



November, 2007

Dear Families of MMSD Students,

When the weather is bad, the Madison Metropolitan School District follows a set of guidelines for deciding if school will be open or closed. With the winter season here, I'd like to review these guidelines with you.

The District must make one decision that is the best for 25,000 students. This decision may not fit with your individual circumstances. Therefore, we encourage and strongly support you in making the decision that is best for your child. You are always the best judge of your child's health and safety.

The process for deciding when schools are open or closed due to snow and/or ice

District staff members review the weather conditions beginning early in the morning. They talk with weather forecasters, the City Streets Department, Madison Police and Dane County Sheriff's Departments, and school district staff to see if all buildings are accessible for students and staff.

We also consult with bus companies to see if buses will be able to travel safely to and from school. This is the primary factor in making our decision. We make the decision whether to close schools by 6:30 a.m. or earlier, and then communicate this decision to all local news outlets.

How you can find out if schools are closed

On days when the weather is bad, listen to any local radio or television station for information about school closing. You can also check our web site (www.mmsd.org) or MMSD-TV (Cable Channel 10 or 19.)

When schools are closed because of extreme cold

Our policy is to close Madison schools if the National Weather Service issues a warning for Dane County for the time just before the school day begins. Schools will not necessarily be closed if there is a wind chill advisory for the county.

When schools are closed, all activities there are canceled

When Madison schools are closed for the day, it also means that all activities scheduled in school buildings for that day are canceled. This includes all MSCR programs and all after school programs.

Why schools are not dismissed early on days when the weather is bad

In many of our families, adults work outside the home and they have no child care arrangements available before the end of the school day. However, if your schedule allows and if you feel your child(ren) will be safer at home, you can pick your child(ren) up before the end

of the school day. If you do, go to the school office and request that your child(ren) be dismissed to you.

We try to keep schools open

When schools close, many families have issues with child care. As a result, we try to keep schools open if it's safe to do so. However, as we stated at the top of this letter, parents can always make the decision to keep their child(ren) at home in bad weather.

Why school starts are not delayed on days when the weather is bad but will improve during the day

In many of our families, adults working outside the home are not able to adjust their work schedules or find child care to accommodate a later start. If your family transports your child(ren) to school, we appreciate the extra effort it takes on severe weather days and acknowledge that the students' arrival might be somewhat delayed.

When schools are closed for other reasons

If you have a question about whether schools or a particular school will be closed for reasons other than severe weather, please listen to local radio or television stations, go to our web site or watch MMSD-TV.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation

For every family that is happy school is in session on days when the weather is bad, there is another family that feels schools should be closed. In over 40 years in education, I find that the decision to open or close schools during inclement weather brings out some of the strongest community reactions – no matter which way we go.

We appreciate your understanding of the difficulties in making this decision, and your support in helping your child get to school safely on winter days.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Art Rainwater". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Art Rainwater
Superintendent of Schools