

Greetings,

I want to take a few minutes to communicate what I feel is some very important information regarding our school district delays, early dismissals and closures.

It is virtually impossible for me to cover all aspects of delays, dismissals and closures in one condensed letter, so I will try to convey some of the most important points.

First, I want you to know that as a parent myself; I fully realize and respect the inconveniences you may go through when the normal school routine is altered. However, when it comes to certain things, especially the safety and security of our students, sometimes I honestly have no choice.

Second, very briefly I would like to take you through some of the decision making process.

1. If conditions of our roads are in question, our district maintenance personnel travel some of the roads in our District from approximately 3:45-5:00 AM. At approximately 5:00 AM we touch base and make a determination. This determination is made from a first-hand experience. In addition, on occasion we will communicate with Whitehall Township and Coplay Borough personnel to get their input on the current and predicted road conditions.
2. Weather Forecasts also play a vital role. We constantly monitor several weather venues (Accuweather, Weather Channel, local television and radio stations, etc.). This monitoring takes place from the night before right up until a final decision is made.
3. In addition to the over 4,300 students we transport to our schools on campus, we transport additional students to over 35 private and charter schools in and out of our district. This is required by law. To get a first-hand account of the conditions of the roads our buses will travel outside of our district, I also touch base with other superintendents throughout Lehigh and Carbon Counties.
4. When it comes to extreme cold/weather conditions, after determining what the conditions/temperatures will be, we rely on several health organizations to advise us on what conditions/temperatures are dangerous. Also, we must make sure that our buses start so students are not stranded at bus stops.
5. When it comes to an early dismissal, we are mostly at the mercy of the weather predictions. But our overall goal is to have each student home and our buses off the roads before the conditions become treacherous. With this overall dismissal process taking almost two hours to complete, sometimes students are dismissed ahead of the first flakes to fall.
6. Also, the condition of our campus many times comes into play. On occasion, two-hour delays give our personnel the additional time needed to clear and salt sidewalks and parking lots, making them safe for vehicle and foot travel.
7. Finally, when a decision is made to alter the normal school day, I immediately notify our technology supervisor, who then posts the change to different media sites, including our school district website. Our school messenger that notifies our parents is then activated. Being sensitive to your needs to make alternative plans for your child, this parent notification usually takes place between 6:00 to 6:30 AM.

There are, of course, other factors that come into play, and I do realize that some of these can be debated, but hopefully those listed above will give you some valuable insight.

In closing, in developing this communication, I had three goals. First, I want to give you a short insight in the decision-making process. Second, I want to let you know that I recognize the inconveniences that are faced when the school day is altered in any way and that I sincerely appreciate the acceptance and support you show us. And third, and most importantly, I want you to know that the safety and security of your child is the most important thing to us and getting your son/daughter to school and home safely is, of course, part of that equation. Sometimes I, as I'm sure you do, look back at the end of the day and say, maybe we could have done things a little differently. But faced with making the immediate decision based on the information we have at hand, the bottom line is and always will be that I will never risk the health or safety of any child, no matter what the outside influences.

As always, thank you for your support of our Great School District.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lorie D. Hackett

Superintendent of Schools