

Weather Cancellation Practices

Dodge City Public Schools remain very aware of the impact of inclement weather on the safety of children and its overall effect on the learning environment in schools. In order to inform parents and the community, the following are questions and answers most commonly received by the school district about inclement weather, school cancellations, postponements, or delays.

Q: Will school be cancelled or delayed when the temperature is really low?

A: Cold weather by itself, without snow, rain, or other precipitation, rarely necessitates a change in schedule. Every school bus is heated for student safety and the district now uses an anti-gel agent in the diesel fuel that runs in the buses. Each building has HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) systems designed provide a comfortable heating level in each classroom.

Q: Do you have general guidelines or board policy that determines when school is closed?

A: Generally, the district must consider that welfare and well-being of 6,800+ students and 1,200 employees. When contemplating a cancellation, the district *as a whole* has to be considered. Factors contributing to this decision include the ability for traffic to pass safely at schools, availability of supervision at home if students are dismissed before normal times, and availability of food at home if parents are not able to get home.

Q: Which person or persons officially determines whether or not school is cancelled or delayed?

A: The Superintendent of Schools is ultimately responsible for the decision regarding changes to the regular school schedule due to inclement weather. However, the decision is made with the advice of several key personnel, most importantly the Transportation Supervisor's determination of whether or not buses can run safely. Also, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – the federal agency responsible for monitoring the nation's weather – reports any potentially hazardous weather to the schools – in advance, if possible, and updates that information as needed. The regional office for the Kansas Department of Transportation also advises the school district regarding weather situations and road conditions, as do the Dodge City Police Department and the Ford County Sheriff's Office.

Q: What happens if inclement weather comes in after school has started?

A: A decision to dismiss school early due to weather is complicated. Again, factors concerning warmth, safety, supervision, and nutrition factor into any decision. If it is determined that a majority of students may face difficulty in being at home unsupervised because parents cannot leave work early, then the safest alternative is to remain in school. Additionally, the ability for transportation, including school buses, personal vehicles, and parents, to travel safely may influence a decision.

Q: Can parents pick up children any time if they feel differently about the decision to attend school or remain in school?

A: Parents are always the best judge of what is best for their children. While school may continue to be in session, parents may keep children at home if they feel the weather conditions are unsafe for their children. They may also – at any time – pick up their children from school for the same reason. There is never a penalty – attendance or otherwise – for parents caring for their children's welfare in the manner they see fit.

Q: How do I know if school is cancelled or delayed or if activities are cancelled, delayed, or postponed?

A: Information about weather-related schedule changes will be posted on the main page of the school district's web site www.usd443.org. Local radio and television stations will be notified.

Q: Whom do I contact for more information?

A: Contact the Office of Public Information @ 620-371-1023