

Greenville County Schools

Process to Decide Whether to Delay, Close or Dismiss Early Due to Inclement Weather

Because of our location in the foothills of South Carolina, we face unpredictable and sometimes dangerous weather conditions during the winter. The safety of students and staff is our primary concern when deciding to delay, close or dismiss school early. District officials take their responsibilities very seriously and utilize a comprehensive decision-making process involving 25 staff members to ensure the superintendent makes an informed decision.

Decisions are made as soon as possible so parents, students and employees can be informed and make appropriate plans. If possible, a decision is made late afternoon or early evening for the following day. If a decision cannot be made at that time, then the next morning District officials begin the evaluation and decision-making process at 4:00 a.m.

ICE (Inclement Conditions Evaluation) Team members assigned to geographic areas across the county personally check road conditions and each school facility. Other staff members monitor weather conditions, forecasts, and temperatures across the district. They also discuss weather and other related conditions with meteorologists, the Highway Patrol, and utility companies.

Decisions to delay, close or dismiss early are district-wide. GCS is one school system and has many operational systems that work together for the good of the whole. It is difficult, if not impossible, to occasionally “untwine” these systems for a day or two considering the number of variables – 70,000 students, 46,000 households, 8,800 employees, and 100-plus school sites. Below are a few reasons:

- The same schools are not impacted each time there is inclement weather and it is not always just the northern part of the county with icy roads. Also, not all schools in an area/zone may be impacted by inclement weather, so on a smaller scale the same issues still exist.
- Schools operate on a district-wide calendar. Three makeup days are included as required by State law. Typically, we do not utilize all three days.
- If all schools do not follow the same calendar, parents with children attending different schools could have one child required to attend one day while another child is required to make up the missed day on another day.
- About 9,000 students in GCS attend school through choice – change in assignment or magnet academies – and travel across the county to attend school. If their choice school is open, students may have to travel across unsafe areas.
- Teachers and other school staff do not necessarily live near where they work. Schools may be open in one area, but many teachers and staff working at those schools may live in areas unsafe for travel.
- Bus transportation for students receiving special education services or attending child development centers is district-wide. Many of these students do not live near the school they attend.
- There would be a financial impact. If schools in one area/zone are closed for inclement weather, then those schools would have to open on another day that other schools are closed. For example, there would be additional costs for the operation of the bus centers and bus supervisory personnel. Also, there would be additional personnel and operating costs for the Fine Arts Center, Alternative Programs and Career Centers to operate more than 180 days to serve all students.