
Imlay City Schools
School Closing Guidelines: Inclement Weather

Revised: December 8, 2015

School Closings

The decision to close school can be a difficult task because of the unpredictable nature of Michigan weather. Just as weather systems do appear without warning, there are times when weather systems do not appear as predicted. Please keep in mind that a forecast is a prediction. Even skilled meteorologists agree that not all watches, warnings and advisories materialize as predicted.

No school closing decision will be universally accepted, but it is helpful to understand that the decision to close school involves many factors including temperature, wind chill, visibility, city and county road conditions, location of county snow plows in the area, the ability to clear school parking lots and driveways, weather forecasts and the status of neighboring school districts. Other factors include the state day and hour requirement, family schedules, day care arrangements when school closes at the last minute and, most importantly, student safety.

Safety

In the end, the school district's primary goal in making a final decision is the safe transportation of all students, parents, faculty and staff. At all times, weather conditions are monitored to ensure that students can be safely delivered to and from school.

Parent Rights

For a student, a snow day is a gift. More time to sleep, maybe a chance to play with friends, and most of all—no school! But for an adult, the decision to close school is quite difficult and complex. The school district covers a large amount of terrain (105 square miles) with extreme variations, for example. Conditions in one area of the school district may be quite different from the next. Weather patterns and conditions are unpredictable and can change suddenly, without warning.

Therefore, on days when the weather is questionable and the school district is open, parents always have the right to keep their child at home. Under no circumstances should parents risk the safety of their child. If parents feel that driving conditions are dangerous and unsafe, or will become worse, they are encouraged to call the school and excuse their child for the day. These absences will be treated as excused absences.

Parent Responsibilities

Students need to dress for cold weather and be prepared for emergencies such as bus breakdowns or building evacuations. Whether walking, driving or riding the bus to and from school, all students need to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. It is not

uncommon to see older students come to school wearing shorts, sweat shirts or light jackets, and no hats, gloves or boots. Hypothermia and frostbite can occur in minutes. Even students that drive to school should be prepared for the cold in case of breakdowns or accidents. Although popular fashion trends may not include winter hats, gloves, heavy coats and boots, parents should insist on their child wearing such items when the temperature or wind chill factor is low.

Decision-Making Process

The two most common reasons to close school are weather related issues and building problems (e.g., power outages, leaks, etc.). Closing school because of building problems is a relatively easy decision in comparison to weather related closures.

On mornings when the weather is questionable, school district personnel, including the superintendent and director of transportation, assess weather and road conditions by (1) closely monitoring weather reports; (2) contacting the Lapeer County Road Commission; (3) conferring with other superintendents and transportation directors from neighboring school districts; and (4) driving the roads in the district from about 4:00 AM to 5:15 AM. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a final decision to close school is usually made by 5:30 AM. It is important to note that weather conditions can rapidly improve or worsen from the time a decision is made in the early hours of the morning. Again, the decision to close school is based on forecasts, which are sometimes accurate and sometimes not.

Weather and Road Conditions

Road conditions and temperature are two main types of inclement weather closings, which are based on the following ever-changing variables:

1. *Snow Depth:* The amount of snowfall (a minimum of about six inches on level ground), drifting, and its impact on roads, which includes all main, secondary and back roads.
2. *Snow Removal:* The timing of the storm and the ability of local road crews to clear roads and district personnel to clear parking lots.
3. *Icing Conditions:* Ice or freezing rain and its impact on road and parking lot conditions as well as downed trees and power lines.
4. *Temperature:* Frigid temperatures or wind chills that carry the risk of frostbite in a short period of time (i.e., 30 minutes or less). Generally, school will be closed when the actual temperature is between 15 and 20 degrees below zero or when the actual temperature combined with the wind chill is between 20 and 25 degrees below zero for an extended period of time.

Closing school based solely on temperature alone is the most difficult criterion to use. Factors such as length of bus routes, availability of spare buses on an immediate basis, and temperatures moderating throughout the day are all part of the decision-making process.

Early Dismissal

As a general rule, once students are at school, the school district does its best to avoid early dismissal. The school district believes that keeping students at school is the best way to keep them safe when bad weather occurs during the school day.

On rare occasions, however, weather related conditions and/or building problems (e.g., power outages, leaks, etc.) may necessitate closing school early. On these occasions, all secondary school students (grades 6-12) will be dismissed first and then approximately one hour later all elementary school students (grades K-5) will be dismissed.

Sometimes, when road conditions deteriorate during the day, a decision may be made to dismiss students up to one-half hour early to allow buses additional travel time so students arrive home at their regularly scheduled time.

Notification

If school is closed, parents will receive an automated phone call from the school district informing them of the decision to close. Therefore, it is important to keep accurate telephone numbers and email addresses in PowerSchool. This same information will also be shared with local radio and TV stations.

Afterschool and Evening Activities

If students cannot be transported to and from afternoon and/or evening activities safely, they will be canceled.

Extended School Year

Inclement weather, hazardous road conditions, power outages, floods or other reasons may require the closing of school. However, the school year may be extended in order to comply with the state law, which requires a minimum number of days and hours of student instruction in each school year. According to the Michigan Department of Education, the first six (6) days (or equivalent hours) of scheduled student instruction that is not provided because of conditions not within the control of school authorities such as severe storms, fires, health conditions, and infrastructure issues, shall be counted toward the required day and hour requirement of pupil instruction. In essence, the school district is allotted only 6 days (or 30 hours) of lost instructional time.