

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Closing Schools Due to Inclement Weather

Closing schools due to bad weather is a difficult decision under the best of circumstances. There are school districts which use hard and fast criteria such as temperature and wind chill, and other school districts will use a combination of factors. In most school districts, the governing policy is to direct the superintendent to execute a decision based upon the best interest of the students and their families.

ISD 361 administration employs a three-part system to determine school closings due to weather: (1) road surface conditions, (2) visibility, and (3) actual air temperature. Common sense dictates that if the roads are iced over and with little opportunity to gravel and salt on the bus routes, school closes regardless of temperature and visibility. By the same token, if the roads are clear and dry, but visibility is under a quarter of mile in a sustained manner, we would close school regardless of temperature.

Closing schools based solely on upon temperature is the most difficult criterion to use. Factors such as length of bus routes, availability of spare buses on an immediate basis, temperatures moderating through the day are all part of the decision to close school. It is also important to determine where and when temperatures would be taken. ISD 361 utilizes the automatic weather service at Falls International Airport. This system gives constant updates on visibility, wind and temperature. Our history in ISD 361 is not to establish by school district policy a predetermined temperature for school closing.

Administratively the "close school" decision would be triggered by a -40 F ambient temperature if there were little chance of moderation during the day. This decision would be made by 5:30 A.M.

Parent cooperation is essential for any inclement weather condition. Children need to be dressed for the conditions. It is not uncommon to see students come to school with short skirts, bare legs, sweat shirts or light jackets, no hats, no gloves, or boots. Some districts have very stringent policies covering student winter dress before the student is allowed on a district school bus. ISD 361 has not considered this policy due primarily to difficulty of enforcement.

No school closing decision will be universally accepted. Issues of family schedules, day care, and a host of other problems are always created when a school closes with little notice to parents. Issues of student safety are paramount and this essentially lies in the parent's decision making. A parent always reserves the right to keep their child home and this would be treated as an excused absence. Excessive absences will be handled with the school attendance policy.