



# Hancock County Public Schools

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KYLE ESTES

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF WINTER WEATHER ON SCHOOLS**

Winter is here and will likely force local school districts to make decisions about closing school during the season. Hancock County Schools wants to share with its stakeholders about the procedures the district follows and the factors involved when cancelling classes.

#### **Q-What is the process of calling off school?**

A-HCS monitors the forecast hour by hour. In addition, the district checks the air temperature and the road temperature to anticipate icing conditions. District officials also stay in constant contact with state and local transportation officials about the condition of the roads.

#### **Q-What happens if the roads are becoming snow covered?**

A-HCS officials drive through different zones in the county and confer on the conditions. This decision making process begins between 3 and 4 a.m. By 5 a.m., the transportation director and HCS Superintendent Kyle Estes review all factors and determine if the district should close or delay the start of school. HCS notifies all bus drivers and media outlets if school is cancelled for the day or delayed. By 5:30 a.m., Mr. Estes will make a call to parents that have subscribed to the School Messenger system. It takes 20 to 30 minutes for the system to reach all subscribers.

#### **Q-What if the snow has not started by 5 am?**

A-Timing is the most difficult aspect of this decision. It takes HCS approximately three hours to get students home (longer if there is inclement weather). If the snow is predicted to begin by noon, HCS must start transporting our elementary students by 9:30 at the latest. Early dismissal creates a hardship for working parents and a risk that many students may be home unsupervised. High School student drivers also need to be on the road as soon as possible (before roads get too bad).

#### **Q-If school was closed the previous day, how is the decision made regarding the return to school?**

A-The HCS transportation team checks all questionable roads. District officials consider the late afternoon road conditions and anticipate the morning conditions based on the temperature. If these conditions are favorable and at least 90% of students can be transported on regular pick-up, school will resume. Bus drivers could possibly call the families in the areas of question and work out an alternate pick-up. The possibilities of clearing schools' parking lots for the next day must also be considered. Children's safety is most important. The district will always err on the side of caution.

**Q-How does the wind chill effect school being closed or delayed?**

A-This answer is a lot more complex. On particularly early mornings HCS will continuously monitor the National Weather Service and closely monitor the weather conditions. There are two possible scenarios that come from the National Weather Service: a **Wind Chill Advisory** and a **Wind Chill Warning**. The National Weather Service defines the two as the following:

- *Wind Chill Advisory*: Wind chills between -10 and -24 degrees and at least a 4 mph wind for 3 hours or more.
- *Wind Chill Warning*: Wind chills -25 degrees and below with at least 4 mph wind for 3 hours or more.

When the National Weather Service issues a *Wind Chill Warning* for Hancock County for the time the school day begins, HCS will make a decision to close schools. It is quite likely that the district will make this type of decision on the morning of the day in question as it is hard to predict what the wind chill will be the night before. If there is a *Wind Chill Advisory* for the county, schools will likely be open unless there are operational problems with the bus fleet or mechanical problems in the school buildings. Buildings and the bus fleet are assessed in the morning prior to school by 5 a.m.

If parents determine that the weather conditions are too dangerous for their students to be outside, the district respects that decision. Parents are free to contact their child's school to request an excused absence for that day. If the child misses school because cars won't start or because of other issues related to extreme cold temperatures, those reasons will determine if the absence is excused. HCS asks parents to please make sure to contact the attendance office at the child's school to report the absence.

We ask our families to understand that the safety of our staff and students is our top priority when making the decision to delay or close school. We assure our citizens that our school buildings are warm, safe and an ideal place for students to be when it is extremely cold outside. Parents should make sure their child is dressed appropriately for the cold weather. We urge students to wear winter hats, gloves, heavy coats and boots. Frostbite and hypothermia are serious risks and need to be taken into consideration.

There are multiple ways for parents and families to find out if school has been cancelled or delayed. Here are several:

- The School Messenger System
- Local Media Outlets:
  - WBKR-92.5 FM
  - WSTO-96.1 FM
  - WKDQ-99.5 FM
  - WABX-107.5 FM
  - WLME-102.7 FM
  - WLFW-93.5 FM
  - WEHT-7/25 TV
  - WFIE-14 TV
  - WLKY-32 TV
  - WEVV-44 TV
  - WAVE-3 TV
- Social Media Outlets:
  - [www.facebook.com/hancock-county-public-schools-communication](http://www.facebook.com/hancock-county-public-schools-communication)
  - The social media sites for the local radio and TV stations