



School Closing Decision Making: Frequently Asked Questions

Have you ever wondered who makes the decision to cancel school on a bad weather day? Well, the final determination is made by the Superintendent of Schools, however not without input from key community stakeholders. Making the decision to cancel or to delay school is one of the most difficult challenges for the Superintendent of Schools because like weather forecasting, the school-closing decision process is not a perfect science. This document is intended to help families understand how the process works.

Who makes the decision about whether or not to close school?

The Superintendent of Schools, in consultation with the Principals, School Custodians, Winthrop's Department of Public Works and the Winthrop Police and Fire officials, makes the final decision to cancel or delay school by 5:45am or earlier. The goal is to make a decision as soon as possible so that parents have time to make arrangements for childcare and adjusted work schedules and so that school staff may adjust their schedule in terms of work travel.

What information is gathered to aid in the decision?

There are multiple factors used in deciding whether or not to close school. Information on road conditions, snow accumulation predictions, building conditions such as electricity and heat, parking lot conditions, air temperature and wind chill, tides, and estimated times provided by the Department of Public Works as to when roads, walkways, and parking lots will be cleared of snow and ice.

How is the information acquired?

District staff and Superintendent monitors state and local weather forecasts. The Department of Public Works, WPS custodial staff and Winthrop Police and Fire officials provide updates on neighborhood road conditions and tide impacts. The Superintendent consults with Superintendents in adjoining communities

What are parents' responsibilities?

The safety of your child is paramount. On days when weather conditions are questionable, but school remains open, parents are free to exercise discretion and keep children home from school. Parents of young drivers are asked to reinforce winter weather driving skills: allowing extra travel time, reducing speed, and not worrying about being late.

How are days made-up?

As per State regulations, students must attend school for a minimum of 180 days and the school year must end by June 30. If school is closed due to weather, the day will be made-

up at the end of the school year and are built into the yearly school calendar for guiding purposes.

How do power outages affect the decision if the weather is stable?

Inclement weather can affect the timeline for utility companies to restore electricity. If all school buildings have electricity, the goal will be to open school. Other factors also influence the decision, including the number of neighborhoods without power, road conditions impacted by power outages (down lines, traffic lights not functioning).

What is a delayed opening?

A delayed opening is simply a **later start to the school day** due to short-term weather conditions or a temporary building related issue. Rather than close school for a whole day the beginning of school will be delayed one hour, ninety minutes, or two hours. **If a delay is necessary**, information related to the specific start time for each school will be clearly communicated to all students and posted on each school webpage. Lunch will still be available to students and dismissal will be at the regularly scheduled times.

How is the public notified?

- District website (www.winthrop.k12.ma.us)
- Facebook: ([Winthrop Public Schools](#))
- Blackboard Connect email: *(please be sure we have most updated email)*
- Blackboard Connect phone call ("connect-ed"): *(please be sure we have most updated phone contact)*
- Local Television: [WBZ-Ch. 4](#), [WCVB-Ch. 5](#), [WHDH-Ch. 7](#), [WFXT-Ch. 25](#), and [NECN/NBC Boston](#).

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