



# FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT **COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS WEATHER AND SCHOOL CANCELLATION PROCESS**

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## **HOW CAN I MAKE SURE I AM INFORMED OF SCHOOL CLOSINGS/CANCELLATIONS?**

The best thing you can do is to make sure that your emergency contact information on file at your child's school is accurate.

### **Download the New Columbus City Schools customizable Mobile App.**

This is the first place we'll share news about "snow days" and other cancellations with an instant message to your smart phone or tablet. It's free and only takes a few minutes to sign-up. To download the free app, simply search "Columbus City Schools" in the app store on your mobile device or tablet.

In most cases, we will use the District's auto-dialer phone service to notify parents of closings or emergencies. However, the auto-dialer and push notification systems pulls students' contact information directly from our student database. If your home and/or cell phone numbers are incorrect in our database, you will not be able to receive these important updates.

When bad weather is forecast, please monitor local news media outlets as well as District communication outlets for information and updates. We will provide area news and radio stations with immediate updates, as well as posting information on closings the District's website ([www.ccsosoh.us](http://www.ccsosoh.us)) and on Facebook (ColumbusCitySchools) and Twitter (@ColsCitySchools).

## **WHO MAKES THE DECISION TO CLOSE SCHOOLS?**

Under Ohio law, the superintendent of schools is the only person permitted to close or alter the schedule of individual schools or the school district.

## **WHAT FACTORS ARE CONSIDERED WHEN MAKING THE DECISION TO CLOSE SCHOOLS?**

While school closures are generally a result of poor weather conditions, other factors can also impact the decision to close schools. Regardless of the issue, we make the decision to open/close schools or modify the school day schedule based upon a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- Weather forecasts (including those from a weather alert service);
- The timing of expected weather, and if conditions are expected to worsen or improve;
- Information on road conditions from our transportation staff and local officials;
- Impact on our transportation fleet (diesel fuel begins to gel at sub-zero temperatures);
- Building conditions, such as whether the buildings have electricity, heat and water;
- Amount of accumulated snow and ice, and our ability to clear school parking lots and sidewalks;
- Ambient (surrounding air) temperature and the wind-chill factor.

## **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE TO CLOSE FOR THE DAY?**

**We make every effort to make our decision to close before 5:30 a.m.** so we can notify local television and radio stations, post the closing information to our website, Facebook page, and Twitter. Keep in mind that unusual weather conditions may force us to make the decision after this time. It is suggested that you monitor local television and radio stations, and the District's website, for updates regarding school closings.

## **HOW ARE STAFF AND PARENTS NOTIFIED OF A CLOSING?**

CCS will notify area news and radio stations (see list below). At the same time, the closing notification is posted to the District's website ([www.ccssoh.us](http://www.ccssoh.us)), Facebook page (ColumbusCitySchools), and Twitter (@ColsCitySchools). A telephone message is sent via the District's emergency auto-dialer system or the CCS Mobile App's push notification to all staff and parents' primary phone number (as recorded in our database). Calls are scheduled to be sent no earlier than 6:00 a.m.

## **WILL CCS CLOSE IN THE MORNING IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

Because district buses begin picking up students as early as 5:30 a.m., even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse an early-morning decision for schools to remain open – without potentially endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses. If conditions worsen during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal, but we will give as much notice as possible, through a wide array of communication channels.

## **DO SCHOOLS CLOSE AUTOMATICALLY WHEN FORECASTERS PREDICT BAD WEATHER?**

Because weather forecasts are not always consistent or accurate, it is impractical to rely solely on these reports. While we prefer to make our decision based on visible or reported conditions, we do consider forecasts to determine if conditions are expected to improve or worsen throughout the day. The school district monitors a wide variety of forecast sources, as well as having district staff driving the city roadways as early as 3:00 a.m., in order to obtain as accurate view of the conditions as is possible.

## **WILL BUSES RUN ON-TIME DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER?**

When the District's schools are in session, all bus stops will be serviced, even during inclement weather. Buses may run late for a variety of reasons, including traffic and road conditions. Take measures to ensure your child is wearing suitable clothing for the day's weather in the event he/she must wait at the bus stop for a longer-than-usual time. Parents also should have a contingency plan in the event that a bus is running extremely late or breaks down before reaching the bus stop. Make your child aware of what he/she should do or who to call if the bus does not arrive. Identify a neighbor, friend, or a reliable "student buddy" that can help in the event of an unexpected emergency.

## **WILL SCHOOLS AUTOMATICALLY CLOSE WHEN THE TEMPERATURE IS BELOW ZERO?**

There is no set temperature at which the district automatically closes schools, but the ambient temperature is one of the many factors (along with wind-chill, road conditions, and weather forecasts) taken into consideration when making a school-closure decision. In most cases,

schools can remain open when the ambient air temperature is below zero. As such, parents should ensure that their child is dressed appropriately for expected weather conditions.

