

In light of the inclement weather and cold we have experienced over the past few weeks, I am writing to inform you our procedure followed when school is delayed, dismissed early, or cancelled.

Let's discuss the timing of the calls. It has been our procedure to be consistent in the time calls are made with all calls made strategically – 8:30 pm in the evening regarding whether a 2 hour delay or school is cancelled the next day. If no call has been made the night before a decision on whether to have a 2 hour delay or no school the following day, the decision is to either delay 2 hours or close is made around 4:30 am with the calls via the *Schoolmessenger* system put in place.

If a two hour delay call is made in the morning and it is determined that we need to cancel school, that call is usually made by 6:45 am-7:00 am. If an early dismissal is needed, we need approximately an hour and a half to hour prior to dismissal to make the necessary calls to have all our buses and drivers ready. Plus, I feel it is important to let parents have enough time to make arrangements for their children to arrive home in a safe environment with proper supervision.

Of course, this is all dependent on the technology – phone and internet – working properly. As was the case last Thursday, January 23, technical problems arose that resulted in having no phone or internet accessibility. Plan B was put into effect but nonetheless, the call to inform all of school being cancelled was late.

Questions have arisen over the times calls are made, especially the night before school is either delayed 2 hours or cancelled the next day. Over the past few weeks, it is easy to see that weather is present that decision to cancel can be made earlier. However, most times we are not sure if and when a decision can be made to delay/cancel for the next day. Thus, the need to wait until the most practical time to call – 8:30 pm. This time gives you as a parent time to make any and all necessary arrangements for your child the next day. If you recall, over the past few years, all of our calls the night before have occurred at this time. Consistency is the key to informing all of the information at hand. I cannot confuse folks by deciding at any and all times of the evening what will occur the next day regarding school being in session. Counties around us have their routine/usual time to call....we here in Pendleton do also.

Additionally, I want to stress that there are media outlets that are contacted and have graciously announced our school delays, early dismissals, and closings. They include:

TV Stations: WHSV TV 3 Harrisonburg, VA

Radio Stations: WSVB 550 AM /101.7 FM Harrisonburg, Va

 WKCY 104.3 FM Harrisonburg, VA

 WELD 101.7 FM Fisher, WV

 WQWV FM 103.7/102.9 FM Petersburg/Franklin, WV

The West Virginia Department of Education is notified when school is closed or when any delay/early dismissal occurs. The web-site for it is:

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/closings/>

You can also sign up for email/text alerts at the WVDE School Closing Website. Here is the link:

<http://wvde.state.wv.us/closings/subscribe/county/pendleton>

Much time and thought is given in regards to school delay, early dismissals, and cancellations. It is not easy to make a call at 4:30 am in the morning regarding what should be done regarding school delays and closings. Calls are made throughout the county to determine the weather conditions, be it snow, wind, ice or just plain COLD. None of us pretend to be Nostradamus and possess the ability to predict exactly what is going to occur with the weather. NOAA weather is consulted frequently and often statewide calls are often received at 4:15 am (when requested that we participate...which we do) to ascertain and determine the scope and sequence of weather patterns and the effect it will have on our locality. The geography of Pendleton County is both a blessing and a problem when weather patterns are considered. Whatever be the case, all decisions to delay or cancel school are made with the safety and welfare of our school community at heart. If an error is made regarding school delays or cancellation, it will be made on the side of safety.

Folks, no system is foolproof, especially when you take into account our weather patterns the past few weeks and our geography. I personally take responsibility for the calls being made in a timely fashion but as was stated, dependence on technology will, at times, cause "hiccups" in the process.

I will follow up with additional information on the newly passed school calendar bill, Part of Senate Bill 359, in the next few weeks. Please be informed that beginning school term 2014-2015, it is required that all school systems have 180 days of instruction. What does this mean? Well, just as it says, 180 days of instruction.