

November 13, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to remind you about our winter weather policy and procedures for school closings and delays. As in previous years, all major local news stations and some of our local radio stations will broadcast when we are operating on a school delay schedule or when we will close school completely. In addition, we will also place school delay and closing announcements on our web page (harrisonburg.k12.va.us), on our phone line at Central Office (434-9916), on Facebook (facebook.com/HarrisonburgCityPublicSchools) and on Twitter (@HCPSNews). Parents may also receive announcements via phone, text, and/or email through our notification system. These same procedures will also be in place for other unforeseen issues or emergencies.

Periodically it may also be necessary to close school early due to inclement weather. I would encourage you to monitor the weather if the forecast is suggesting that inclement weather may arrive after school begins or if any surprise storms develop. Because some television stations may not broadcast early dismissals as quickly as we would like, I would encourage you to refer to our web page or call our Central Office number to gain the latest information about early dismissals. In addition, we will not announce the exact time schools will be dismissing but will instead announce if they will be dismissing either one hour, two hours earlier, etc. It is important to know what time your child's regular dismissal time is.

Frequently asked questions:

- **What time will a decision be made in the morning?** We will try to make a decision by 6:00 a.m. Our buses begin their routes soon after that. However, sometimes the weather conditions are unclear which may require us to make a later decision.
- **How is a decision made?** At 4:30 a.m. the superintendent, along with members of our central office team, begin to monitor our roads and facilities and will make a determination based on the conditions of the bus routes, pedestrian walkways, building grounds and parking lots. We will work closely with the public works, police and transportation departments for their recommendations when necessary. The superintendent will simultaneously monitor weather forecasts and make his decision based on the most accurate information provided. **Safety will be the number one factor** and school will not be closed or delayed unless the conditions warrant it based on objective evidence that the **Harrisonburg roads** are or will be unsafe for transporting students. Each community has its own unique conditions, so do not make any predictions based on what other school districts have decided.
- **Can my child take a school bus if he/she has never taken one before because I do not want them to drive or be driven by a friend or family member due to weather conditions?** Absolutely. At any time your child may enter a school bus and be taken to school. If you have any doubt about your child's ability to drive in questionable weather, I would encourage you to have an adult drive them or take the school bus. Many teenagers have never driven when the roads are potentially slippery and you may feel more at ease if they are not behind the wheel. I would encourage you to discuss with your teenager the appropriate methods when driving in winter conditions such as snow, sleet and ice. Make sure you learn the bus routes for your child.

- **Is this an exact science and will everyone always be happy with the superintendent's decision?**

Absolutely not. People's comfort levels in driving in "snowy" or "slippery" conditions are different and what some people consider a blizzard, others may consider just a dusting. In addition, in some areas of our city the roads may be fine and other areas snow-coated. I must look at the conditions of the entire city and not make a decision based on one area of Harrisonburg. I assure you we will be closed if the National Weather Service states that Harrisonburg has blizzard conditions. Unfortunately, pending inclement weather does not work around my weather calling schedule and late-arriving storms can result in delayed or "questionable" decisions at times. Furthermore, I must base my decision on information provided by others, including the weather forecasters who at times can be wrong. If you are upset with the decision please let me know, not the principals. The final decision rests with me. I have been making weather-related decisions for eighteen years and I understand the importance and impact this decision has on our community and families and I take this responsibility very seriously.

Thank you for your cooperation and if at any time you have any concerns or questions please don't hesitate to contact me at 434-9916 or by email at skizner@harrisonburg.k12.va.us.

Have a safe winter season.

Sincerely,



Scott R. Kizner, Ph.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Harrisonburg City Public Schools