

District Office

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## Closing School Decisions

In my numerous years as Superintendent, I have often had to make the decision to close school (especially during the winter season)! I am frequently asked how this decision is made. So I thought I would put together a brief description of the process used to make the decision to close school. First and foremost, the decision is based on student and staff safety.

According to the Michigan Department of Education Pupil Accounting Manual, acceptable reasons for closing school include "conditions not within the control of school authorities such as severe storms, fires, health conditions, and infrastructure issues." The two most common reasons to cancel school are weather related issues and building issues (power outages, leaks, etc.). Building issues closures are usually easy to decide. Weather related closures can be more tricky.

Weather related closings can occur because of road conditions, severe temperatures, or visibility concerns. On bad weather days, multiple district staff members start driving the roads as early as 4:00 AM to determine whether road conditions will allow for our buses to safely transport our students. It is important to remember that our district encompasses 89 square miles of both paved and dirt roads. While the main roads may appear safe, often the condition of our back roads can be very different. Please remember that I make the safest decision for every student in Milan Area Schools. At times, you may decide, as a parent, to make a different decision for your child(ren) when I do not cancel school.

While these staff members are driving the roads, I am involved in conference calls (and texts) with other superintendents in the area. I am also monitoring the current and predicted weather conditions. On some days, you may notice that some schools in the area do not close when we do (or vice versa). This is due to the varied conditions throughout Washtenaw and Monroe Counties.

I know that many parents need to make child care arrangements for their children if I do cancel school. While there are times when the decision can be made the prior evening, that is not always the case. I do make the morning decision as early as possible to notify parents and staff. The decision is always announced by 5:15 AM.

Once the decision to cancel school is made, I make the following notifications in this order:

1. Posting on [milanareaschools.org](http://milanareaschools.org)
2. Notification to media stations
3. Posting on Social Media
4. Notification to staff and parents via notification system.

The Michigan Department of Education allows up to six days of cancelation for these reasons; anything beyond that usually requires make-up days. These make-up days normally require us to extend the school year in June. Please consider this when planning vacations during the first scheduled week of summer.

Thank You,  
Bryan Girbach