



# SOUTHWEST LICKING LOCAL SCHOOLS

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## DEAR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS,

Another school year is upon us! Our district staff understands that our decision to open or close schools, offer a two-hour delayed start, or resort to an early release in bad weather has a big effect on families. Also, we understand that our students are better served by being in school - both academically and socially. As always, our top priority is the safety of our students.

## HOW DO WE MAKE OUR DECISION?

When bad weather affects the area, we make the decision to open/close schools or modify the school day schedule based upon a careful analysis of all relevant factors, such as:

- Information on road conditions from transportation staff and from local law enforcement and road crews;
- Amount of accumulated snow and ice;
- Whether precipitation is expected to continue throughout the day;
- Weather predictions (including those from a weather alert service);
- Storm timing;
- Building conditions (such as whether there is electricity and heat);
- Parking lot conditions.

We have a very large district, approximately 65 square miles. Weather and road conditions may be fine in one portion of the district, but not in another. In such instances we must close school or modify the school day for the entire district. Under no circumstances will the District hold classes when Licking County is placed on a Level 2 or Level 3 Snow Emergency.

Please keep in mind that surrounding districts have often aligned with our decision due to similar decision processes, but there be will days when unique factors impact our decision and can cause us to be unlike the districts around us.

## WHO MAKES THE DECISION?

As Superintendent of Schools, I am responsible for the final decision, based upon the factors and the recommendation from the Transportation Director.

## WHEN IS THE DECISION MADE?

I strive to make the decision to close by 5:30 a.m., or earlier, so that we can notify radio and TV stations, post the information to our web site, and send electronic notices to emergency announcement subscribers. Keep in mind that unusual weather conditions may force us to delay first and then make the decision to cancel at a later time. If the District is placed on a 2-hr delay, the decision to cancel will be made no later than 7:00 a.m. Please stay tuned to the previously mentioned stations, as well as our web site and e-communications, for possible changes to a delayed status.



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## **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF CONDITIONS WORSEN?**

Even if weather conditions worsen, we cannot reverse our decision in the morning without endangering students. Once we make the decision to open the schools, many parents rely on it and leave for work. If we then send students back home, many will return to unsupervised bus stops and empty houses. If conditions worsen during the school day, we may need to have an early dismissal or cancel afternoon pre-school classes, but we will give as much notice as possible through the previously mentioned means.

## **WILL WE CLOSE SCHOOL IF IT IS COLD?**

In recent years, cold has become a consideration. I can tell you that this is a relatively new component in the delaying or closing process and often has moving parameters. There is no specific temperature that triggers a delay or closing. Decisions to delay based on cold generally take into consideration the temperature and wind (not wind gusts), better known as the wind chill. Temperature and wind will fluctuate throughout the day, making this component a difficult factor to consider. We are, however, aware that there is a point when it is too cold for children to be outside and we will delay or close based on the forecast. In general, when frostbite can occur within twenty (20) minutes, we will delay to allow for sunlight and possibly warmer temperatures to arrive. Should the forecast call for no change in the wind chill temperatures, we will consider making the decision to cancel classes for the day. For reference, I utilize the National Weather Service's wind chill chart.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Although my staff and I do our absolute best in this process, we know that often no perfect decision exists. If you do not feel that it is safe for your child to get to school, use your best judgment as to whether or not he or she should attend. If your decision is to keep your child at home, we do request that you to contact your child's school of attendance to report their absence.

We hope that this explanation helps everyone understand the process that our district staff uses to make the best possible decision for all in our district.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert T. Jennell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert T. Jennell  
Superintendent