

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Office of the Superintendent
30 Park Street • P.O. Box 600
Vernon, CT 06066-0600
Fax (860) 870-6005

Website: www.vernonpublicschools.org

Joseph Macary, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
(860) 870-6000 x4674

Robert Testa
Assistant Superintendent
(860) 870-6000 x4680

November 7, 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The winter season is almost upon us. The district administration understands that our decision to open or close schools due to inclement weather has a significant impact on families. We also understand that our students are better served – both academically and socially – by being in school. However, as always, our top priority is the safety and well-being of our students.

- **HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?**

Please understand that the decision to open or close schools during inclement or hazardous weather is based on a careful analysis of many relevant factors, such as:

- **Information on road conditions from the Vernon Department of Public Works, Police Department, and our School Bus Transportation Company.** We give careful consideration to the most dangerous roads in the district. The Town of Vernon has many winding and hilly streets. Even if your street looks clear, travel elsewhere in the district may be dangerous, especially in the higher elevation areas of Vernon. We also consider that many high school students drive to school.
- **Weather Forecast and Predictions.** We prefer not making our decision based solely on weather predictions, which are not always 100% accurate, but sometimes this is unavoidable. The amount of snow and ice accumulated and forecasted is a major factor in the decision to close school. Temperature and wind chill factors are important as students wait outside for the bus or walk to school.
- **Building Conditions.** Our schools need to be a safe, healthy, and secure environment for all students, staff and visitors. Issues such as whether we have electricity and heat are critical factors to consider. Parking lot conditions and entry ways need to be safe and passable for all students, staff, and visitors.
- **What other school districts are doing.** We share information with seven other local school districts via a conference call and check whether they are opening or closing.

The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.

- **WHO MAKES THE DECISION?**

As the Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based on the above factors and recommendations from the Public Works Department, Police Department, School Bus Company, Town, District Facilities Department and our Consulting Meteorologist.

- **HOW IS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED?**

The following media outlets are notified: TV Stations (WFSB Channel 3, WTNH Channel 8, WVIT Channel 30, FOX Channel 61) and Radio Station (WTIC 1080AM). Parents can sign up for a text message for school closings by logging on to WFSB Channel 3 and selecting to receive mobile text alerts for the Vernon Public Schools. In addition, as you know, we send out a Blackboard Connect Alert via voice message and e-mail informing parents that school is canceled or delayed. Parents and Guardians should ensure that their current emergency contact information has been given to the schools. Please do not call the school unless it is an emergency.

- **WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?**

A decision needs to be made by 5:30AM as bus routes begin at about 5:45AM and media stations need to be notified to broadcast a school closing alert before students and families leave home to travel to school.

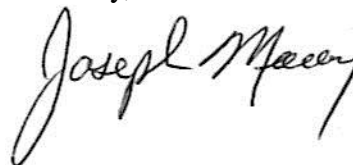
- **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

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 conditions worsen during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal, but we will give adequate notice to all parents first.

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, weather conditions can be unpredictable. 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 bad conditions and offer them alternatives if weather conditions worsen.

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district utilizes to make the best possible decision for all students and staff in our district. Let's hope for good weather this season.

Sincerely,



Joseph P. Macary, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Town of Vernon, Connecticut