



Inclement Weather, School Closing & Notifications



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School Closings & Notifications

One of the challenges for the Superintendent of Schools is deciding whether or not to cancel or delay school due to inclement weather. Like weather forecasting, the school-closing decision process is not a perfect science. As this is New England, we are apt to have a number of school days when the weather is inclement. It is important for families to understand how the process works. Please find details for our winter weather school operations and closings below.

Who? Decision Maker

The Superintendent makes the decision to close or delay school in consultation with the Franklin Department of Public Works (DPW), the Highway Department, the Police Department, and the Director of Facilities.

1. Superintendent monitor state and local weather forecasts as well as Precision Forecasting, a service tailored to give us real-time data on conditions in Franklin
2. DPW, Highway Department, and Police Department test the road conditions and report that information.

What? Factors & Considerations

The safety of our students and staff is our number one priority as we consider the weather forecast. We are very sensitive to families' childcare challenges when schools are closed and only do so if our analysis indicates we should. Please know that schools will likely be open if roads are open and parking lots are cleared. If a parent/guardian believes that weather conditions are too severe, they may keep their children home.

In deciding whether to have school, we consider the following factors:

- Information on road conditions from the town's superintendent of highways/grounds and the police
- Time snow starts to accumulate, and the amount of snow expected
- Weather predictions as to what is expected later in the day
- Building conditions (e.g., whether we have power and heat)
- Parking lot conditions and our ability to remove the snow
- Temperature and wind-chill
- The Department of Public Works prediction as to when roads, walkways, and parking lots will be cleared

When? Notification Timing

- Typically, families will be notified of a school closing or delay by 5:30 A.M. of the day in question. The most accurate information is often provided at the early morning newscasts since conditions could have changed overnight.

There may be occasions when a decision can be made the previous evening, but typically it will not be made until the day of. As soon as a decision has been made, families will be notified.

How? Notification System

Families and all district staff will receive messages via phone and/or email about the status of school opening/closing due to inclement weather conditions through the Regroup mass notification system.

Phone calls will begin to be made at 5:30 A.M. If you do not wish to receive a phone call early in the morning, please contact your child's school to remove your number from our Regroup system.

Tune in to the following stations for up-to-date information on school closings. Do not call the school unless it is an emergency. We will also send out a notification via social media.

Regroup: Please keep your contact information current at your child's school

Television: Channels 25(Fox), 4 (WBZ), 5 (WCVB), 7(WHDH), NECN, and 10 (WJAR NBC)-RI

Radio Stations: WBZ (1030 AM), WMRC (1490 AM)

Social Media: Twitter: @FranklinPSNews

No School

If conditions are, in the Superintendent's judgment, sufficiently severe for student travel, schools will be canceled. The "No School" announcement will be carried by local television news channels, and posted on the website. Parents and staff will be notified via phone, email, and text message from the school's communication system.

- All classes and school activities are canceled for the day.
- The day will be made up later in the year, as state regulations require.

Delayed Opening

If conditions are almost safe, but the Highway Department needs extra time to clear the roads, the school day may be shortened. Under this alternative plan, the opening of school and all bus pickups will typically be delayed one or two hours, with the bused students being picked up one or two hours later than usual.

The "Delayed Opening" announcement will be announced similarly to cancellations. On such days, schools will be dismissed at their regular times. School lunch will be served at the regular times in each school, though we cannot guarantee the serving of previously advertised menus.

Custodians, cafeteria workers, administrators, and secretaries will report to school as close to their regular hours as is safe to do so. Teachers, ESPs, and other school staff will report one-two hours later than usual.

Students being driven to school should follow the delay timing.

- Morning bus pickups and school start times are postponed by one or two hours.
- Before School Programs are canceled
- Meals, afternoon dismissals, and all other school activities take place at their regularly scheduled times.

Parents/Guardians are reminded not to send their children to school early on “Delayed Opening” days since the schoolyards and roadways may not be cleared, nor are staff available or responsible for supervising early arrivals.

Early Dismissal

On rare occasions, the Superintendent may implement an early dismissal. This will be done in as timely a manner as possible. Notification will generally be communicated and will be posted on the website.

- Student dismissal occurs during the school day. Implemented on rare occasions when weather conditions warrant.
- All after-school activities are canceled.

There are times when it is more advantageous to keep students in school rather than release them early to allow more time to clear roadways to and from schools before dismissal and allow caregivers time to commute home to receive younger children.

Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC)

Cancellation, delays, or early dismissal at the Francis X. O'Reagan Early Childhood Center will be handled as follows:

- School Cancellation:
 - In the event that weather conditions dictate school cancellation, these announcements will be made on radio, television, and via Regroup notification as early as possible.
- Delay in School Starting Time:
 - When Franklin Public Schools has a delayed opening, ECDC will have a cancellation/delayed opening as follows
 - ECDC morning session (9:15-11:45) will be canceled
 - ECDC full-day and extended sessions (9:15-3:15 and 9:15-1:15) will delay opening as indicated (for example, if there is a 2-hour delay, the school will open for students at 11:15 and dismiss at the regularly scheduled time).
 - The delayed opening *will NOT impact* the afternoon session (12:45-3:15)
- Unscheduled Early Dismissal:
 - In the event that adverse weather occurs or intensifies after school has begun, it may be necessary to release students earlier than normal so that buses can operate before the roads become more hazardous. In this event, all afternoon educational programs, activities, and PM preschool classes will be canceled.

Parents/guardians need to use their discretion in deciding whether or not to send their children to school during inclement weather conditions.

Sidewalks

Clearing the roads and parking lots is the town's priority during and after any snowstorm. The second priority is the clearing of the sidewalks. Ideally, both roads and sidewalks will be sufficiently clear of snow before we open. However, please be aware that schools may be open before sidewalks are clear. There may, however, be some days when sidewalks will have snow cover that students will have to walk through on their way to school. Sidewalk maintenance is the responsibility of the DPW, and due to a large number of sidewalks, it may take up to a week to clear them. Families must exercise discretion on how students will arrive/depart from school. In the event of excessive snow, we implement emergency transportation for walkers – see the website for information.

Power outages

Snowstorms, Nor'easters, and Hurricanes may negatively impact the ability of utility companies to restore power in a timely manner. If all school buildings have electricity, we aim to open schools. Other factors also influence the decision, including the number of neighborhoods without power, debris (trees, downed power lines, and safe routes to school) may influence the decision to open or close schools. As with all our decision-making, school officials consult with public safety leaders to make the best decision within the context of the information available.

Make-up Days

As per school attendance regulations, students must attend school for a minimum of 180 days, and the school year must end by June 30th. If snow days exceed these days, we will adjust the school calendar to use school vacation time to make up days.

Family Responsibilities

The safety of your child is first and foremost! The Franklin Public Schools covers a large amount of geography with terrain variations. Conditions can change suddenly. When the weather is questionable, but the schools are open, please feel free to exercise your parental discretion to keep your child home. Teachers will be flexible in accepting late work under such conditions. Families of young drivers, please reinforce inclement weather driving skills with your child:

- Leave earlier
- Reduce speed
- Leave extra car lengths between vehicles
- Do not worry about being late

Families of drivers can choose to drive their child, or they may take a school bus. (Bus routes are on the district website under Transportation.

Plan Ahead

Weather prediction is an uncertain science when you live in New England. However, getting snow in winter is almost guaranteed. Since we will let the safety of our children guide our decision-making with regard to snow days, we ask all families to make emergency alternative childcare arrangements should the day come when the children have no school or school is delayed.

Thank you for planning in advance.

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