### **AT WHAT WIND-CHILL FACTOR WILL THE DISTRICT BE CLOSED?**

Because there are many media and weather sources reporting ambient temperatures and wind-chill factors from throughout the area (often reporting different temperatures or wind chills at the same time) we have not published a specific temperature or wind-chill factor that would automatically close our schools.

### **WHEN SCHOOL IS CLOSED FOR THE DAY, ARE AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES CANCELLED AS WELL?**

Generally speaking, evening activities, events, and athletic practices are cancelled when schools are closed for the day; however, there are occasions when an event might occur even when schools have been closed. Please monitor the District's website and social media outlets for special instructions.

### **WHEN SCHOOL IS CLOSED FOR THE DAY, ARE ALL CCS LATCHKEY LOCATIONS CLOSED AS WELL?**

**Yes.** When the district has canceled classes for the day, all CCS Latchkey programs will be closed as well.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU HAVE TO RELEASE STUDENTS EARLY?**

While we do everything possible to avoid sending students home before their scheduled dismissal time, weather or other factors (such as power outages and water line breaks) can cause the district to "Early Release" students. An auto-dial message will be sent to all primary parent contact phone numbers, the media will be notified, and a message will be posted on the district's website and social media outlets. We urge parents to pay close attention to radio and television stations and websites for timely updates. Students will not be able to use school telephones to make alternate arrangements, so please have an emergency back-up plan in place in the event of an unexpected dismissal.

### **WHAT HAPPENS WITH AFTER-SCHOOL CARE WHEN SCHOOLS CLOSE EARLY?**

When schools are closed or dismissed early, after-school care (Latchkey) may still remain open, depending on the conditions. The District will include information on Latchkey on its website and in information provided via our phone dialer, and to the media.

### **WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE FOR A POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSING?**

All families should make arrangements for their children in the event of a school closure.

- Children should know where to go if a parent will not be home, and how to contact the parent, guardian, or another adult with whom there are back-up arrangements.
- Parent contact information, including work and cell phone numbers, should be kept up-to-date with the school.
- If you are instructed to pick up your student at a location other than their school due to a school closure, you will be asked to present photo ID before the student will be released to your care.
- In cold weather students should be dressed appropriately for the conditions, as it is impossible to predict when a school might have to be evacuated due to an emergency.

## **DOES CCS HAVE A PLAN FOR A DELAYED START?**

Columbus City Schools provides school bus transportation to more than 30,000 CCS students. **Because our 800+ buses are serving multiple schools in a two-tiered routing system, it is not feasible to operate a delayed-start schedule.**

## **WHAT IF I BELIEVE IT IS UNSAFE FOR MY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT TO DRIVE TO SCHOOL?**

School bus transportation is widely available across the school district. If parents believe it is unsafe for their high school student to drive to or from school because of weather conditions, the student is welcome to ride their assigned bus. Students can also walk or be driven by a parent or another adult of the parents' choosing.

## **WHAT IF I BELIEVE IT'S UNSAFE FOR MY CHILD TO COME TO SCHOOL BECAUSE OF WEATHER CONDITIONS IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?**

Since parents and guardians are the legal representative for their child, it is their right to decide what is best for their child with respect to safety concerns. The option to keep a child home from school when the parent considers the weather conditions to be excessively dangerous is always at the parents' discretion, and the school understands and respects the decision. However, if school is in session, the parent should notify the school that their child will be remaining at home on a "Parental Excused Absence." While the absence will be considered "excused," it will still be counted as an absence for the day.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PUBLIC SERVICES OR UTILITIES ARE DISRUPTED?**

Due to circumstances beyond our control schools may experience power outages or other emergencies, such as gas leaks, water service disruption, etc. Should events of this nature occur, District personnel will make every effort to provide for student and staff comfort and safety. While disruptive, schools can often remain in session when without power. The District does not want to send students home unsupervised or to a home without electric or water. If the Superintendent determines that school cannot continue for the duration of the day, the District will notify parents via the emergency calling system, notify the media, and post an announcement on the District's website and social media outlets.

## **A NOTE TO PARENTS, STUDENTS, AND STAFF**

Please know that we do our best to keep our students and staff safe at all times. When it comes to the decision of whether schools remain open or be closed, there is often no perfect decision that everyone can agree upon. We hope this information helps everyone understand the process that we use to make the best possible decision for everyone connected with our schools.

## **COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS' INFORMATION SOURCES:**

- [www.ccsok.us](http://www.ccsok.us)
- [Twitter.com/ColsCitySchools](https://twitter.com/ColsCitySchools)
- [Facebook.com/ColumbusCitySchools](https://facebook.com/ColumbusCitySchools)
- CCS FACTLine (614-221-3228)
- CCS Customer Relations (614-365-5888)