

Dorchester School District Two Inclement Weather Procedures

Weather Monitoring

The safety of students and staff is the primary concern when decisions are made to delay, close, or dismiss school early in response to hazardous weather conditions. The Superintendent and the district leadership team take this responsibility seriously and utilize a comprehensive decision-making process in making an informed decision. This includes monitoring weather forecasts and road conditions through coordination with the National Weather Service, Dorchester County Emergency Management Department, local utility companies, SC Highway Patrol and local law enforcement. The Superintendent will also consult with Superintendents of surrounding school districts. If conditions warrant a change to the regular schedule to close early, cancel school or have a delayed opening, the district strives to make those decisions as soon as possible.

Additional considerations

Decisions made in response to hazardous weather conditions are district wide, affecting all schools and district sites. There are times some areas of the county are not as impacted as others by inclement weather, but decisions must be based on road conditions in all areas that school buses must travel. In addition, many teachers and staff members live in surrounding areas that may be unsafe for travel.

Delay of school start times, early dismissal, or cancellation

When possible, the decision to **close schools** due to hazardous conditions will be made the evening before to allow parents and employees as much advance notice as possible in order to make appropriate plans.

If early morning weather conditions warrant a **delayed start time**, schools may open on a one, two, or three hour delay from the normal schedule. The length of the delay would depend on existing weather conditions and the weather forecast for the day.

There are times when forecasts of rapidly deteriorating weather conditions require **early dismissal times** for schools in order to transport students safely home and get vehicles off the roads. If at all possible, the established early dismissal schedule will be followed: elementary schools at 11:00 a.m., middle schools at 12:00 p.m., and high schools and Givhans Alternative Program at 1:00 p.m. Parents and staff will be notified of the change as quickly as the decision is made.

When there is school cancellation or early dismissal, after school events, half-day programs, and elementary extended day child care will also be cancelled unless otherwise announced.

Notification of change in school schedules or cancellation

If a decision is made to alter the start or dismissal times or to cancel school, the Dorchester School District Two Public Information Office will notify students, parents and employees through a variety of methods including:

- Blackboard Connect telephone calls
- Emails and text messages
- School and district website postings
- Facebook messages
- Local media outlets

It is very important that parents keep schools updated on any changes to contact information to ensure they receive the Blackboard Connect calls, emails and text messages,

Preparation for Inclement Weather

In cases of extreme cold, bus drivers, maintenance workers and other district/school staff report to work early to prepare the buses and facilities for students. School bus drivers arrive early to crank the buses to allow extra time for the buses to warm up and to address any mechanical issues. The Dorchester School District Two Transportation Office works closely with the State Department of Education's bus mechanics to address any issues quickly.

School staff will arrive at school early to receive students as they are dropped off, minimizing the time children are exposed to weather conditions.

Making Up Time Missed for Students and Staff

Three make-up days are included on the district master calendar as required by state law. These days are listed on the district calendar posted on the website. Designated make up day(s) for school closures will be announced as soon as possible.

Tips for Students and Parents

1. Stay informed: Check the district website regularly and local media for updates on school delays and/or closings. **It is important to remember the decision to alter the school day is made by the district office staff not individual schools. The district requests that parents not call schools in order to keep the phone lines open in case of emergency situations.**
2. Students riding buses to schools should dress appropriately for the weather and alter their time for arriving at bus stops based on the school start time. If a delay is scheduled, students should delay their arrival time at the bus stop to match the delay.
3. Parents are encouraged to have a plan in place if school closes early or if there is a delayed start time. The plan should avoid leaving young children at home unsupervised.

The district wants to ensure students, parents and employees are prepared for any situation caused by extreme temperatures or inclement weather. If you have any questions about procedures related to extreme temperatures and/or inclement weather, please contact Pat Raynor, public information officer, at 843-695-5376.