

October 27, 2014 – In Session with the “Oriole” Superintendent

### **Inclement Weather – Charlotte Public Schools**

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Superintendent

With the calendar now entering November and snow in the forecast I thought it important to revisit the school district’s process for school closures or delays as it relates to inclement weather.

In an effort to try and describe our process of evaluating inclement weather and what goes into our decision making in regards to remaining open, delaying or closing I offer the following information to hopefully provide some better understanding of how a decision is made.

First, whenever questionable weather comes our way, select staff members, including myself, assess road conditions. Usually this means driving our roads by at least 4:30 a.m. Several primary roads and secondary roads are assessed, with wind direction factored into the evaluation if the weather involves blowing snow and drifting.

Fog and ice conditions present entirely different considerations; yet, they are evaluated to determine if travel is possible and can be done so safely.

Other considerations assessed are the temperature and wind chill. A long standing practice for our school district has been to cancel or delay school with a wind chill of 25 to 30 degrees below zero. This has been an agreed upon practice with other school districts in our county for many years. Clearly, districts have discretion at the moment in time when a decision is to be made on any given day. Our intent is to be sensitive to the cold conditions while balancing it with maintaining continuity in school district operations.

We also interact and consult with many other districts in our county and adjoining counties on questionable weather days early in the morning. Communication between the districts is paramount during this time period. District personnel are sharing information on weather conditions and making judgments as to what should or should not be done. Additionally, governmental agencies (Road Commission, State Police, MDOT etc...) are also consulted as appropriate, to better determine how to respond and act.

Decisions are then based upon much communication and deliberation among our leadership team. We always consider all aspects of a weather situation, including safety, and base a decision on the information we have assessed and evaluated. At times it is not easy. Every weather related situation is unique. The circumstances surrounding the weather and subsequent decision made can and will be subject to questions. At times, some decisions are viewed unfavorably. We understand this reality and value the constructive feedback offered.

I offer you this additional information so you understand other aspects of our practice when weather days arise.

1. When poor weather comes when school is already in session, we will avoid releasing early. Releasing early creates too many unknown situations for families, specifically child care or child supervision.
2. Some of our buses depart for their morning pick-ups around 6:00 a.m. or soon thereafter. We are committed to making a weather related decision between 5:30 AM and 6:00 AM or earlier. Once this decision is made, calls to the media and our staff begin immediately.
3. Watching local TV stations (WILX, WLNS and Fox 47), monitoring our Facebook page, and/or listening to local radio stations are your **VERY BEST** sources for school closing or delays. We also use our call out system to reach parents at their preferred phone number.
4. Please do NOT call the transportation office or your student's school. Office staff is not there during this time in the mornings when decisions are made.
5. Parents of our students always have the option of keeping their students home when in their own judgment that decision needs to be made.

Additionally, we would like to remind parents to have their children dress appropriately for the winter weather conditions. Many times, we have students without hats, gloves, boots, or a coat. It is important that if you need assistance with obtaining these cold weather items that you contact your student's building so that they can assist in getting your student the items they need.

Lastly, please remember that we do live in Michigan and the weather conditions change constantly and quickly. We are very appreciative of your understanding and cooperation when these decisions must be made in the best interest of our students. I hope this information helps you have a view into our process and how challenging it can be.