

January 12, 2012

Dear Parents,

As we look forward to spring and summer weather and anticipate what appears to be our first major experience of winter weather in 2012, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind all of us of procedures regarding school closings and delays.

**Q. What are the delay options that will be considered in order to prevent make-up days?**

A. Either 2-hour or 3-hour delays could be implemented. Please refer to information from your respective school in terms of starting and ending times for a 2-hour delay schedule and a 3-hour delay schedule. If you have not already done so, please develop alternate plans for child care. The alternate plans should accommodate the possibility of school closing for the entire day, the implementation of a 2-hour or 3-hour delay schedule, and the early closing of school. The ultimate decision of whether school will be closed or delayed is based on whether our buses can safely transport students on NACS roads.

Two-hour delays are the most commonly used delay option because the State of Indiana requires a minimum number of days **and** a minimum number of minutes per day. A 2-hour delay complies with Indiana's emergency situation daily minimum minute requirement.

If a 3-hour delay is implemented, which is possible in order to reduce the number of needed make-up days, then an additional hour must also be added to the end of the day. This additional hour at the end of the day is required in order to comply with Indiana's emergency situation daily minimum minute requirement.

It is extremely rare; however, if weather conditions warrant closing school early, then school could be closed as early 1:00 p.m. This option will be used only if extreme weather conditions jeopardize the ability of NACS to safely transport students to their homes/bus stops at the end of the day. If school is closed early on the same day that began on a delay schedule, then the day does not count towards the 180 day minimum requirement. This fact weighs heavily on my final decision regarding school delays and closures.

**Q. How are decisions about delay schedules and school closings determined?**

A. The ultimate decision of whether school will be closed or delayed is based on whether our buses can safely transport students on NACS roads. The buses purchased by our school corporation maximize the various safety features to insure the safest possible transporting of our students. Likewise, our bus drivers participate in ongoing training opportunities to increase the likelihood of safe driving in various road conditions. Our buses and bus drivers must meet Indiana State Police expectations on an annual basis. Despite the safety features of our buses and the training that our drivers receive, there are some road conditions that are not conducive for safe transporting of students. Typically, ice, drifting snow, and reduced visibility are the primary reasons for delays and closings.

Each morning between 4:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., road and weather conditions are monitored. At least three NACS employees are driving NACS roads to determine actual road conditions. Each of us drives on roads in different parts of the district so that a picture of the entire district is developed. I also monitor weather reports from multiple sources.

My goal is to make a decision regarding delays and closings by 5:30 a.m. each day. However, with changing road and weather conditions, sometimes the decision is made as late as 6:00 a.m. In rare instances, a delay may be announced in order to afford more time to determine whether the changing road and weather conditions warrant a school closing. In these instances, a decision to close may be determined as late as 8:00 a.m. or 9:00 a.m., depending on whether the original delay was 2-hours or 3-hours. I know this creates an extreme inconvenience for parents, and I will utilize this option as rarely as possible. On days that a delay schedule is implemented and later changed to a closing, road conditions either worsened, or despite the best efforts of county, city, or state road crews, roadways were not adequately cleared or treated. Ultimately, school will be in session **only** if our bus drivers can safely navigate buses on the NACS roads that must be traveled to transport our students.

**Q. On some days when school is delayed or closed, my roads are fine?**

A. Northwest Allen County Schools is comprised of Eel River, Lake, and Perry Townships in Allen County. Although roads might be fine in one geographic part of the district, another part may be experiencing significantly reduced visibility or ice covered or snow drifted roads. Weather forecasts and road conditions throughout the entire school district are evaluated before making a decision to delay or close school.

**Q. Why do all of the school closings have to be made up?**

A. The reason each school closing results in a make-up day is to comply with Indiana law. The expectation from the State of Indiana is that school will be in session for a minimum of 180 days.

**Q. Can we extend each day a few minutes in order to make-up school closings?**

A. No. In addition to being open a minimum number of minutes each day, Indiana law requires that schools must be open for student instruction a minimum of 180 days. To allow the lengthening of school days to serve as an option for making up school closings, a change in current law is required. Currently, I am unaware of any pending legislation that would address this situation.

**Q. Will Saturdays be used for making up school closings?**

A. No. I did consider and investigate this option a year ago. However, because of SAT and ACT test administrations, lego league/robotics team competitions, academic team competitions, speech and debate team competitions, band and choir contests, FFA and 4-H participation, culinary arts competitions, little league participation, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts activities, IHSAA tournament games, track meets, tennis and golf matches, baseball and softball games, and numerous other activities scheduled on Saturdays throughout March, April, May, and June, I will not recommend the implementation of Saturday school for the purposes of making up emergency/weather related school closings.

**Q. Will graduation be rescheduled?**

A. If the number of make-up days required by the State of Indiana extends beyond the current graduation date, then yes, graduation will be rescheduled so that all students can meet Indiana's attendance requirements and Indiana's graduation requirements before the ceremony. Our currently scheduled last day of school is May 24 and our currently scheduled date of graduation is June 9.

**Q. Have steps been taken to reduce the need for extending the school year beyond the currently scheduled last day of school?**

A. Yes. The 2011-2012 NACS calendar includes three make up days within the school year (one make-up day on February 6, one on March 12, and one on May 14). If these make-up days are not needed, then these days will be treated as holidays. The recently approved 2012-13 calendar also includes built-in make-up days. However, if the number of required make-up days exceeds the number of built-in days, then yes, the school year will be extended beyond the currently scheduled last day of school in order to comply with Indiana's attendance laws.

Respectfully,

Chris Himself  
Superintendent  
Northwest Allen County Schools