

# North Haven Public Schools

North Haven, Connecticut 06473

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## *News from Our Schools* *November 2018*



Dear Parents and Guardians,

It's that time of year again when it's a good idea to review how decisions to cancel, delay, or dismiss school early are made in the district, and how the information is communicated all of you. For those of you who have been through this before, hopefully, this will be a good refresher.

The easiest calls to make are those resulting from a snow or ice storm that begins in the evening or in the middle of the night and continues into the next day. Typically, under these circumstances, there is no question that buses will not be able to run. In those instances, I speak with the district's meteorologist sometime between 8:00 PM and 9:00 PM when he provides me with the most recent data on the track of the storm, along with his understanding of what that will mean for the morning commute. He contacts me again between 4:00 AM and 4:30 AM the next morning when we review current conditions. Based upon that information, along with conversations with Phil Diana, Director of Grounds and Maintenance, I try to make the decision of whether or not by 5:00 AM whether to close school or remain open. By this point, Mr. Diana has already spoken with the town's police and road crews. Sometimes, when the decision is less obvious, it may take a bit longer to make. In those cases, a decision may not be reached until sometime between 5:15 AM and 5:30 AM. Once the decision is made, my administrative assistant, Joyce Lapre, gets a message out to staff and families through our district phone, text and email communication system, I contact the local television stations, and the closing is posted on our district web-site. Not until we have as much confidence as possible in the decision do I make the official call. Each community is different and there are factors that have to be taken into consideration by some superintendents that do not present a problem in North Haven and there are things that I might need to consider that would not present a problem in another district. That's one reason why some superintendents are able to announce a school closure in the evening as opposed to the morning. Whenever I can do that with confidence, I will. Typically, that decision isn't made until the morning, however.

When a storm stops during the evening, or in the early hours of the morning, decisions about closing school or delaying the opening are really dependent upon what the police and the road crews from North Haven tell us. Depending on the intensity of the storm, delaying the opening a few hours allows the custodial staff at the buildings the opportunity to clear sidewalks and parking lots surrounding the schools. A delayed opening provides the road crews more time to clear streets with fewer cars and buses on the roads. As standard practice in North Haven, delayed openings will always be two hours in length. This is done to give road crews, custodians, and bus drivers sufficient time to do their work and ensure student safety.

The most difficult call is one involving an unanticipated early dismissal. Storms predicted to start during the school day are always the most challenging. Typically, decisions about early dismissal need to be made by 11:00 AM for transportation purposes. Once made, word of the closing is posted on our web site, announced on local television and radio stations, and sent automatically to people's telephones, texts, and/or email to all participating families. When deciding whether or not to close school early, I am in frequent contact with our meteorologist, the road crews in North Haven, and the police department. If it seems that the storm will end well in advance of dismissal, it may make more sense to carry on with business as usual because to do otherwise would put buses on the road at the height of the storm, before clean-up efforts have started. If it does not appear that the storm is going to let up, we try to move dismissal along as quickly as possible, beginning with the high school and middle school at noon. People have asked why we don't begin early dismissal with our

elementary students. The reason for this is that many of our students are from homes with two working parents, and we need to get older students home first because they are the caregivers.

The act of calling off school due to inclement weather is both a science and an art. We do the very best we can with the information available to us. If nothing else, I hope you see that considerable thought goes into making the decision. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we get it wrong. It is always my intent to err on the side of safety, but parents are encouraged to use their own judgment, as well. **Regardless of my decision, if you have any concern about safety, please consider keeping your children home or picking them up early.** We want to work with you to ensure the safety of all North Haven's students.

As always, thank you for your ongoing cooperation and continued support. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,  
*Robert D. Cronin, Ph.D.*  
Superintendent of Schools

