

November 4, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

The winter season is upon us. Our district staff understands that our decision to open or close schools in bad weather has a big impact on families. We also understand that our students are better served-both academically and socially- by being in school. But as always, our top priority is the safety of our students.

◆ **HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?**

Please understand that we make the decision to open or close the schools in bad weather based on a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- ▶ Amount of snow and ice accumulated.
- ▶ Whether precipitation is continuing.
- ▶ Building conditions (such as whether we have electricity and/or heat).
- ▶ Building and Grounds-Administrators speak with maintenance and custodial staff members who are responsible for clearing and treating school parking areas and sidewalks.
- ▶ Temperature and wind chill-Please remember that some of our students walk to school or must wait outside for the bus.
- ▶ Notification from Contracted Bus Companies.
- ▶ Weather predictions-We prefer not making our decision based on weather predictions, which are not always accurate. But sometimes this is unavoidable.
- ▶ What other school districts are doing-We also share information with other local districts and check whether they are opening or closing.

◆ **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

As superintendent of schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations of appropriate administrative staff.

◆ **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

Tune to the following television stations for up-to-date closing and delay information:

KDKA, WTAE and WPXI

You may also check our district Website at www.leechburg.k12.pa.us for additional information. *Please refrain from calling the schools unless it is an emergency.*

◆ **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

I try my best to make the decision by 5:30 AM or earlier so we can notify television stations and post the information on our district Website. If I wait longer to announce a closing, some parents will have already left for work, leaving their children unsupervised. Depending on the weather conditions, some decisions are made the evening before the closing/delay.

◆ **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

Keep in mind that, even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without 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 adequate notice to all parents/guardians before releasing students.

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. **If you do not feel as though it is safe for your child to attend school, use your best judgment on whether he or she should attend.** Also, discourage teenagers from driving in unfavorable conditions and offer them alternatives if weather conditions worsen.

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district staff uses to make the best possible decision for all in our district.

Yours in Education,

James A. Budzilek, Ed.D.
Superintendent