



**From the desk of the Superintendent  
New Berlin CUSD #16**



**To cancel school or not? Snow Day (emergency day) or not?**

In preparation for inclement weather, the Board adopted an e-Learning plan which is good for three (3) years. This would allow the district to not have to take “emergency days” for snow, ice, or any other emergency. However, the school superintendents have been given the option of using “Remote” Learning Days due to the Gubernatorial Disaster Declaration because of COVID-19. These days are not limited and can be only used during a declared disaster. Another change is that districts are required to make meals available to students who qualify for free meals only during this emergency time. Under inclement weather and the size of the district in square miles, this may be a challenge for our Food Service staff. If a “Remote” day is called the day prior to before school is let out and if it isn’t a remote Wednesday, then we will make every attempt to send a meal home with students that qualify. If not, we will attempt to make one location available for parents to travel to in order to pick up the meal. It will all be contingent upon if it is safe to travel later in the morning.

Cancelling school is one of the more complex decisions a Superintendent must make. The decision to delay, dismiss early, or close schools due to inclement weather has an enormous effect on all of our families. The following information may help you understand the process that is used when making this critical decision.

When inclement weather impacts the District, the decision to dismiss, delay or close schools based upon a careful analysis of the following factors:

- By driving some of our roads and assessing key roads/intersections that our buses need to navigate.
- By assessing the available information on road conditions from law enforcement, our Transportation Director, and local road commissioners.
- By assessing the amount of accumulated snow and/or ice, or the density of the fog.
- By assessing the visibility.
- By determining whether or not the precipitation/fog is predicted to continue throughout the day.
- By assessing the temperature and wind chill.
- By determining the impact on our transportation (buses).
- By examining weather predictions from satellite systems, local radar and the National Weather Service.
- By assessing the timing of the storm/fog.
- By holding discussions with area Superintendents beginning the prior evening and continuing again around 4:00 am

There may be times that you believe we should have cancelled school or when you believe school should have been in session. Our District, which is over 152 square miles, consists of portions of Morgan County on our Western part. It also reaches past the AMC Movie Theater in Springfield on the Eastern part. The geographical make-up for portions of our District vary and the fact that we have an interstate highway that is utilized by the District makes it very difficult to determine when it is safe for school to be in session. For example, if you live in Loami, conditions might be fine but in New Berlin the conditions could be terrible or vice versa. The final decision on whether to cancel school or not is based upon the overall condition of the District and the safety of all of our children.

**If you do not feel it is safe for your child to get to school, use your best judgment as to whether he/she should attend. Please call your respective school office and let them know.**

**Who makes the decision on whether to delay, dismiss early or cancel school?** As the Superintendent, I am tasked with this complex responsibility. Under the Governor's Disaster Declaration, I will make every attempt at calling off school the day before due to the requirement of providing meals for students.

**When is the decision made?** I will make every attempt to cancel school by 6:30 am or the previous night or day, so we can initiate the automated call system, notify local radio stations, and notify TV stations. If a school day is delayed or dismissed early, the same contacts will be notified.

**What are the expectations for students during "Remote" days?** Students will be required to log in to their Chromebooks no later than 8:10 am. Students will be engaged in remote learning activities from 8:10 am to 1:45 pm and beyond just as they were with remote learning for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter.

**Will we close school if conditions worsen (early dismissal)?** If weather conditions worsen, I will be reluctant to dismiss early. If I send students (especially younger students) back home, some will return to empty houses. Once students arrive at school, I feel that most of the time the safest plan is to keep them at school until the end of the day. However, there may be a time we will dismiss early, in order to get students home before a storm worsens. I am hoping this will be a rare occasion. If this does happen, we will utilize the automated call system immediately to notify parents.

I hope this explanation helps you understand the process we go through when considering whether or not to cancel school. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at (217) 488-2040 extension 405 or e-mail at [jl Larson@pretzelpride.com](mailto:jl Larson@pretzelpride.com).

Jill Larson, Superintendent