIGAN 49408

January 31, 2019

Dear Fennville Community:

The decision to cancel school due to weather is one of the most difficult we have to make during the winter months, and the process is one we take seriously. Any decision to cancel school impacts every family in our district and can create real challenges for many of our parents who need to adjust child care, transportation, or employment arrangements for the day. Safety is always the first and most important consideration, and with safety in mind we make the decision to hold or cancel school based on the best possible, current, and accurate information we have about weather conditions.

Our decision to cancel school always starts with looking at weather forecasts, and as forecasts move from watches to advisories or warnings, the details that come with the changing forecasts can help us prepare for weather that is hazardous. But we know living close to Lake Michigan that weather conditions can change quickly, and the actual weather often turns out to be very different than the weather that was predicted. That is why we wait until we know the weather conditions, or have the best possible, accurate information before making a decision.

On days when the weather could lead to a school closure, the Director of Transportation and the Superintendent begin the process around 4 a.m. by driving the roads of the district to survey weather conditions and the conditions of the road. They also begin to consult with neighboring school districts who have individuals out driving the roads as well, including roads that border our school district. We also consult with the Allegan Area Educational Service Agency to see if county buses will be running that day to transport special needs students. While we don't base our decision on what other schools do, we do consult with colleagues who are also looking at weather conditions and thinking about student safety and road conditions. As we drive our roads, we consider the travel conditions for our buses and our student drivers. If we are worried about the conditions and the safety of our students, families, and staff, we will always err on the side of safety and cancel school.

Extreme cold can also lead to school closure even when roads are clear, as many of our students walk or wait outside for a bus to arrive. We follow safety guidelines and recommendations when it comes to cold weather, and our decision is based on the safety of our students.

Regarding school closings:

- When possible, our goal is to make a decision earlier than 5:30 a.m.; once a decision is made to cancel school, we send out a School Messenger alert via phone, text, and email, we contact the media (such as television and radio stations), and we post the information to our district website and Facebook page.
- On days when school is cancelled, the CAC is also closed.
- On days most days when school is cancelled, the District Office and daycare program are open, though either or both can be closed if the weather conditions are especially hazardous for travel.
- On days when school is cancelled most school activities are also cancelled, though administrators consult during the day to see if weather conditions improve enough to permit activities for older students, such as varsity athletic contests.



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The State of Michigan provides for six days of cancellation each school year before days need to be made up, and many of our employees and their families depend on the income they make from working when school is in session. We believe it is good for students to be in school, and we understand closing school can disrupt student learning. We have to balance all of these factors when we consider whether or not to cancel, and that is why we always base our decision on student safety and the best possible, real time information about weather conditions.

Even with the best possible planning, communication, and positive intent, there will be days when the weather conditions change or create questions about the decision to hold school or cancel for the day. We understand and respect that many families feel differently about weather and traveling Michigan's roads, and the challenge for each family to adjust to a cancelled school day is unique to that family.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns related to school closures, please feel free to contact me in the Fennville Public Schools District Office, by email at jgreydanus@fennville.org, or by phone, at 269-722-3350.

Thank you, and Go Blackhawks!

Sincerely,

Jim Greydanus

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