



When is school closed due to weather?

November 2012

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. The district must make a decision that is the best for all students. We realize our decisions may create an inconvenience with your individual circumstances. Therefore, we encourage and strongly support you in making the decision that is best for your child(ren). 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.

MMSD consults with bus companies to see if buses will be able to travel safely to and from school. MMSD administration makes the decision whether to close schools by 6:30 a.m. or earlier, and then communicate this decision to all local news outlets and to parents via email, phone and text message. .

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. **If during registration you have provided an email address and/or text message phone number in the parent portal to the Infinite Campus student information system, you will be contacted in the morning regarding a school closing.** You may also check our website www.mmsd.org or MMSD-TV Cable Channel 993.

When schools are closed because of extreme cold

When the National Weather Service has a wind chill WARNING for Dane County in effect for the time just before the school day begins, we will make a decision if our schools should close. It is quite likely we will make this type of closing decision on the morning of the day in question. If there is a wind chill ADVISORY (and not a WARNING) for the county, schools will likely be open.

When schools are closed, all activities 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 generally 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 we 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, we will communicate via email to those parents/guardians who have provided their email address to us via Infinite Campus – the online student information system. You can also listen to local radio or television stations, go to the school's Web site or watch MMSD-TV.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation

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

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. Please know that we will use safety considerations in making all of our weather decisions.

Sincerely,

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

Jane Belmore
Interim Superintendent of Schools