

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION: WEATHER RELATED SCHOOL CLOSURES

Special Notice:

With the recent preparation for distance learning for students on the Hybrid track, as well as the students that are online-only, “Snow Days” will be different. Instructional staff will be expected to continue to hold class, but in the distance learning format for all students. Students that are doing Online-Only will be expected to continue classes as usual. The only time we will close completely is if we have a long-term electrical outage causing instruction to be halted.

Snow Day Plan of Action: Winter is Coming

When the decision to close the school facilities is made, I’ll begin by sending an email and phone message through our mass communication program School Messenger. School Messenger is updated each evening by connecting with PowerSchool. The primary phone number and email address provided by the parent/guardian will be the contact information used for these messages. If you have not provided the most updated phone or email address to your child’s school office you will not be contacted.

A message will be sent between 5:00a.m. - 5:30 a.m. to instructional staff, custodians, food service staff, bus drivers, media groups (KXLY TV, KLEW TV, Inland Northwest News Radio/NWPR, and KQQQ/KHTR Radio), principals, and other local non-MSD school administrators. A second message will go out at 6:00 a.m. to families. In addition, a third message will be sent at 7:30 a.m. to our Board of Trustees. I will also post a brief message on Moscow School District #281, and our Facebook page, as soon as possible after 5:30 a.m.

Frequently asked questions regarding school closures are:

- **How are snow days decided?**

First, it begins as early as 4:00 a.m. when Greg Harris, Transportation Supervisor, and I - drive on the roads, view the internet weather forecasts, and contact county/city road departments to check on road conditions. We will also view the traffic cameras, located within Moscow and along Highway 95, to determine current conditions throughout the region. A prediction is made to decide whether the storm will continue or be short lived. After reviewing all of the information, the final decision to close school will be made no later than 5:15 a.m. This is based on whether there is drifting snow in the surrounding areas, the roads are extremely slick, and if the weather appears to be getting worse or a forecast predicts that the poor weather will continue.

- **Why does the Moscow School District not utilize a two-hour delayed start on questionable days?**

School bus drivers are not full-time employees and many of our drivers have other jobs to go to between routes. We do not have spare drivers to meet the needs of transportation on a delayed school start.

- **Will the District announce an early release if the weather gets worse throughout the day?**

Typically, I will not as there is a real concern that a student may be going home to a locked house or no one - home at all. We would only make such a call in a worst-case scenario. However, we do encourage parents to pick up their child at their earliest convenience if they believe the increasingly poor conditions will make it hard to get home safely. We also strongly encourage parents to arrange a ride for their child if winds are at an extremely high speed, and their child typically walks home. This is due to the possibility of their child being injured by loose items flying around outside.

- **Can I keep my child home if school is open, when I believe it is in the best interest for my child to remain home?**

Yes, please understand that as superintendent, I make the decision whether school is open or closed based on the conditions that will affect the school day. However, you as a parent can ultimately decide whether your child attends school or not. Our district has a 90% attendance requirement, which means that your child has a limit of 9 days per semester that can be missed. Please use them wisely.

I understand completely, that we might disagree on the decision to keep school open or closed under tough weather conditions. Some parents want the schools closed with just a few inches of snow; others don't see why we would ever close school. We live in the Northwest, where snowy and slick roads are common throughout the winter, and all of us have to plan to commute in such conditions. In the early dark hours of the morning, I truly understand the impact this decision is to all of the stakeholders in our school and community. If you disagree, then please make the decision you believe is correct for your family, as safety above all is our number one priority.

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Bailey, Ph.D.

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