



Board of Education

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Dr. Rydell Harrison
Superintendent of Schools
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Dear Parent or Guardian:

Once again, it is that time of year when I must discuss the District's procedures regarding school closings, delays, and early dismissals. **Please read and save this letter for future reference.**

The decision to change school schedules is made after careful review of information collected from the local Police, Highway, School Maintenance Departments, and a local weather service. Road conditions, sidewalk status, precipitation, temperatures and forecasts are considered when making a determination to delay or close schools. **In some circumstances, a delay may be upgraded to a school closing.** Typically, we must make a decision by 5:30 AM in order for proper notification to the bus company and staff; **therefore, you will typically receive notification from my office (and media) by 5:45AM.** Please note that *when we are able to*, we will make the decision in advance (the prior evening, for example); however, with the uncertainty of weather forecasts, and the additional factors we must account for – building readiness, bussing, etc. – it is simply not always the right decision to make a call in advance. Likewise, while the towns on our borders may sometimes make different decisions, we are making a decision based upon the information we have regarding the roads, the buildings, the busses, and even the forecast *specific to Oakville and Watertown*. The safety of our children is the priority factor in all decision making.

Blackboard Connect

The Blackboard Connect communication system is a telephone messaging service that the district uses that enables us to personally communicate with parents and staff regarding emergency situations, school closings and delays, school events and other important issues impacting you and your children. Blackboard Connect has two methods for phone calls: "Outreach" and "Emergency." **When a weather-related issue allows for us to make a decision while school is not in session (i.e., the night or the morning before), we utilize "Outreach," which calls only one number: whatever number is listed in the "Home"**

field in PowerSchool. Note that it does not matter if the number in the “Home” field is actually a home number, but, that it is the primary contact method. **When we need to communicate a closure (early dismissal) and school is already in session, we utilize the “Emergency” method, which calls ALL phone numbers listed in your child’s PowerSchool records. Please take a moment to, again, log in to your account, or, contact your child’s school, and check the contact numbers listed in both the “Home” field and all others.**

DELAYED OPENING

- Buses will arrive at stops approximately two (2) hours later than the usual time.
- **Please do not drop children off at school at their usual time.** Staff members are only available to supervise children twenty (20) minutes before a delayed school opening.
- **If your child attends Pre-K, please reference Ms. Meka’s “Snow Letter” from JTPS to determine arrival/departure times.**

EARLY DISMISSAL

- An announcement will be made on radio stations, television stations, and also through BlackBoard Connect, generally prior to 11:00 a.m.
- The high school is usually released at approximately 12:00 noon. (Please note that unusual circumstances may dictate an early dismissal before 12:00 noon.)
- There are no p.m. pre-school classes on early dismissal days.
- Some schools might not be released until 2:00 p.m. When an early dismissal is required, our mission is always the safety of our students.
- It is imperative that you keep a current emergency telephone number listed at your child's school building. Arrangements with a neighbor, or friend, to look after your child in the event you are not home would also be helpful.

EMERGENCY – THREE-HOUR DELAY

- School buses will begin picking up students three hours later than regularly scheduled.
- Breakfast is canceled.
- Lunch will be served in all schools
- No AM Pre-School

In the event of school closings or early dismissals, all sporting events and student activities will be canceled.

Transportation Regulations

Students in grades PreK-2 will be returned to school in the event an adult is not present at the bus stop to meet them.

In the event of a school closing, no children from our town will be bused, regardless of whether they are attending public schools or private schools.

All Storm Announcements

Announcements will be made on the following radio and TV stations:

FM 92.5	FM 101.3
WINH -TV 8	FM 96.5
WFSB- TV 3	WVIT-TV 30

Websites-E-mail

Notification of weather related closings, delayed openings, and early dismissals can be set up through the Board of Education's website at www.watertownps.org. Weather related information can also be accessed at www.ctweather.com.

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to monitor weather related delays, closings, and early dismissals and to cooperate with school personnel as we work to ensure student safety.

Finally, I want to assure you, once again, that our primary concern in calling school delays, early dismissal or closure is always the safety of our children. If parents feel conditions are unsafe, they should use their discretion and keep their children at home.

Thank you, again, for your continued support. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. As always, let's hope for a mild winter and an early summer.

Yours truly,

Dr. Rydell Harrison
Watertown Superintendent of Schools