

December 29, 2016

Dear Lamoille North Families and Staff,

Greetings on this snowy Vermont day! I hope you are taking some time to spend with those you love during this Holiday and finding joy in your surroundings. It goes without saying that we have had a most interesting start to the winter this year. Having reflected on the weather conditions this past month and in the midst of our first predicted major snowfall, I want to share with you the variables I consider when I delay or close school due to extreme weather conditions. I am learning that there is no perfect, 100% guaranteed plan. This is Vermont, and as we all know, weather can change in what seems like a moment's notice, and without warning.



On a day when weather is in question, I review several weather websites, including Weathering Heights, the National Weather Service, WeatherBug, AccuWeather, and Wunderground, to name a few. I also talk to Superintendents in neighboring towns at approximately 5:00 a.m. on relevant mornings. Next, I call the Sheriff's Department dispatch unit where I am apprised of road conditions in all of our towns. Frequently, but not always, I speak directly with our road crews. Finally, I connect with our Bus Coordinators who throughout the morning communicate with the drivers to assess road conditions. All Bus Drivers understand that they should not proceed up or down roads that they judge to be unsafe. Decisions about whether to delay or close school are made by 5:30-5:45 a.m. If I have information beforehand, and that will almost always be related to frigid weather temperatures and dangerous wind chills, I will try to give notice the previous evening. Ultimately, I make the best decisions I can with the resources I have. All decisions are made in collaboration with our local partners and are never made in isolation.

I want to remind all parents that the final decision to send your child to school on bad weather days is yours and our schools will consider it an excused absence. Conditions can be vastly different from the mountain back roads to the well-traveled main roads. And, conditions can be vastly different in Cambridge than they are in Hyde Park and even North Hyde Park. It is also vitally important that every family has a safety plan for students waiting at a bus stop. It doesn't happen often, but weather like November's sudden ice storm, mechanical problems, disrupted power lines, and the like, can and do happen.

I can't write to you about how decisions are made around weather-related school closings without honoring our incredible road crews and drivers who work through all hours of the night to make our roads as safe as possible for all the people in our communities. We cannot thank you enough for what you do.

On my end, I will continue to do everything I can to keep our children safe by using the best resources at hand. I take this responsibility very seriously. As always, please feel free to reach out to me directly at 851-1171 should you have questions.

I wish for you all a happy, healthy and safe 2017!

My best to you,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.