November 2016

Dear Hamden Parents and Guardians:

Despite the recent balmy temperatures, the winter season is almost upon us. The district administration understands that our decision to open or close schools due to inclement weather has an impact on families. We also understand that our students are better served, both academically and socially, by being in school. Our top priority, however, is and always must be the safety and well-being of our students.

The decision to open or close school during inclement or hazardous weather is based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

**Information on road conditions from transportation staff and from the local police.** We must give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. Hamden has many winding and hilly streets, especially in the north end of town. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous, especially in the higher elevation areas. Also, we must consider that many high school students drive to school.

**Weather Conditions and Forecast.** The amount of snow and ice accumulated and forecast is a major factor in the decision to close school. In addition, temperature and wind chill factors are important as students wait outside for the bus. We make every effort to ensure that our weather information is as current and reliable as possible, and to that end, along with other districts in South Central Connecticut, we consult with various weather services for our weather information. We prefer not to make our decision based on weather predictions, but sometimes this is unavoidable.

**Building Conditions.** Our schools need to be a safe, healthy, and secure environment for all students and staff. Issues including things like whether or not we have electricity and heat are critical factors to consider. Parking lot conditions and driveways are also important, as entry ways need to be safe and passable for all students and staff.

**What other school districts are doing.** We share information with other local school districts via a conference call, and check whether they are opening or closing. However, because of varying conditions such as transportation requirements and/or building, road, or weather conditions, some districts or schools may remain open when others close.

**Who Makes the Decision?**

The Superintendent of Schools is responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the Police Departments, Town Public Works Departments, District Facilities Department, and our consulting weather services.

**How is the Public Notified?**

We notify the public of weather related delays, cancellations, and emergency early dismissals via the amdHamden HHamden School website, the Hamden Public School Facebook page, and radio and television stations. In addition, we send parents an automated alert via SchoolMessenger about delays, closings, and emergency early dismissals. Early morning phone calls are also made, except to those parents who “opt in” through our SchoolMessenger . Parents should make sure that their current emergency contact information has been given to the schools. Please do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

**When is the Decision Made to Close School?**

Generally, the decision is made and announced between 5:00 AM and 5:30 AM.

**Will We Close School if Conditions Worsen after a Delayed Opening?**

In the case of a delayed opening, please continue to check the school closing status, as conditions could require a change from a delayed opening to a closing. If schools are open and weather conditions worsen during the day, we may need to have an emergency early dismissal. In that case, every effort will be made to announce a decision as soon as possible in order to follow the emergency early dismissal schedule on the district website. However, a decision could be made at any time to dismiss earlier or later than the posted schedule. If there is a chance of inclement weather and parents/guardians will not be available that day due to work or other obligations, parents/guardians should check in with those adults listed as emergency contacts and make arrangements in case an emergency early dismissal is called.

Although we do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. The ultimate decision, of course, on whether or not to send your child to school rests with you. Please use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to send your child to school. I also encourage you to consider your teenager’s driving experience or inexperience before allowing him/her to drive to school in dangerous weather conditions.

For more information about school delays, cancellations, or early dismissals, see the School Hours section under District Information on the Hamden Public Schools homepage [www.hamden.org](http://www.hamden.org).

Let's all hope that this year's snow is confined to weekends and school holidays!

Warm regards,

Jody Ian Goeler

Superintendent